

THE SLEEP OF REASON?

ON PRACTICES OF READING
SHŌNEN MANGA



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Declaration

I declare that:

this thesis has been composed by the candidate;

the work is the candidate's own; and

the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

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Date: 1 Feb 2011



Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the practices of English-speaking readers of *shōnen* manga (Japanese comics written primarily for an audience of teenage boys). I concentrate on three series in particular: Hiromu Arakawa's *Fullmetal Alchemist* (2001–2010), Tite Kubo's *Bleach* (2001–ongoing), and Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto* (1999–ongoing). I argue that, although it may appear to be inherently imbued with (authorial) meaning, the *shōnen* manga text emerges from a curious 'alchemy' through which the practices of readers transform the 'raw' materials provided by manga creators to produce a text that appears to have always been inherently meaningful in itself. I argue that this is always an impossible and monstrous transformation.

In the first chapter, I introduce the monstrous combinations of words and pictures, panels and gutters known as *shōnen* manga and argue for the importance of taking the practices of 'ordinary' (or, at least, non-scholarly) reading seriously. In the second chapter I explore the idea that reading is an 'alchemy' through which the disparate elements readers encounter on the page are transformed into a meaningful text. In the third chapter, I discuss the ways in which time and narrative are braided as readers assemble the disparate elements they encounter on the *shōnen* manga page. In Chapter 4, I explore the visceral thrills of reading *shōnen* manga, which are often expressed through notions of the awesome and the epic. Finally, in Chapter 5, I examine the ways in which a group of *shōnen* manga readers known as 'shippers' find love and romance amidst the fighting in *shōnen* manga and demonstrate the legitimacy of these readings by locating them in the material text through the concept of 'canon'.

By attending to reading as an embodied and material practice in this way, the thesis contributes to debates about the relationships between creators, texts and audiences and ongoing attempts to imagine new ways of being critical within cultural and literary studies. Within cultural geography, these kinds of attempts have often been aligned with what might broadly be described as nonrepresentational theories. As such, this thesis attempts to draw out the geographies through which manga texts are realised as manga texts at all.



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Preamble

Geographers have long been interested in reading and literature. There is a long-standing and vibrant tradition of geographic engagement with literary fiction¹. There is also a substantial body of work which traced the reception and influence of various scientific and geographic texts within historical geography². Geographers have also engaged with a whole range of textual forms within popular culture, including film³, music⁴, videogames⁵ and comics⁶. A great deal of the geographical engagement with comics has explored the geopolitical imaginations at work within particular comics or genres⁷ or has sought to position comic book production within wider geographies of the cultural industries⁸. For the most part, geographers have focused on North American or European comics rather than graphic narrative produced in other geographic locations, such as manga (Japanese comics)⁹, *manbwa* (Korean comics) or *manhua* (Chinese comics). In this thesis, I am interested in exploring the geographies of manga in English translation because there is now a well-established industry of English-language adaptation. Manga volumes are now widely available in bookstore and libraries, and they have been adopted into popular cultures, particularly among children and young people in the UK and North America. Indeed, Viz media now publish monthly version of the *Shōnen Jump* and *Shōjo Beat* manga anthology magazines in North America, alongside the bound volumes of manga they market as ‘graphic novel editions’.

As manga have not been extensively studied within geography, there are a number of different ways in which I could have begun to explore the geographies of manga. I could, for example, have begun to explore the geographies of manga¹⁰—

the geographies of manga production, adaptation, distribution, and reception. I could have set out to chart the ways in which manga series change and adapt as they travel through geographic space. This kind of project would link up with existing work about the localisation of Japanese popular culture for consumption in other geographic locations¹¹ and its reception within other cultures¹². Equally, I could have explored the geographies *in* manga—the ways in which places and spaces are represented in particular manga series and the consequences of this. Doing so would have linked up with an existing work on, for example: the portrayal of race in anime and manga¹³, and particularly with regards to whether and why the characters look ‘white’¹⁴; popular cultural representations of Japanese national identity and Japan’s history¹⁵; and the environmental imagination in Japanese popular culture¹⁶.

Instead, in this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the geographies through which manga are realised as manga, or manga as a itself *geographic practice*. Current theoretical debates about the formal qualities of comics and graphic narrative more generally make quite liberal use of a spatial and geographic language; it has become common for comics to be referred to as ‘temporal maps’¹⁷ or to discuss the spatio-topological relations within them¹⁸. I wanted to engage with this literature and work with these ideas in order to properly draw out the geography within this literature. In doing so, I also wanted to connect these ideas from comics theory with the vibrant literature within cultural geography that is concerned with exploring the performative aspects of cultural forms, much of which is associated with so-called nonrepresentational theories¹⁹. By attending in detail to the practices of manga readers in this way, my work does not abandon the other two approaches I identified above. Rather, a focus on the practices through which manga are realised as manga is useful in understanding the geographies *in* and *of* manga.

I wanted to study the everyday reading practices of ‘ordinary’ manga readers in this thesis. That is, I wanted to concentrate on very popular, mass-market versions of the manga form. I decided to concentrate on *shōnen* manga—manga marketed primarily to adolescent boys—because it is the most prevalent and popular form of

manga both within Japan and internationally. In order to keep the project manageable, I chose to focus on three series in particular: Hiromu Arkawa's *Fullmetal Alchemist*, Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto*, and Tite Kubo's *Bleach*. Each of these series is extremely successful within Japan and also in English-translation. *Naruto* is the most commercially successful of the series. It has sold over 100 million copies within Japan²⁰. ICv2, a news organisation that publishes and analyses sales information for manga and other forms of popular culture, listed it as the top-selling manga property in the USA in 2008²¹, 2009²² and 2010²³. Indeed, in 2006, *Naruto* accounted for almost 10% of all manga sales in North America²⁴. *Bleach* has also been a commercial success. By 2008, over 1.2 million copies of the English adaptation had been sold in North America²⁵ and had sold over 52 million copies in Japan by 2009²⁶. ICv2 has ranked the English adaptation of *Bleach* as the fifth most popular manga property in the USA in 2010²⁷. Indeed, Gonzalo Ferreyra, the Vice President of Sales and Marketing for VIZ Media, has commented on the continued strong performance of both series in an increasingly difficult market²⁸. *Fullmetal Alchemist* has also sold over 50 million copies in Japan²⁹, and each individual volume of the series has sold in excess of one million copies³⁰. ICv2 ranked it as the 4th most popular manga property in the USA in 2010³¹.

I wanted to include both weekly and monthly published series in the project as the constraints imposed by different serialisation periods can affect the storytelling conventions used and the reading experience in various ways. Both *Naruto* and *Bleach* are published in the Japanese *Shōnen Jump* magazine and released in chapters between 16 and 20 pages in length each week. *Fullmetal Alchemist* was released in the Japanese *Shōnen Gangan* magazine in monthly installments of between 35 and 40 pages in length. *Naruto* and *Bleach* are also serialised in English in the monthly North American edition of *Shōnen Jump* magazine, which releases 3 chapters each month. Each of the chapters remains identifiable as a chapter in its own right within the magazine. All three series are also released (both in Japanese and English) as a sequence of book-bound volumes.

I have used a range of individual pages, spreads, or sequences from each series as specific examples of the various, and more general, points I make throughout the thesis. Each example is chosen because it allows me to highlight a particular aspect of *shōnen* manga storytelling or the reading practices, but they are also intended to be more generally representative. Indeed, in many cases, I could almost have opened any of the manga volumes of my shelf at random and chosen that page as an example. This is particularly the case for the various examples used in the third and fourth chapters, which discuss techniques and devices that are extremely commonplace in each of the series and in *shōnen* manga more generally. Despite this, the examples were not chosen at random, but are the outcome of my own personal reading of *Bleach*, *Fullmetal Alchemist* and *Naruto* in combination with my analysis with the discussions in the various fan communities I examined.

More specifically, I decided to use the *Fullmetal Alchemist* sequence about the talking chimera the second chapter because the content of the sequence, and the themes developed within it, align closely with the argument I make about the practices involved in reading *shōnen* manga. The sequence also comes from early in the series, which minimises the amount of background information needed for readers to make sense of the story. The processes of braiding become ever more complex as the series stretches on and it is far more difficult to unpick them the further into the series one reads. For the discussion in the fifth chapter, I decided to focus on only one of the series—*Bleach*—to keep the workload manageable. In particular, I decided to focus on the fan discussions surrounding chapters 350 to 354, which encompass Ichigo's mysterious transformation and Ulquiorra's demise. This decision was driven by my analysis of the materials I had been collecting, which highlighted this section as particularly useful in unpicking the different practices of readers and the effects these have on the text.

The thesis have a somewhat unconventional structure. It does not, for example, contain a 'Literature Review' or 'Methodology' chapter. Nor does it contain an 'Introduction' or 'Conclusion'. Instead the thesis is divided into five chapters, with a short preamble and an epilogue. I decided to structure the thesis in this way as I felt it would more successfully, and convincingly, develop the argument in the

thesis. One of the effects of the traditional thesis structure, as well as the rules about thesis layout, is to place all the emphasis on the *content* of the thesis rather than its *form*. However, one aspect of my argument is that texts never *contain* anything; the ‘story’ or ‘argument’ of the text emerges from the practices to which its readers submit the ink they find of the page (or the pixels on a screen). As such, the form and structure of the text is at least as important as the words (and pictures) arranged on the page. I wanted to play with the structure and form of my thesis in order to disrupt the ‘expected’ reading process and thereby emphasise the emergent properties of the text within the practices of reading.

With this in mind, the thesis is divided into five chapters, each of which develops aspects of my argument. The first of these chapters—Monstrous Texts—provides a kind of ‘non-introductory introduction’ to the thesis in that it holds the four other chapters together and ties them to a broader body of debates in human geography as well as literary and cultural studies. Each of the chapters ‘speaks to’ the others, both directly and indirectly, but they can also (to some degree at least) stand alone. Within each of the chapters are a range of floating text boxes, which function largely as diffuse, extended footnotes. The text within these boxes speaks to the ‘main’ text of the chapter it accompanies in various ways; they sometimes develop an example, or complicate the argument, or provide additional information. I’ve used three different types of text boxes: some with grey backgrounds and solid black borders; some with no backgrounds and imperfect black borders; and one box with a black background and white text. The first two box designs are used simply to differentiate between consecutive boxes in an attempt to make the text more readable. The black box is used to discuss the ‘flashback’ techniques used in *shōnen* manga. A common device for indicating ‘past tense’ in *shōnen* manga is to blacken the gutters and the black box is intended to mirror this, albeit imperfectly. The notes accompanying each chapter (sequenced numerically), and each box within it (sequenced alphabetically) can be found at the end of the thesis. I have also included a ‘Glossary’ at the end of the thesis, which explains and defines a range of terms relating particularly to manga and the individual series discussed in the thesis which are likely to be unfamiliar to

geographers or other academics. Each of the terms is explained at some point in the text, but the glossary is intended to help readers to navigate the terminology used within manga reading communities.

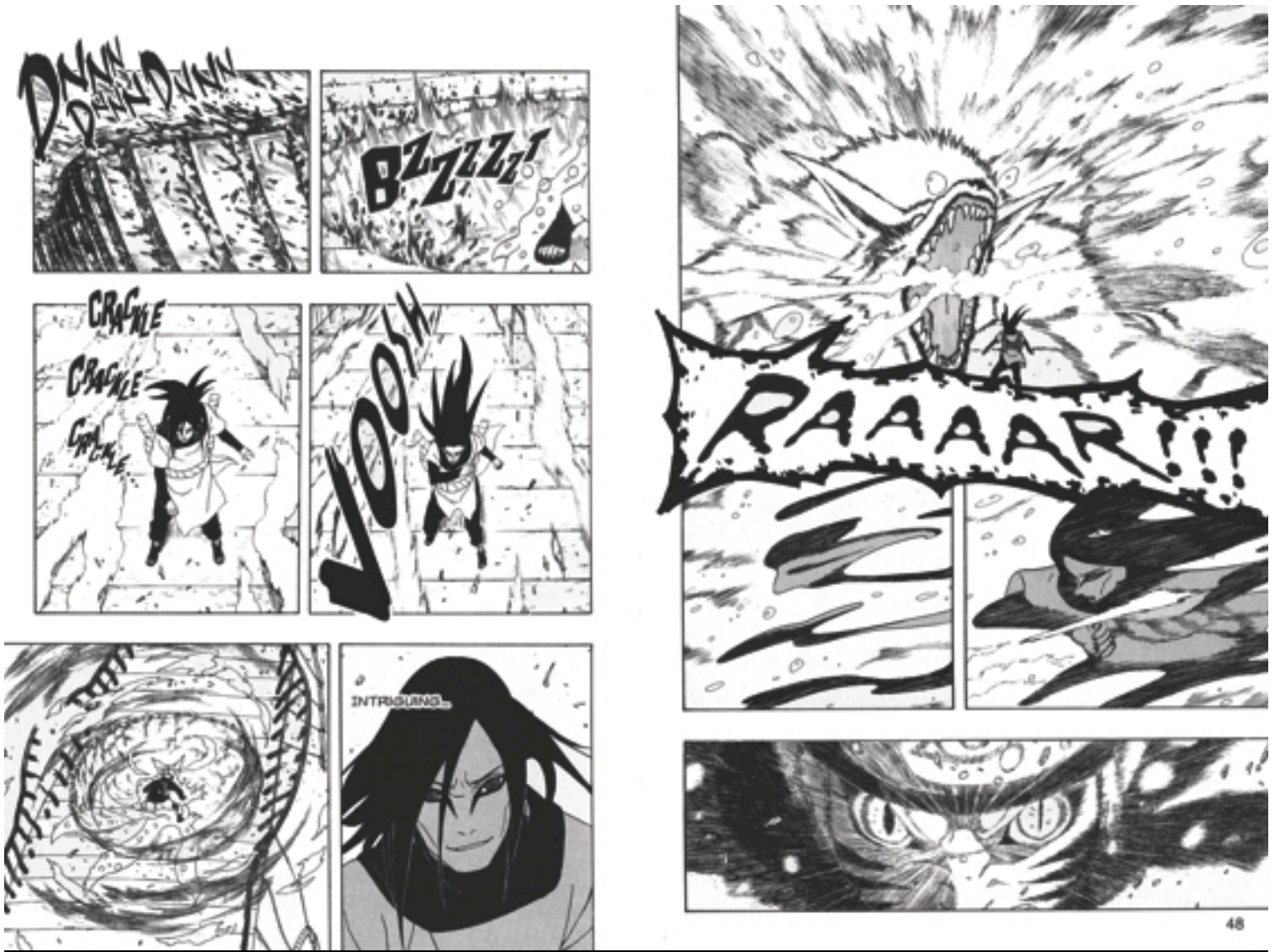


Figure 1.1
 Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 33. Pages 48–48. © Masashi Kishimoto 1999.

1. Monstrous Texts

Monsters no longer swarm in religious imagery, but in science fiction and children’s books. They are not identified—and this must be progress of a kind—with prodigious births, sports of nature, exotic marvels. They have taken up their dwelling inside the minds of people instead, and this poses new problems as to their control.¹

Monsters can be many things. In its contemporary usage the word tends to be used in three, sometimes interrelated, ways: it can refer to all manner of

improbable creatures of myth, fiction and fantasy; inhumanely or outrageously evil people or actions can be termed monstrous; and anything that is considered to be excessively or unnaturally large in size is often called monstrous. As Marina Warner notes in the quotation with which I began this chapter, the term was widely used in the past to refer to people with a range of disabilities, who were considered to be 'monstrously deformed'. This usage has now waned and monsters are largely viewed as creatures of the imagination. Probably due to its connotations of irrationality, the term continues to be used as a term of endearment for children, who are sometimes referred to as 'little monsters' when they are playful, (slightly) naughty or cheeky².

In his work on the philosophy of horror, Noel Carroll defines two types of monster: 'fusion creatures' or hybridized composites of heterogeneous elements, such as the chimera or the basilisk; and 'fission creatures', the heterogeneous elements of which occupy the same body but are not temporarily coincidental in their manifestations (werewolves, for example, are both human and wolf, but not simultaneously)³. In either case, monsters are irrational and excessive. They can be considered to be 'denizens of the borderland'⁴ because they represent the extremities of transgression and indicate the limits of the order of things. While monsters may be grotesque, dangerous and/or impure, this is not what makes them monstrous; their monstrosity derives from their *improbability*. Monsters breach the accepted norms of ontological propriety and do not fit the possibilities conceived within normal science. As a result, in some branches of evolutionary biology unprecedented mutations are termed 'hopeful monsters' because they may herald an entire population of a species to come, which is as yet unnamable⁵.

For Carroll, only 'horrific' monsters can be improbable. He explains that the monsters that inhabit mythologies, folk and fairy tales are neither unnatural nor surprising because they can be fully accommodated within the cosmology in which they occur; horrific monsters are 'extraordinary character[s] in our ordinary world', while the monsters that are found in fairy tales and such like are simply 'ordinary creature[s] in an extraordinary world'⁶. Jacques Derrida explains that we (by which he means humans in general) are afraid of monsters because they

encroach upon our 'ordinary' world. They are creatures with which we are not (pre-)prepared to engage, and whose existence we could not have anticipated⁷. The etymology of the word monster suggests exactly this. It comes to English from the Latin *monstrum*. *Monstrum*, in turn, is derived from a corruption of *moneo* by *monstrare*. This links 'advice', 'reminder' or 'warning' with 'showing'⁸. Monsters reveal something. To meet a monster is to encounter something surprising in the world; it is to discover that the world is not as 'ordinary' or 'familiar' as it might have seemed:

If we pay attention to them, monsters do have something to reveal. They show us the reality of the impossible or the things we label impossible; they point out that the world we think we live in, and the world we actually inhabit, may not be the same place at all.⁹

Monsters expose the difficulty of distinguishing between the 'real' and the 'imagined'. Writing about cinema, Gilles Deleuze argued that the imaginary is a poor concept. The imaginary is not unreal; it is the indiscernibility between the real and unreal. While the two do remain distinct in the imagination, the distinction itself continually shifts around. In this way, Deleuze insists that it is more useful to think of the imaginary as a set of exchanges between the actual and the virtual (both of which constitute the real). As creatures of the imagination, monsters are unexpected, and often unwelcome, migrants from the virtual¹⁰. Thought of in this way, monsters allow us to glimpse the ungraspable¹¹. They reveal the processuality of the world, which is always-already becoming-otherwise. In this sense, monsters are not defined by the extent to which they fit into the world; the world is itself monstrous¹². The monsters that populate myths and fairy tales are no different to the art-horror monsters described by Noel Carroll. They are not 'ordinary' and their worlds are no less enchanted than our own. It is simply that the strange worlds of myth and fairy tale are better able to offer hospitality to monsters because they are not expected to conform to deadened and disenchanting visions of modern life¹³.

Monstrous texts

The worlds of and in *shōnen* manga can prove similarly hospitable to monsters. The three *shōnen* manga series discussed in this thesis are teeming with monsters. Their heroes encounter, and must defeat, all manner of monstrous enemies. Indeed, each of those heroes can be considered to be monstrous himself. Figure 1.1 (at the beginning of this chapter) shows the title character in Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto* struggling to control the dangerous, nine-tailed demon fox that was locked within him in his infancy. At the beginning of the series, the orphaned *Naruto* is shunned by his fellow ninja villagers because of his monstrosity and many of the early chapters are concerned with him struggling to gain acceptance through a mixture of perseverance and the power of friendship. There is an irony in this, given that the monstrosities of the other ninja are routinely celebrated within the village. For example, Shino's special ninja ability comes from allowing his body to have become home to a colony of bugs, which fight for him in battle. Nonetheless, as *Naruto* gains in skill as a ninja and proves to be a loyal and able comrade he is increasingly accepted by the other villagers. Eventually, in chapter 450, they come to celebrate him as a hero and the saviour of the village because of, rather than despite, his monstrosity as the host of the nine-tailed fox demon.

Tite Kubo's *Bleach* follows the adventures of a seemingly ordinary schoolboy, Ichigo Kurosaki. In the first chapter of the series, Ichigo is forced to take on the powers of a Soul Reaper and to fight against malevolent dead spirits. To do so, Ichigo had to blur the line between the living and the dead, and to become neither fully living nor fully dead himself. In the course of his adventures, Ichigo gains an 'inner hollow'—a corrupted soul in addition to his own, uncorrupted, soul—on whose powers he is able to draw to enable him to fight against stronger foes. This inner hollow lends him enormous power, but also transforms him into something that even his friends regard as monstrous and worrying. This transformation is the subject of some of the fan discussion explored in the fifth chapter of this thesis, Ships and Canons.

Similarly, the heroes in Hiromu Arakawa's *Fullmetal Alchemist* have become both less and more than fully human in form as a result of their strange alchemic powers. In an ill-fated attempt to bring their mother back from the dead, Al Elric lost his body entirely. His older brother, Ed, attached his disembodied soul to a suit of armour, which serves as Al's body throughout the series. Ed did not come out of this alchemic disaster unscathed either; he lost his leg and arm, which have been replaced by machinic prostheses known as 'automail'. As a result, Ed's body has become a monstrous combination of human flesh and machine, while Al exists only as an animated armour casing. Monstrosity remains a major theme throughout the series, as Ed and Al struggle with evil forces in a bid to return Al to a fully embodied state. In the next chapter of this thesis, I will 'read' through a section from an early chapter of *Fullmetal Alchemist* in which Ed and Al encounter a fairly deranged State Alchemist, whose speciality is making chimera (monstrous composite beings).

Yet, as we shall see throughout this

Manga

While this thesis is not really concerned with definitions, it is important to explain what manga is. Broadly speaking, manga is what a Japanese person would call those texts we know as 'comics' in English. Yet, the relationship between the two terms is riddled with complexity. By and large, they are composite texts made up of words and pictures which are arranged in panels, word balloons and gutters. 'Graphic narrative' might be a more general term but this is problematic because it reduces the form as a whole to the narrative it may, or may not, convey.

In Japan, all comics are 'manga'. Imported comics from the USA (*Batman* or *The Fantastic Four*, for example) and European *bande dessinée* (such as *Tin Tin*), are 'manga' in the same way as domestically produced titles (like *Naruto* or *Bleach*). In contrast, the English language publishing industry distinguishes between 'manga', 'comics' and 'graphic novels' (longer, more 'literary' versions of the form). This is largely a marketing decision, which

thesis, monstrosity is not simply an issue of plot, theme or characterisation in *shōnen* manga; it is also a matter of form. Manga are composite texts made up of words and pictures, which are arranged in panels, word balloons and gutters. All of these elements can be seen on the manga pages in Figure 1.1. As such, the medium of manga can itself be considered to be at least as monstrous as any of the characters within it. To read manga, readers must offer some hospitality to monsters; indeed they must be willing to summon them and bring them forth by assembling the disparate and seemingly impossible elements they find on the page.

However, that is not to say that readers can or should allow these monsters to run amok. Derrida explains that to welcome a monster is, inevitably, to recognise it as a monster¹⁴. In doing so, you must become accustomed to the monster—and to have it do the same to you. It is in this sense that Rita Felski argues for a recovery of the idea of recognition in literary studies¹⁵. She explains that recognition is an anticipatory practice, rather than a retrospective one. As

both reflects and creates widespread feeling among the readership that there is something distinctive about manga. Aarnoud Rommens makes a broadly postcolonial case for the appropriation of the term ‘manga’ as a loanword within the English language^a. For Rommens, to reduce manga simply to the Japanese variant of the comic is to colonise it, and to render it as nothing more than an exotic—and anomalous—feature of the Euro-American comics constellation. He is concerned that, by extension, only ‘Western’ comics can claim to be ‘true’ comics, and manga becomes nothing more than a deviation from the norm. He prefers manga to be treated as a distinctive medium in its own right, and on its own terms.

Jaqueline Brendt explains that manga is distinguished from other forms of graphic narrative by the institutional and commercial framework in which it is produced. ‘Manga’ and ‘comic books’ describe completely different cultures of production, distribution and consumption^b. In particular, she identifies the crucial role played by

such, it is always perplexing and paradoxical because it brings together and even elides sameness and difference. It is not simply a repetition of that which we already know, but the process through which we come to know. Readers make sense of what is unfamiliar by making connections to what they already know, by assimilating new information into their existing structures of knowledge: 'the joy of recognition is... of knowing *more* than is already familiar'¹⁶.

For Derrida, the act of recognition necessarily legitimates and normalizes the monster and, eventually, masters and tames it. The manga page charges its readers 'to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange'. In so doing, readers must inevitably make some attempt to domesticate this 'monstrous arrivant'; they must 'make it part of the household and have it assume new habits, to make us assume new habits'¹⁷. To live with, and to welcome, monsters is to believe in an enlivened world capable of surprise and to allow oneself to be enchanted 'by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday'¹⁸. For surprise is nothing more than a miss in

the anthology magazines in which manga are serialised, and the extensive role manga series editors play in ensuring that a series is produced on time and in such a way as to appeal to their particular magazine's readership. The distinctive aesthetic and cultural forms of manga are a consequence of the peculiarities of this system of production. For all that contemporary manga has grown out of long processes of cultural exchange, there are very good reasons for attending to the specificities of manga. This is not quite the same as treating manga as a discrete 'medium' in its own right; it is to understand manga as a particular form of graphic narrative, which speaks to Euro-American comics and other forms of graphic narrative without becoming indistinguishable from them.

Indeed, it is important to remember that there is considerable breadth of both genre and subject matter within the manga industry. In Japan, manga tend to be grouped broadly demographically, in terms of the audience to which the magazine in

habitual reception—it is a simple lack of recognition¹⁹. The act of affording hospitality to monsters is important because, in doing so, one is able to welcome the future *as future*. It is to accept the world as more than a set of pre-calculated possibilities to be managed, but as brimming with potential, which is unforeseen and unforeseeable. In Derrida's words:

The future is necessarily monstrous: the figure of the future, that is, that which can only be surprising, that for which we are not prepared, you see, is heralded by species of monsters. A future that would not be monstrous would not be a future; it would already be a predictable, calculable and programmable tomorrow.²⁰

In their monstrosity, then, manga texts are constitutionally open-ended. This seems obvious in the case of ongoing series. Yet, even when serialisation comes to an end and there is no more textual material to be assembled into the story, the work of reading is never really finished. Although it may seem to be a stable material 'thing' (ink on pages, collected into volumes bound as books), Stanley Fish insists that all literature (not simply manga) is a

which they are serialised is aimed. There are differences between the various magazines within each category^c, and also various (sometimes overlapping) sub-genres within each of the demographic categories. Setting aside 'niche market' magazines, manga can be broadly grouped as: *kodomo* (written for children of both genders); *shōnen* (aimed at an audience of teenage boys); *shōjo* (to appeal to an audience of teenage girls); *seinen* (targeted towards men); and *josei* (intended to be read primarily by women). There are notable differences in drawing style, page layout and content between series in each of these categories, such that many readers will often be able to determine whether a series is '*shōnen*' or '*shōjo*' simply by glancing at a page.

In this thesis, I am interested in *shōnen* manga. This is still an enormous category, which encompasses a broad range of genres and subject matters. To narrow things down, I have chosen to focus on three specific series, all of which fall into the fantasy action/adventure

'kinetic art'²¹. For this reason it does not lend itself to static interpretation. For Fish, meaning is always an *event* created in and through the practices of reading. Conceived of in this way, manga can neither stand still, nor can it allow its readers to do so.

Enchantment

Engaging with manga as monstrous in this way runs counter to the dominant tendencies in literary and cultural studies. Eve Sedgwick has noted that what Paul Ricour referred to as the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' seems to have become so rooted in academic practice that any attempt 'to theorise out of anything *but* a paranoid critical stance has come to seem naïve, pious or complaisant'²². She worries about what is lost when paranoia and suspicion become *the* only viable methodology for critical theorising in the social sciences and humanities, rather than simply being viewed as one choice of cognitive/affective practices among many others. However, she does not advocate a return to viewing paranoia as simply a pathology; there are reasons for questioning paranoid practices beyond dismissing suspicions

genre: *Bleach*, *Naruto* and *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Each of the series is extremely popular, long-running, and successful both within Japan and internationally. They are all widely available in English translation (both officially and as fan-produced 'scanlations') and have significant fan-bases in the UK and North America. As in Japan, the readership for each series is far wider than its designation as a *shōnen* series suggests. They are read by people both older and younger than this demographic and by both genders.

I have chosen to focus on these three series simply because they are very popular and widely available. There are various differences between the three series, but they are all reasonably representative of their demographic and genre, both in form and content. It is worth noting some differences between the series, however. *Bleach* and *Naruto* are both published in the Japanese *Weekly Shōnen Jump* (週刊少年ジャンプ) magazine, which means that a new chapter of around 16–20 pages is released each week. *Fullmetal*

as 'delusional or simply wrong'²³. Instead, Sedgwick suggests that we (as academics engaged in critical theorising) should open up to other ways of seeking, finding and organising knowledge in addition to the paranoid practices of the hermeneutics of suspicion.

This is as much an ethical move as it is an epistemological or methodological one. Jane Bennett has argued for the importance of attending to the mood of enchantment that permeates everyday life. She urges scholars to allow themselves 'to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday'²⁴. Bennett suggests that, while enchantment is something that can be encountered in the world, it is also a comportment that can be fostered by giving expression to a sense of play in the world, by developing our 'sensory receptivity to the marvellous specificity of things'²⁵, and by resisting the narratives of disenchantment that have come to characterise a 'critical' stance. As a methodological strategy, enchantment involves an attitude of 'presumptive generosity' and 'affective fascination with a world thought to be

Alchemist is published in *Monthly Shōnen Gangan* (月刊少年ガンガン), which means that a new chapter of between 35 and 40 pages is released each month. Each magazine has a slightly different editorial policy, which is reflected in the series they publish.

Tite Kubo's *Bleach* (ブリーチ) has been serialised in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* since 2001. It follows the adventures of Ichigo Kurosaki, a 15-year-old schoolboy who inadvertently gains supernatural powers and becomes a 'Soul Reaper'. He must use these new powers to rescue his friends, to fight evil and, ultimately, to try to save the town in which he lives. As with all the series published in *Jump*, *Bleach* develops themes of effort, friendship and victory, and often makes use of extreme visual techniques (such as cut-off panels, speedlines and irregular page shapes). At the time of writing, the series stretched to over 400 chapters in length, which had been collected into over 40 bound *tankōbon* volumes. It has been available in (official) English translation since 2004 as a series of

worthy of it'²⁶. Much like the kinds of 'reparative reading' advocated by Sedgwick, Bennett's mood of enchantment compels us to offer hospitality to the world as monstrous because it requires an openness to all manner of surprising encounters for which we can never be fully prepared.

A particular challenge for these projects is the need to find vocabularies that are adequate to the task, such that it does not appear to be an anti-intellectual move. As Sedgwick has noted:

The vocabulary for articulating any reader's reparative motive toward a text or a culture has long been so sappy, aestheticising, defensive, anti-intellectual, or reactionary, that it's no wonder few critics are willing to describe their acquaintance with such motives. The prohibitive problem, however, has been in the limitations of present vocabularies rather than in the reparative motive itself. No less acute than a paranoid position, no less realistic, no less attached to a project of survival, and neither less nor more delusional or fantasmatic, the reparative reading position undertakes a different range of affects, ambitions and risks. What we learn best from

'graphic novel editions' (essentially *tankôbon*). *Bleach* has also been serialised in the monthly North American edition of *Shônen Jump* since 2007.

Fullmetal Alchemist (鋼の錬金術師) is a monthly manga series by Hiromu Arakawa. It was serialised in *Monthly Shônen Gangan* from 2001 to 2010. The series stretched to 108, which will be collected in 26 *tankôbon* volumes. It has been available in (official) English translation since 2006. It follows the adventures of two brothers, Ed and Al Elric in their quest to restore their bodies after a disastrous alchemic attempt to bring their mother back from the dead. *Fullmetal Alchemist* makes far less frequent use of the extreme visual techniques commonly found in *Bleach*, *Naruto* and other *Jump* series. Nonetheless it utilises the same general principles of storytelling characteristic of most *shônen* manga.

Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto* (ナルト) is the longest running of the three series. It has been serialised in *Weekly Shônen Jump* since 1999. At the time of writing, the series stretched to

such practices are, perhaps, the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them.²⁷

For Rita Felski, the imperative is to engage seriously with ordinary forms of and motives for reading. As she explains: ‘We [as scholars] are called upon... to do justice to how readers respond to the words they [the readers we study] encounter’²⁸. This is resolutely not an apolitical or anti-political move; Felski urges literary scholars to think in terms of a ‘politics of articulation’²⁹ through which they can account for the ways in which the meanings of texts change as they make new connections as they are read in particular contexts and for particular purposes. It has become common to view enchantment as antithetical to critical and rational thought. Indeed, the very purpose of criticism within the hermeneutics of suspicion is to demystify and disenchant. Enchantment is too often understood as a ‘bad magic’³⁰ through which popular art disorients and bewitches its audiences. As Rita Felski explains: ‘Disoriented by the power of

nearly 500 chapters in length, which are available in more than 50 *tankôbon* volumes. The series follows the adventures of a young ninja called Naruto, in whose body a powerful demon nine-tailed fox has been imprisoned. It charts Naruto’s attempts to master his ninja powers in the hope of eventually leading his ninja village as Hokage. In the course of his adventures, he must help his friends, fight evil, and even save the entire ninja world. Like *Bleach*, *Naruto* has been available in (official) English translation since 2004 as a series of ‘graphic novel editions’. It has also been serialised in the monthly North American edition of *Shônen Jump* since 2003.

I have focused on the English translations of these series, mostly because I cannot speak (or, more importantly, read) Japanese very well and certainly not well enough for any sustained reading. As a result of these language barriers, this thesis is about the practices of English-speaking readers of these series. For the most part, I have used the official translations (published by VIZ Media), but I have also used some

words, readers are no longer able to distinguish between reality and imagination; deprived of their reason, they act like mad persons and fools'³¹.

In this way, enchantment is often viewed as the domain of fanatics. Critics should be able to avoid the seduction of enchantment to which ordinary readers so easily fall prey. By remaining detached, they are able to subject texts to 'sober and level-headed scrutiny'³² such that they can expose the structures through which they enchant and beguile those less wary. In perhaps less appealing language, Marco Abel urges literary and cultural critics to adopt what he calls a 'masocritical' stance. That is, he urges them to allow themselves to be affected by texts in the first instance, without seeking to judge them. By attempting to suspend or defer judgement, 'masocritics' seek to inhabit 'the moment before subjective interpretation'³³. In this way, they hope to suspend the world they think they know in order to allow a new one to emerge.

Henry Jenkins argues that fan cultures, and the practices of reading within them, are often dismissed by

pages from the original Japanese version (where no English adaptation has currently been released) and some unofficial fan translations, known as 'scanlations' (where I want to discuss the adaptations that fans have made to these pages). Where I have used scanlated versions, I have also included reproductions of the official versions for comparison.

As such, the practices of reading I discuss in this thesis cannot escape issues of translation and cross-cultural interpretation. Indeed, translation and cross-cultural interpretation are often the subject of debates within the fan communities themselves. Within what Henry Jenkins refers to as a culture of 'convergence', 'Western' manga fans find themselves acting as 'pop cosmopolitans' who walk 'a thin line between dilettantism and connoisseurship, between orientalist fantasies and a desire to honestly connect and understand an alien culture, between assertion of mastery and surrender to cultural difference'^d. I will take up this point and discuss its implications at greater length in

literary scholars (if not by those in cultural studies) because fans seem to be particularly susceptible to the lure of enchantment³⁴. Indeed, fans are so

the final chapter of this thesis, *Ships and Canons*.

irrational that they often allow themselves to become ensnared by 'frivolous' texts which are inherently inferior to those 'serious' texts that compose the literary canon. It can be easy for outside observers to (unfairly) dismiss fannish reading practices—and other fannish activities like fan fiction writing, fan art production, or 'cos-play'³⁵—as trivial or nonsensical in this way. However, pathologising fans as a collection of irrational and obsessed individuals simply serves to reinforce elitist views about popular culture and shores up arbitrary hierarchies of taste³⁶. Rather than dismissing fans as 'deviants interacting in bizarre and unhealthy ways with inadequate text', Catherine Tosenberger insists that fan activities should be understood in relation to a long-standing 'tradition of artistic innovation through explorations of pre-existing texts, both high and low'³⁷.

Indeed, the activities of fans and other 'ordinary readers' are not entirely estranged from those of literary and cultural scholars, even if the terms used and the tone of the debate may differ. Jenkins notes that fannish reading practices are all the more troubling to literary or cultural scholars because fans insist on treating the texts with which they engage as if they were works of 'serious' merit:

Reading practices (close scrutiny, elaborate exegesis, repeated and prolonged rereading, etc.) acceptable in confronting a work of 'serious merit' seem perversely misapplied to the more 'disposable' texts of mass culture. Fans speak of 'artists' where others can see only commercial hacks, of transcendent meanings where others find only banalities, of 'quality and innovation' where others see only formula and convention.³⁸

Fans insist on affording popular works of mass culture the degree of attention and appreciation that literary scholarship has traditionally bestowed upon 'canonical texts'. More than this, fans attend so closely and carefully to their chosen texts that they fail to observe an appropriately critical distance from the text. Instead they seek to integrate these popular texts into their own experiences and make them

part of their lives. Jenkins uses a metaphor borrowed from Michel de Certeau³⁹ to develop a theory of fans as 'textual poachers', who take elements from source texts and adapt them to their own needs and ends:

Unimpressed by institutional authority and expertise, the fans assert their own right to form interpretations, to offer evaluations, and to construct cultural canons. Undaunted by traditional conceptions of literary and intellectual property, fans raid mass culture, claiming its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions.⁴⁰

Jenkins insists that this is a theory of *appropriation* rather than *misreading*. Misreading is necessarily an evaluative term, which suggests a hierarchy of authorial meanings over those produced by readers. It also implies that there are proper (schooled and professional) practices of reading that can be clearly distinguished from improper (fannish) strategies. Mafalda Stasi is concerned that Jenkins's metaphor of 'textual poaching' actually works against his aim of getting scholars to take fan activities seriously. She argues that the notion of 'poaching' is problematic because it suggests illegal appropriation, or even outright theft. In this way, it may serve to reinforce the assumed hierarchy between the original text and the 'pirated' fan productions derived from it⁴¹. Rhiannon Bury suggests an alternative metaphor of textual 'gamekeeping' might be more useful. She argues that fans are neither 'uncritical dupes' of the (cynical and predatory) culture industries, nor are they rebellious 'poachers' out to 'hijack' authorial meaning⁴². There is no single 'theological' meaning to be uncovered in a text because texts are always multidimensional sites of intertextual clashes. Yet, in picking up on some of the more unfortunate connotations of Jenkins's poaching metaphor, both Stasi and Bury tend to caricature his argument. Jenkins does not advocate a single, original text; rather he argues for the legitimacy of the many coexisting fan readings that can emerge.

While this work in fan studies has been extremely useful in asserting the open-endedness and multiplicity of textual meaning and the importance of attending to ordinary reading practices, fan scholars (like Jenkins, Stasi and Bury) have

tended to preserve the skepticism that characterises the hermeneutics of suspicion by downplaying the role played by the mood of enchantment in the experiences of non-scholarly readers in favour of their rational and intellectual responses to cultural texts⁴³. In this regard, much contemporary fan scholarship reflects the fears of fans, who are tired of being paraded as fools by cultural and literary scholars. While carrying out this research, a *Naruto* fan known as The1EK raised some concerns about participating in a research project entitled, 'The Sleep of Reason'⁴⁴ insofar as it recalls Francisco de Goya's etchings. 'The Sleep of Reason' is one possible translation of *El Sueño de la Razon Produce Monstruos*, which is Plate 43 within Goya's *Los Caprichos*. Goya's aim in this work was to ridicule 'the multitude of follies and blunders common in every civil society, as well as... the vulgar prejudices and lies authorised by custom, ignorance or interest'⁴⁵. The1EK worried that the aim of my project would be 'to make parodies out of the manga authors or our [the fans'] own interpretations of the manga'. He asked: 'Are we to be made to look like fools to illustrate the common foibles and follies to be found in any civilised society?'

This is far from my purpose in this thesis. I want to take the practices of 'ordinary' readers seriously *without* dismissing the aesthetic experience of enchantment as one of the possible outcomes and motives for reading. In reflecting upon Goya's, *El Sueño de la Razon Produce Monstruos*, Marina Warner ponders the ambiguities of the title, which can be translated as either 'The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters' or 'The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters'. Warner wonders whether Goya meant that monsters are the unfortunate consequence of relaxing the vigilance of reason, or if it is reason itself that dreams up its own monsters and, indeed, longs for them. In this way, she wonders whether monsters arise from the gaps that reason cannot fill, however much we might think we want it to⁴⁶. Monsters are native to the world whether we perceive it to be enchanted or disenchanting. As such, there is no opposition to be made between reason and enchantment. It is perfectly possible to understand ordinary readers as alert and critical without dismissing the joy and attachment they experience in the works they read. As Rita Felski notes: 'there is no reason why our readings cannot blend analysis and

attachment, criticism and love'⁴⁷. Indeed, academic scholars may have much to learn from fans in this regard.

Fans and ordinary reading

While fans may be ordinary readers in the sense that they are not (usually) concerned with the business of professional literary or cultural criticism, there are dangers in taking fan activities as representative of ordinary reading practices. Fans tend to attract attention from cultural and media scholars because they are a convenient group for audience research and, what is more, a group who are often interested in participating in research. However, a fuller understanding of textuality might be achieved by accounting for a broader variety of interactions between text and audience. Jonathan Gray argues that 'non-fans' (people who do engage with a text but only because it is convenient and who do not feel any great investment in that text) and 'anti-fans' (those who actively dislike a text, whether or not they have any direct experience of it) should also be included in audience research. The nature of textuality shifts with the level of audience engagement. This means that cultural scholars must abandon the notion of a solitary and stable text if they are to engage with a variety of motives for engaging with (or refusing to engage with) texts⁴⁸.

Henry Jenkins agrees with Gray on the need to attend to the plurality of textual experience, but he rejects the clear distinction that Gray makes between the practices of fans, non-fans and anti-fans in engaging with a cultural text. Jenkins insists that there is a continuity between fans and a more general audience. While certain reading or viewing practices may have been institutionalised within fan communities, there is as much danger in setting fans apart as a unique type of media audience as there is in viewing fannish practices as emblematic of all audiences. In his studies, Jenkins tries to document the specificity of fan reception as a peculiar—although not completely unique—response to popular works. *Textual Poachers* is concerned with fan cultures and the subjectivities that are caught up within and produced by these collective interpretive communities. The practices of reading are an important aspect of this, but they do not concern

Jenkins in and for themselves. Jonathan Gray complains that cultural analysts too often submerge the text within the identity building projects of its audience rather than studying texts *as texts*⁴⁹. While I do not want to deny the importance of studying fan cultures and fan subjectivities, my interest in this thesis is in the practices of reading and the relationship between these practices and the (*shōnen* manga) text, not with those who read these texts.

Wolfgang Iser explains that to study reading is necessarily to explore the ways in which readers interact with the (formal) structures of a (literary) work. Scholars can learn very little about the processes of reading if they concentrate on either reader psychology or authorial technique. However, the physical text and the reader are far easier to access and analyse than the event that takes place between them; *reading itself is imperceptible*. The task Iser gives to literary scholars, then, is not to explain the work in which they are interested, but to reveal the conditions which bring about its possible effects. It is for this reason that he advocates a 'literary

Shippers in the Mist?

There is much debate within some fan communities and among fan scholars about the ethics of online fan research. In part, this has arisen because fans have so often been cast as cultural dupes and irrational fools by cultural researchers. Many fans are understandably wary of any academic interest in their activities. The debate has also arisen because many fan scholars are also fans themselves, and they contribute to both fannish and academic debate in a variety of ways. Many of these 'aca-fen' do so anonymously, and are concerned about their fannish activities bleeding into and impacting upon their professional careers. Indeed, some fans who are not academics also worry about their online activities being 'exposed' in this way because it may disrupt their everyday activities, both online and offline. Some fans have experienced negative consequences from being cited in scholarly works. As a result, fan researchers have tended to adopt slightly different ethical practices than might be expected of other

anthropology' rather than a theory of 'reader-response'⁵⁰. This argument could easily be expanded and adapted to encompass other kinds of cultural text, including manga.

Scholars interested in fan cultures have often turned to the practices of fan fiction writers and their writings in an attempt to understand something of how readers interact with a cultural text. Sheenagh Pugh argues that all fan fiction must reference, however obliquely, its (canonical) source text otherwise it cannot be fan fiction at all. Fan fiction writing weaves together new stories based upon readings and interpretations of a source text. These readings necessarily remain embedded within the fan fiction writing even where the fan fiction writer sets out to invert various aspects of the source text⁵¹. There has been a tendency within cultural studies to approach fan fiction writing as a set of cultural artifacts, which afford researchers a means of assessing the cultural impacts of texts and the ways in which they are folded into the everyday lives and identities of their fans and readers⁵². Much as Jonathan Gray is wary about subsuming (original) cultural texts

researchers when citing the material that fans post online.

The ethical guidelines produced by the Association of Internet Researchers places different responsibilities upon researchers depending upon whether they are interacting with 'participants' or 'texts' in a research project^a. Material published on the internet can be understood as texts in the same way that printed materials can. For example, researchers are able to make use of electronic journal articles in exactly the same way that they make use of the printed articles. Their responsibilities are simply directed towards the protection of intellectual property, which can be ensured by adhering to a correct citational protocol. However, the notion of 'published text' is more slippery for many of the other kinds of material that can be found online. There is much disagreement about whether online messages should be considered to be private communications between individuals (which may or may not take place in 'public space') or whether they should be approached in the same way as

beneath the activities and identities of their audiences, Pugh argues that fan texts need to be studied, and taken seriously, as texts in their own right. She insists that these texts are interesting and worthy of study beyond the insights they afford into the psychologies of those who read and write them. In doing so, she also refuses to subordinate fan fiction texts to the (source) texts on which they are based⁵³.

Similarly, the activities that take place within fan communities, and particularly those among contemporary internet communities, hold more than psychological or sociological interest (to paint disciplinary concerns with a very broad brush). In online communities, fans write about their readings and read one another's writing. The 'writing-readings' and 'reading-writings' they produce begin to make the collective practices of reading, and the relationships these have to the text itself, both visible and accessible to scholars. Fannish debate and discussion often focuses on the legitimacy of different readings of a series and, indeed, on establishing

conventionally published texts. If they are considered to be private communications, then researchers have an obligation towards the 'participants' in their research (even if they have participated without their knowledge) and they must ensure that they obtain informed consent for this 'participation'^b.

This decision seems relatively straightforward for communications that take place in 'private' spaces on the internet (such as in personal email exchanges, in instant messages, closed chatrooms or social networking spaces that have only been made available to 'friends'). In this case, the researcher has a duty to obtain informed consent from participants as they would if they were carrying out the research offline. The picture is far muddier for materials that are openly accessible to the public, and especially for those materials that can be found in search-engine results. Entries on publicly accessible blogs, forums or social-networking spaces (such as *Livejournal* entries that have not been 'friends-locked') might be considered to be published 'texts' or they may be thought of as akin to conversations

‘proper’ readings of that series. For Iser, individual instances of reading are always an empirical rather than a theoretical matter—they are always particular realisations of a work. Yet, the relationships between reading and the text that are demonstrated in these readings have implications for the status of the text itself and how we understand reading as a practice.

In this thesis, I make much use of various online fan readings—by both *Bleach* and *Naruto* fans—as a means of understanding what the practices of reading do to the manga text. These online reading-writings are not the only way to approach reading as an object of study. We can study reading by doing it, and by writing about our practices of reading. Before I began my PhD, I did not read manga at all. In the course of this research, I had to learn how to read manga. I began reading manga and, over time, I became proficient at reading manga (in English, if not in Japanese). In addition to my individual attempts to learn to read manga, I also took part in some group manga-reading sessions with colleagues at the University of Edinburgh. In these sessions, we tried

overheard in public space. In this case, it is more difficult to determine whether researchers have a duty to obtain informed consent, or if it would simply be more ‘polite’ if they were to ask for permission to cite material^c.

This is a very big issue in fan communities, particularly on the social-networking/blogging site *Livejournal*. Fans and ‘aca-fen’ (those who are both academics and fans) disagree about whether it is ‘fair use’ (a term from US copyright law) to cite publicly accessible *Livejournal* posts without asking for permission first. Lolaraincoat (an ‘aca-fan’) insists that it is ‘not good academic ethics and it’s inadequate citational practice’ to cite such posts as if they were texts; she believes that researchers have a duty to ask for permission first because ‘[w]ords posted to a social networking site are not the same thing as published words (even published words on the internet)’^d. Other fans and ‘aca-fen’ think differently. Regan_v believes that any unlocked *Livejournal* post must be ‘considered free for “fair use” in other people’s work’. To insist

to read manga together and talked about what we were doing when we read that manga. During these sessions I often had to ‘teach’ others how to read these monstrous texts printed ‘the wrong way’ on the page with which I had become familiar. This process of learning to read manga, talking about it, sharing it with others, as well as producing my own reading-writings has informed the discussion throughout this thesis.

How the story goes⁵⁴

In the next chapter—(Fullmetal) Alchemy—I ‘read’ through a short section of *Fullmetal Alchemist*. This section follows Ed and Al as they make the horrific discovery that Shou Tucker has attempted to advance his military career by making a talking chimera (a monstrous composite beast) by fusing his daughter, Nina, and their dog, Alexander. Yet, it is not simply the alchemy *in* the story that produces a monster; the story itself is chimeric because it emerges from an impossible transformation of words and pictures dispersed in panels separated by gutters. To understand how readers

otherwise would be hypocritical, given that ‘the reworking of canon and the creation of transformative works’ is the ‘raison d’être’ of many fan activities^e. Spiletta⁴² goes further than this. She argues that it is not simply wrong for fans to insist on being asked permission when their publicly accessible posts are cited; they risk damaging the fan communities they seek to protect:

Fandom will fight tooth and nail for the right to create derivative works, so any member of fandom that posts something in public and then wants to object to their work being cited in a way that clearly falls under Fair Use is not only wrong, but is also behaving in a way which is hurtful to the community at large.^f

Despite these concerns, many fan scholars have adopted the practice of asking for permission to cite fan materials (or, at least, offering fans the opportunity to decline to be cited). This has become editorial policy for *The Journal of Transformative Works* and it is something that is often

assemble the story from these disseminated fragments, I draw upon Eric Livingston's notion of reading as an *alchemic* process from which the text emerges, but which obscures its own working⁵⁵. I use the term 'alchemy' rather than simply 'imagination' or 'imaginative production' because I want to emphasise the transformation that the action of reading produces in the text itself (rather than in the reader).

We tend to think of texts as repositories for meaning; the meaning is put into the text by a creator so that it can be accessed by anyone competent enough to read it. Yet all we (as readers) really encounter in texts are splashes of ink arranged on the page (or pixels arranged on a screen, in the case of those reading online). By subjecting these splashes to the action of reading, texts become meaningful to such an extent that this meaning—which we encounter as a story in *Fullmetal Alchemist*—seems to inhere in the text itself. Something resembling the story that the *mangaka* intended to tell can emerge from this process of transmutation because reading is a resolutely social process. For all that

insisted upon by fan scholars reviewing for other journals. As this has become something of an ethical norm in the field, I have offered any of the fans who have been cited in this thesis the opportunity to decline to be cited here wherever it was possible to contact the poster. While many posters did not respond (possibly because they no longer use the forum or *Livejournal* account on which they originally posted), no-one I contacted declined. Many fans wanted to know what it was I would be citing and for what purpose, but in general they were enthusiastic about having their ideas included. Indeed, a *Bleach* fan known as Debbiechan was quite enthusiastic about the possibility of what she described as a 'shippers in the mist' style ethnography of fans and shippers (see chapter 5, Ships and Canons).

In addition to looking at the reading-writings posted by the fans themselves, I invited *Naruto* fans who used the *One Manga* forums to contribute to a discussion about some changes made to some *Naruto* pages after their original publication (see chapter 4, Still Life). After gaining

reading appears to be a quiet process that individuals undertake in isolation, the practices of reading are acquired and maintained within larger communities of practice. Shared knowledge of these practices enables *mangaka* to disperse their stories such that readers are likely to find them in the material texts (the ink on pages) that they encounter. In this sense, the practices of reading and writing are inextricably entangled.

Chapter 2 is concerned with exploring how readers are able to work with the scattered elements they find on the pages of the manga they read—the words and pictures, the panels and gutters—as they find (and make) meaning in manga texts. In chapter 3 —Irresponsible Pictures—I look in more detail at one aspect of this alchemy, the relationship between

space on the manga page and time in the manga story. Using examples from *Bleach*, *Fullmetal Alchemist* and *Naruto* alongside the advice and guidance that Scott McCloud had for aspiring comics creators in *Making Comics*, I explore the geography through which manga are realised as manga. Current thinking in comics theory is dominated by variations on the idea that, through the action of reading, space on the comics page is realised as time in the story. However, this assumes a linearity of both time and narrative that does not really account for the complexities of assembling a story dispersed in panels. I argue that both time and

permission from the website administrator (Greg) I posted a thread on the *Naruto* section of the forums in which I asked posters how they thought the changes affected the reading experience. I referred them to pages on my website which hosted images of the pages and explained more about the project and what participating in the exercise would entail. I received responses from 16 posters, who shared their thoughts with me and responded to the thoughts shared by others. In this sense, the exercise was something akin to holding an open-invitation focus group on a publicly accessible website. Some of the discussion that arose in this exercise also informed the argument in chapter 3 (Irresponsible Pictures).

narrative are braided in manga, such that reading is always both prospective and retrospective, but always contingent.

In chapter 4—Still Life—I look at the embodied experience of reading manga: the almost visceral thrills that readers derive from the process of assembling the elements they encounter on the page. Starting off by thinking through some changes Masashi Kishimoto made to the final two pages of *Naruto* chapter 195, I attempt to think through the ways in which action-adventure *shōnen* manga—and particularly those series published in *Jump*—provide readers with an intensive reading experience they describe as ‘awesome’, and ‘epic’. I look particularly at techniques that create synaesthetic dynamism in the *mise-en-page* (or page design) in *Bleach* and *Naruto*. Yet, in doing so, I do not simply place issues of ‘technique’ and ‘affect’ into the hands of the *mangaka* alone. The visceral thrills of reading *shōnen* manga are the outcome of the curious alchemy that the practices of reading work on the text itself. They are the outcome of the combined (if asynchronous) efforts of creators and readers.

As I noted earlier, specific instances of reading are always achieved within particular communities of practice. In the final chapter of this thesis—Ships and Canons—I look at the practices of a particular kind of *shōnen* manga reader: the ‘shipper’. *Shōnen* manga are written primarily for an audience of teenage boys, but they are read much more widely than this. The majority of shippers are female, and many of them are older than is average for the readership. Their reading practices, and the readings that emerge from them, are by no means representative of the readership as a whole. In this way, the activities of shippers are interesting because they show how myriad readings can be found in, and are supported by, the text itself. In chapter 5, I look specifically at the practices of *Bleach* shippers and the ways in which they use the concept of ‘canon’ to debate and negotiate between numerous competing readings of the text. Whereas in literary scholarship the term canon refers to the legitimacy of the text itself (its acceptability as a ‘serious’ work of literature), the fannish term ‘canon’ refers to the legitimacy of a reading of the text. In their discussions of ships and canon, then, *Bleach* shippers expose the inconclusiveness of the text.

Given that this is a thesis about the open-endedness of texts—and particularly about the ways in which texts, including manga texts, emerge from the combined activities of readers and writers—writing a conclusion seemed a fairly ludicrous conceit. No text—be it a manga, a thesis or something else entirely—can lay claim to the self-sufficiency and completeness that come with a ‘conclusion’. As serialised media, it seems obvious that (ongoing) manga texts are constitutionally open-ended. Yet, even when their serialisation comes to an end and there is no more textual material to be assembled into a story, the work of reading is never truly finished. Manga may seem to be a solid, material ‘thing’—ink on pages, which are collected and bound as books—but the stability and seemingly intrinsic meaningfulness of texts is illusory. As Stanley Fish explains:

The objectivity of the text is an illusion and, more over, a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically convincing. The illusion is one of self-sufficiency and completeness. A line of print or a page is so obviously there—it can be handled, photographed, or put away—that it seems to be the sole repository of whatever value and meaning we associate with it... This is of course the unspoken assumption behind the word ‘content’. The line or page or book contains—everything.⁵⁶

As Wolfgang Iser explains, meaning is always an *event*—a dynamic happening⁵⁷—created in and through situated practices of reading. Manga texts do not feature a pre-given reality (to be recovered by a sufficiently competent reader); the action of reading effects a transformation of the pre-given material on the page⁵⁸. It is my argument in this thesis that this is always an impossible, and *monstrous*, transformation, even if reading seems to be a mundane and straightforward activity to most competent readers. Instead, the thesis ends with a short epilogue in which I think through the connections between it and other scholarly work and indicate some directions for future work.

In this way, I hope to build upon the kinds of work in literary and cultural studies discussed in this chapter, in an attempt to envisage other ways of being critical beyond the hermeneutics of suspicion and what Abel calls ‘representationalist’ practice. Abel distinguishes his ‘masocritical’ project from existing studies of

literary and filmic violence on the basis of his methodological (and even ontological) assumption that:

[S]ynalectic materials of any kind are not representations *of* something but, instead, constitute the *reality* of representations (or the real forces at work in what are often deemed representations). Put differently, unlike other critical studies of violence in literature and film, mine does not frame the encounter with violent images in terms of signification and meaning (mediation) but, instead, in terms of affects and force—that is, asignifying intensities.⁵⁹

Within geography, the attempt to develop the affirmative potential of criticism has largely been taken up by those working with what have been termed ‘nonrepresentational’ theories. Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison explain that geographers working with nonrepresentational theories are interested in the emergence of worlds as a result of ongoing practices and performances⁶⁰. They argue that, while nonrepresentational theories are inevitably diverse and do not combine to produce a coherent theory, they are united by a primary concern for the relations that make up the world. This requires more than a simple assertion that phenomena are constituted relationally; ‘it becomes necessary to think through the specificity and performative efficacy of different relations and different relational configurations’⁶¹. The task for geographers working within this ‘tradition’ is to explain how relations are assembled (and reassembled) such that the social holds together. In this sense, the social cannot be offered as an explanation; it must, itself, be explained.

It might seem odd that a thesis about texts and the practices of reading them should be concerned with something that can be described as *nonrepresentational* theories. However, nonrepresentational theories do not seek to abandon representation entirely; they approach representation as a set of practices and, as such, seek to ‘redirect attention towards the material compositions and conduct of representations’⁶². Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift have argued that the turn towards the ‘performative’ in the social sciences and humanities generally (as well as within human geography specifically) has not caused scholars to abandon texts and

writing. Rather, it has emphasised the need to attend to ‘the spaces of writing themselves’⁶³. They identify three broad types of work in this regard: work which attends to the performativity of writing, and which views writing as ‘a space to be travelled and negotiated’⁶⁴; work which explores the corporeality of texts; and attempts to map the spaces of writing and to produce ‘literary maps’⁶⁵.

In this thesis I hope to produce some (monstrous) combination of these three concerns by closely examining the ways in which manga texts are made meaningful in and through the practices of their readers. I attempt to unpick the geography of *shōnen* manga as a form of writing, and the various chapters explore the ways in which *shōnen* manga texts map the relations from which the manga story emerges. The manga story, or the reading of that manga, is never truly in the text (however much it might appear to be to those who have read it, or assumed to be by those who have yet to) but it can never be entirely autonomous of it (it cannot be completely separated from the ink on pages that we encounter as a manga text). Meaning is always in the impossible position of being both absent and present at the same time.

Anderson and Harrison argue that nonrepresentational theories are, or should be, attentive to entities that are both present and absent in this way—for example, affective atmospheres and virtual memories—and the role that they play in constituting the world. For example, geographers working with these theories have explored affect as it is implicated in embodied experiences of boredom⁶⁶ or pain⁶⁷ and in cultural practices of listening to music⁶⁸, playing videogames⁶⁹, and travelling by rail⁷⁰ or air⁷¹ (among others). This thesis contributes to this kind of work by attending to the role that affective atmospheres play in the synaesthetically visceral experiences of reading *shōnen* manga. At the same time, I am wary of estranging the affective and the cognitive (or, indeed, of ignoring the myriad other ways of knowing or experiencing the world). Affect is caught up in the production of meaning in the manga text, alongside cognition, imagination, disposition and much else. In this sense, meaning does not only belong to or derive from processes of cognition; it emerges from a curious alchemy that is cognitive,

imaginative, affective and more (and which is reducible to none of its constituent elements).

In this way, I seek to rehabilitate and reclaim meaning within the broader debates surrounding nonrepresentational theories. I also attempt to move away from the kinds of 'layer-cake' models which Clive Barnett is concerned cement, rather than problematise, the deterministic power of cultural texts⁷². I do not wish to position affect as some kind of 'pre-personal' force that underlies 'subjectification' and/or 'reason'⁷³. Instead, I want to attend to the difficult task of thinking the affective as already contextualised by experience, even if that experience cannot be contained by cognition and language. The affective qualities of *shônen* manga are not contained by the text any more than meaning is; they arise from the practices of readers in their encounters with the elements on the manga page. Creating *shônen* manga, then, cannot be a matter of 'capturing forces' of affective intensity (as Abel claims, for example⁷⁴) any more than it can be a matter of capturing meaning. *Mangaka* are able to produce texts which are likely to have a particular effect on readers because they share knowledge and experience of the reading practices to which their texts are likely to be submitted. My aim in the following chapters of this thesis is to unpick the work of reading *shônen* manga to think through the ways in which stories, characters and affects emerge in practice. In this way, I hope to detail the monstrous geographies through which *shônen* manga are realised as *shônen* manga.



Figure 2.1

Hiromu Arakawa. *Fullmetal Alchemist* Vol 2. Pages 26–27. © Hiromu Arakawa/SQUARE ENIX 2002.

2. (Fullmetal) Alchemy

Fullmetal Alchemist is a popular manga series set in a fictional universe, which is loosely based on Europe during the industrial revolution. As young children, the protagonists, Ed and Al Elric, damaged their bodies in an alchemic attempt to resurrect their

Reading the wrong way

All of the English-adaptations used in this thesis (whether official or scanlated) are ‘unflopped’ localisations. This means that the

dead mother: Ed lost an arm and a leg, which he replaced with biomechanical ‘automail’, and Al lost his entire body. He survived as nothing more than a soul alchemically attached to a suit of armour. At fifteen, Ed decided to become a State Alchemist—to put his pseudo-scientific and semi-magical alchemy at the service of the military—in order to gain access to resources that might enable him to restore his and his brother’s bodies. As a State Alchemist he is known as the ‘Fullmetal Alchemist’.

I want to start this chapter by reading through a few pages from early in the series—from chapter five, to be precise—in order to think through how stories are told, and read, in the fragmented mixtures of panels and gutters, words and pictures that we know as manga (and, indeed, in graphic narrative more generally). After reading through these pages, I will use ideas from comics theory, children’s literature and theories of visual culture to think through the work that goes into producing a story in *shōnen* manga.

In chapter five of *Fullmetal Alchemist*, Ed and Al visit Shou Tucker—the

panels, and the pictures within them, remain in the original Japanese format, which reads from right to left, starting in the top right-hand corner. They have not been mirror-imaged to read in the direction in which English-speakers would usually read (from left to right). To prevent confusion, the back page of an ‘unflopped’ manga translation—or what would be the front page in a normal English-language book—often has a set of reading instructions for readers unfamiliar with the format. In titles published under their *Shōnen Jump* imprint, VIZ Media also include an editorial note explaining why the pages have not been flopped:

By flopping pages, U.S. publishers can avoid confusing readers, but the compromise is not without its downside. For one thing, a character in a flopped manga series who once wore in the Japanese version a T-shirt emblazoned with ‘M-A-Y’ (as in ‘the merry month of’) now wears one which reads ‘Y-A-M’! Additionally, many manga creators in Japan are themselves unhappy with the process, as some feel the mirror-imaging of

‘Sewing-Life Alchemist’—in the hope of learning something useful from his research. Tucker is a biological alchemist, and an expert in chimera: monstrous composite beasts. In these pages, the boys return to Tucker’s house for a second day’s study (the pages are shown in Figures 2.1 to 2.4).

Pages 26–27

The first panel (Figure 2.1) is only partially framed and shows dark clouds and a rumbling onomatopoeia. In the next panel, we see Ed Elric looking up at the sky and remarking that it is going to rain, while Al Elric rings the doorbell. We know that this is the Tucker house because we saw Roy Mustang ring the same doorbell when he took the Elric brothers to the house the previous day (on page 12). Having received no answer, Al opens the door slightly and calls out to Tucker, who should be expecting them. There is nothing inherently

unusual about these events, but the scene feels ominous. This is partly because the onomatopoeia—rumbling thunder, creaking doors, hushed corridors—and the dark shadows create a foreboding atmosphere. As ‘ordinary’ readers encountering these pages within our reading of the chapter in its entirety, we also contrast this atmosphere with the welcome the boys received the previous day when they arrived at a busy—and messy—family home, complete with a dog and boisterous

their art skews their original intentions.^a

This text appears on the inside back cover of all the *Shōnen Jump* series published by VIZ Media. Mirror-imaging seems to expose inconsistencies in artwork that were imperceptible in the original. Accordingly, some artists, and the companies that publish their work, only allow their work to be licensed for publication abroad if they will be published with their original layout. VIZ Media only gained the license for its *Shōnen Jump* titles because they agreed to publish them in the original reading direction^b. The economics of producing unflopped manga—which can be produced quicker and at lower cost than flopped manga—have also contributed to its current dominance of English-language manga publishing^c.

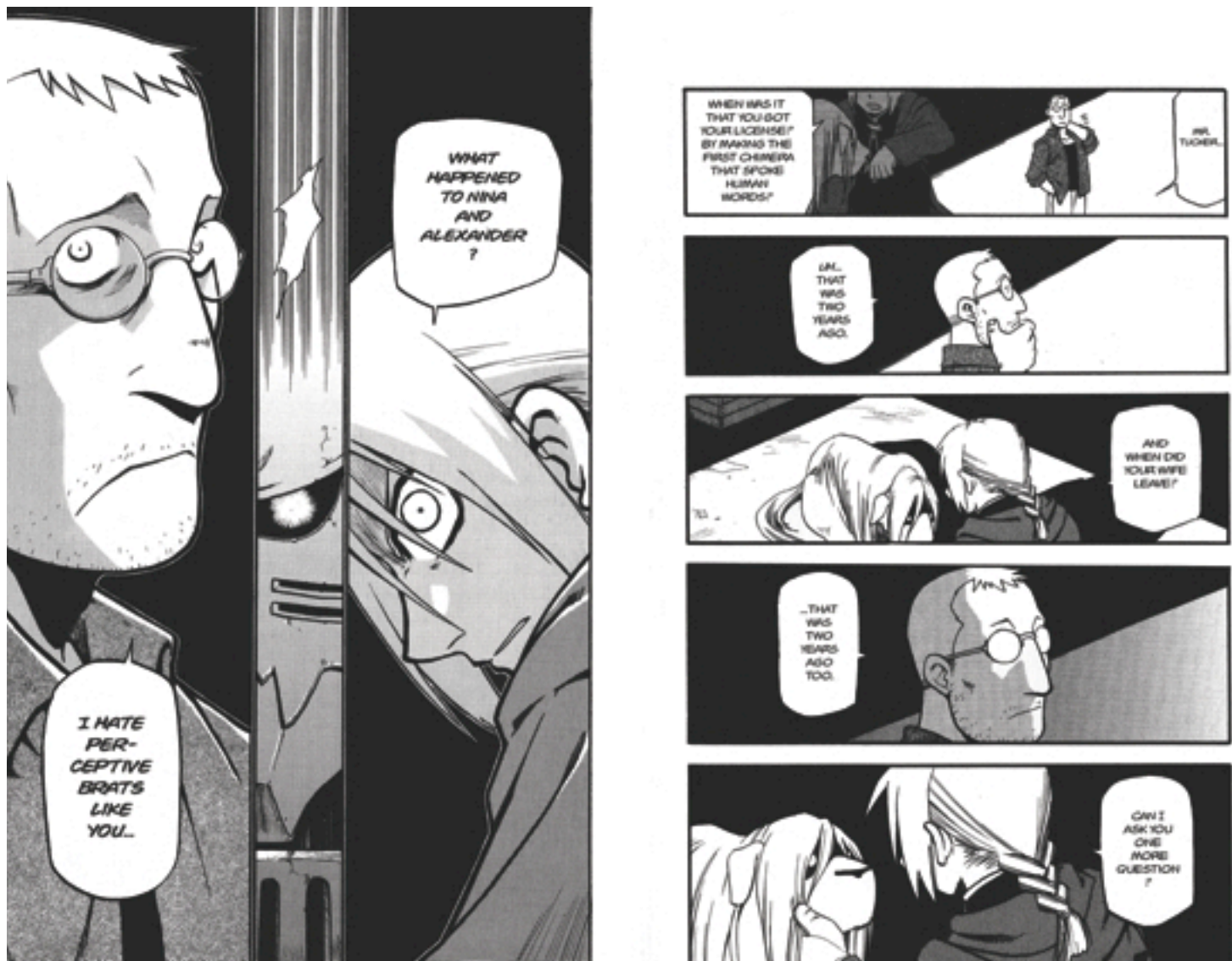
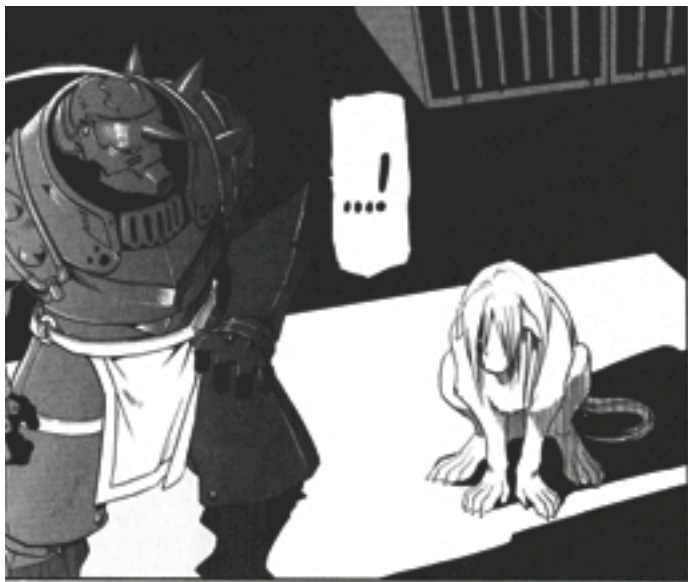


Figure 2.3
 Arakawa. *Fullmetal Alchemist* Vol 2. Pages 30–31.

and comes in for a closer look. The chimera continues to repeat Ed’s name while Tucker explains his luck in producing the talking chimera just in time for his annual assessment—poor performance in which will lead to the loss of his State Alchemist license, and the generous research funding (and lifestyle) that goes with it. The chimera moves from repeating, ‘Edward’, to call Ed, ‘Big...bruh...ther’. Ed reacts with shock, which is emphasised by the whiteness of his widened eyes against the grainy screentone laid over him. It is common for younger Japanese children to refer to older boys as ‘big brother’¹, whether they are related or not. The previous day, Tucker’s—now absent—preschool-aged daughter, Nina, had been addressing both Ed and Al in this way.



33



32

Figure 2.4
Arakawa. *Fullmetal Alchemist* Vol 2. Pages 32–33.

Pages 30–31

Over the page (Figure 2.3), Ed examines the chimera gently while he interrogates Tucker in a series of panels that get progressively taller as they switch between views of Ed and Tucker until the final panel bleeds off the bottom of the page. Ed establishes that Tucker got his State Alchemist license two years previously by making his first talking chimera. Earlier in the chapter, we learned that all that unhappy creature said was, ‘I want to die’ (page 11). At the same time—two years ago—Tucker’s wife left him and his daughter. With this timeline established, Ed wants to ask one final question: he wants to know where Nina and Alexander (the Tucker’s dog) are. Ed is angry, and Tucker responds despondently that he hates

perceptive brats like Ed. From the narrow panel squeezed between the panels containing Ed and Tucker, it might appear that Al shares Ed's anger since he has a strange glow in his (eyeless) eyeholes. But Al is not as perceptive as his brother.

Pages 32–33

On the next page (Figure 2.4), Ed pushes Tucker against the wall. Al is shocked at this outburst. As he holds Tucker against the wall, Ed explains that Tucker made the talking chimera, on which his State Alchemist career is based, by human experimentation (something which is forbidden by both law and custom). He used his wife in the first instance, and now he has turned his daughter and the family dog into a chimera. It is only at this point that Al realises what has happened, although he is not enraged like his (more hotheaded) older brother. The confrontation continues over the next few pages and by the end of the chapter Tucker has been stripped of his State Alchemy license and the wretched Nina-Alexander chimera has been put out of its misery by what appears to be the mysterious new 'villain' of the series. Although, as I hope to demonstrate in relation to any kind of reading of a series, the designation of a character as a series 'villain' is only ever a tentative conclusion which is contingent upon the information available to the reader at the point of reading. This is particularly the case in *Fullmetal Alchemist* because one of the themes of the series is the difficulty in distinguishing categorically between good and evil, heroes and villains.

Reading

So far, so very obvious. All I have done is 'read' what can plainly be read from these pages. Nothing more. The practices of 'ordinary' reading—not the carefully cultivated praxis of 'academic' or 'critical' reading, but the lay skills of everyday reading—are familiar to us, unremarkable even. As a practice, reading is completely undisguised. Yet, it is curiously mystified. The detailed work of reading, as a practice, is often overlooked (and certainly undervalued) in comparison to its transcendalising achievement: the read-text and the meaning it appears to contain². For Eric Livingston, reading is similar to arithmetical

calculation in that its 'lived, practical and reflexive character' is obscured by the outcome of the practice. In arithmetical computation the process of arriving at an answer, and the possibilities for getting there differently, tend to disappear in comparison to the 'correct' answer. This 'right' answer seems to have always been embedded within the calculation and needed only to be released by someone who was sufficiently competent at arithmetic. In much the same way, the mundane practices of reading appear to reveal what the text says. This reading seems to have always already awaited the competent reader within the text.

This is less the case for people who are learning to read. Reading is a programmatic part of primary schooling (at least in the 'Western' world where children are required by law to attend school if their parents do not make other suitable arrangements to provide for their education). For novices, reading involves a conscious effort to decode individual words on the page using a variety of phonetic and other strategies, which they are taught at school. In doing so, readers are able to transform the collections of letters they encounter on the page into words. Thus decoded, the text has still not been read. The task remains to figure out what a text actually says; readers must discover the *meaningful* text within the words (and punctuation marks) on the page. Again, school children are explicitly taught comprehension, although this part of the reading process is less visible—or, at least, less audible—than the decoding of individual words.

As children progress through school—those who do anyway—these practices of reading should become automatic to the extent that they go unnoticed unless something draws attention to them: a grammatical error or a spelling mistake; a particularly baroque writing style; or even a page layout that forces them to read the 'wrong' way. Such aberrant texts produce a kind of 'breaching experiment'³. By transgressing the expected order of the text, 'problems' and 'mistakes' make the (hitherto unnoticed) process of ordering that text visible. Problems and mistakes draw attention to the practices of reading through which the text can be discovered within the elements encountered on the page (the ink formed into letters and punctuation marks, and arranged sequentially such that they form words, sentences and paragraphs). In ethnomethodology, such 'breaches' are used

as a means of investigating the production and maintenance of social order through everyday practices and interactions.

Livingston explains that a text emerges from, and is discovered within, the processes of reading. Ordinary reading seems unremarkable because once a reading—or a pairing between reading and text—has been found within a text, that text seems to say what it can very obviously be read as saying. The work of reading—the transformation that reading effects in the ink on the pages—recedes into the background, such that the reading seems to reside in the text itself, even before the text was read. In this way, the reading appears to be an anonymous discovery which is available to any (sufficiently competent) reader.

Livingston is particularly interested in ‘poetic objects’ (which are not confined to the literary category of poetry) because they problematise the apparent straightforwardness of reading and displace the trust we place in texts. Poetic objects draw attention to the practices of reading, and the ways in which they overtly shape the text that can emerge from them. As he explains:

The poetic object...first appears as something different from an ordinary text; its promised achievement is a reorganisation of the skills of reading from within which the reading of the text will be evident...Reading a poetic object's text is similar to walking down a sidewalk with a friend and finding oneself on the grass, heading for the curb.⁴

Poetic objects force readers to attend to the practices of reading overtly, and to develop methods that will enable them to *actively* find meaning in texts.

In critical reading, literary terms—such as, ‘irony’, ‘allegory’ and ‘metaphor’—serve as apparatuses for describing the orderliness of reading's work. These terms enable what Livingston calls ‘deeply reasoned’ readings of texts to be produced. For example, Livingston explains that critical readings of Anthony's speech at Caesar's funeral in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* often describe the use of the word ‘honourable’ as ‘ironic’. However, the irony does not subsist within the word itself; it emerges from the way in which the speech is read—and contextualised—within

the play as a whole. In this way, determining the word as ‘ironic’ affords a ‘critical’ reading of the play, but it does so only by abstraction. To place ‘honourable’ within the category of ‘irony’ is to flatten out the specific qualities—the ‘thisness’—of the relationships between ‘honourable’ and the rest of the text. These kinds of literary terms enable an ‘instructed reading’, which distorts the ordinary skills of reading, although in no crude way. Livingston contends that instructed readings are often ‘elegant’ achievements that allow any competent—and sufficiently tutored—reader to read a literary text ‘properly’.

Alchemy

However, instructed readings can only ever be projected; they are never fully realised. Livingston explains that the poetic object can only ever be the *promise* of an instructed reading because no issue of reading is ever fully settled. Critiques, alternative readings, and new perspectives emerge from the gap between the projected achievement—the wholly understood text—and the instructed reading. Poetic objects are interesting because they confront us with the limits of our literacy: we may not struggle to decode the words, but we must strive to find the poetic object within the writing we encounter on the page. Paul Magee (a poet and literary theorist) uses poetry itself to explain how poems touch our ‘illiteracies’ by forcing us to attend to the work of reading as a skilled practice.

To read lines such as these
you need first to experience
your own ability to read certain
things, which is to say, you
need to experience your own illiteracy.
Each successful poem is a reminder
of the fact that we still don’t know
how to read.⁵

Here, two (otherwise unproblematic) sentences are broken up strangely across the lines of the poem. As readers, we have to overcome the idiosyncrasy of the line breaks in order to find the sentences and the meaning of the poem. Shane Smith, a

student of Magee's, argues that comics can be similarly poetic because they force us to *extract* information rather than merely absorbing it.

Smith's argument is based on the notion that comics communicate through visual language. He contends that, while most of us spend many years at school learning to read written texts and understand oral language, we lack such training in deciphering 'visual language'. This argument simplifies the issue in at least two ways: it ignores the important role that pictures, and picturebooks, play in the development of literacy, and it dismisses outright the role that written text often plays in comics. Young children's first contact with books often takes place through picturebooks, and many primary schools teach reading through one or more structured reading schemes⁶. The balance of words and pictures in these books alter as children progress through the scheme so that children begin by reading mostly (or wholly) pictorial books, and move through progressively more 'wordy' stories to the point where they are reading books with no illustrations at all. They may move on from any particular reading scheme before this point, but the principle remains the same regardless.

Jaqueline Brendt explains that comics tend to be approached in one of two ways: they are dismissed as a simplistic, childish and comforting medium that reduces complexity and operates primarily through redundancy; or they are celebrated as a challenging medium in which the seemingly incompatible—words and pictures—are united⁷. Both approaches are problematic; comics do have much potential—a great deal of which does stem from the ambiguous status of words in the blurring between the verbal and the pictorial—but experienced readers can, and do, read them easily, and quickly. For example, Frederik Shodt claims that experienced manga readers often read an anthology magazine of 320 pages in length in around 20 minutes, at an average speed of 3.75 seconds a page⁸. Whether or not these calculations are correct, the speed at which comics are both (mass) produced and consumed works to obscure any complexity in the interactions between word and picture in them and to solidify the position of those who would simply dismiss them as worthless ephemera⁹.

It is not my intention in this thesis to defend manga (or graphic narrative more generally) as a medium, nor am I interested in celebrating the ‘superiority’ of comics over other media. I simply want to suggest that the notion of ‘poetic’ need not equate with ‘difficult’ or ‘elite’. There is sometimes a tendency (in both society and the academy) to rarify, and even to fetishise, poetry such that it is deemed especially ‘worthy’ of ‘critical’ attention¹⁰ from those ‘intellectual’ enough to read it (or, indeed, avoidance by those who do not position themselves within whatever categories that might somehow qualify them to read poetry). In fact, there may be more than a little danger of elitism in making an argument about the interest of ‘poetic objects’ as stemming from their demand for more than the ‘ordinary’ skills of reading.

Yet poetry, and poetic objects more broadly conceived, do not have to be ‘scary’ or ‘elitist’; not all poems are intimidating or incomprehensible without specific, additional training. There is, for example, a long and vibrant tradition of verse in (young) children’s culture. Parents often sing nursery rhymes to their babies and introduce them to reading with picturebooks full of verse. The importance of verse in children’s picturebooks is demonstrated in the adaptation and appropriation of verse from other sources in picturebooks for the children’s market (for example, numerous versions of the poem ‘Jabberwocky’, which originally appeared in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, have been produced as picturebooks¹¹), in the enduring popularity of Dr Seuss’s humorous and nonsensical works, and it has been celebrated in more contemporary works like Julia Donaldson’s, *The Gruffalo*¹². These works are certainly not intimidating, nor are they ‘difficult’ to read and understand. But they remain *poetic* nonetheless.

Indeed, the Dr Seuss books are marketed explicitly as being easy to read. They were originally published in Random House’s ‘Beginner Books’ series. HarperCollins, who have since begun publishing the books, have divided them into three, colour-coded reading strands: blue-backed books are designed for parents to read to their children (for example, *Hop on Pop*¹³); green-backed books —such as *Green Eggs and Ham*¹⁴—support children’s emergent reading skills; and yellow-backed books are good for older, and more fluent, readers (for example,

*The Lorax*¹⁵). The poetic nature of the books is viewed as a major factor in making them easy to read. The publishers information for 'green-back' books explains: 'The rhyme, rhythm and repetition make them easier to read, helping to build confidence'. These qualities of rhyme, rhythm and repetition make a text easy to read precisely because they call attention to the *work* of reading, and to the relationship between texts and reading. Indeed, the publisher's blurb on the back of *Hop on Pop*—'The Simplest Seuss for the Youngest Use'—explains that the rhymes used in the book encourage young children to develop an awareness of the relationships between sounds and letters:

This charming book introduces young children to words that rhyme, such as Hop and Pop, Cup and Pup, Mouse and House, Tall and Small. And once they have learned to recognize one word, children soon find to their delight they can read another simply by changing the first letter.¹⁶

As such, 'poetic' objects do not surpass the 'ordinary' practices of reading; they simply draw attention to the skills required in the practice of 'ordinary' reading.

Once read, a text—poetic or otherwise—seems to have an intrinsic coherence¹⁷. Despite this, a text does not encapsulate its reading. Texts *describe* their readings; they do not contain them. Livingston terms the gestalt of reading practice an *alchemy*. His use of the term alchemy is a little strange, and he never fully explains it. Alchemy is commonly understood as a primitive version of chemistry. However, this evolutionary notion obscures the ways in which the two differ in kind. Brian Massumi explains that alchemy is a 'qualitative science of impossible transformation', while chemistry and physics are 'quantitative sciences of elemental causes'¹⁸. As an alchemy, the practices of reading transmute the fragmented text—a composition of letters and punctuation marks arranged on a page—to produce something meaningful. The mismatch between cause and effect here make the transformation impossible.

Writing specifically about comics—as texts composed of pictures, even if they are often juxtaposed with words—Jean Marie Schaeffer argues that a story cannot be

contained within images alone, nor can it be given by them; it seems to be simultaneously ‘upstream’ of them (as part of a greater narrative programme) and ‘downstream’ of them (as a reconstruction in the mind of the reader/viewer) but it always eludes the pictures themselves¹⁹. Thierry Groensteen is intrigued by what he calls the ‘mysterious cognitive alchemy’ that is required in order for readers to reconstruct a story that was never contained in a work to begin with. Schaeffer seems to reduce the category of ‘story’ to straightforward narration. However, for Groensteen, the story exceeds the narrative; it does not simply relate events that build to produce the tale, but produces a ‘world’ for its reader.

Similarly, Livingston explains that the reading—or the story, as the thing that is read—is not literally *in* any text, but neither is it *not in* the text²⁰. He turns to Husserl to argue that texts only come to exist as meaningful objects in and through the practices of reading. For Husserl, ‘we’ constitute the world as existing objectively and self-sufficiently from fragments of perception gathered through our lived experiences. The read-text emerges from the alchemic practices of reading; the elements of a text—nothing more than splashes of ink on a page—are transformed such that they seem to be meaningful in and of themselves. Through the practices of reading, texts cease to be ‘fragile things’—‘made up of nothing stronger or more lasting than twenty-six letters and a handful of punctuation marks’, as Neil Gaiman reminds us²¹—and hold together as stories in their own right. The coherence of a text is always equivalent to the coherence and continuity of reading’s work. But this coherence, and seeming self-sufficiency, are only ever retrospective.

Words and Pictures

Of course, comics (including *shōnen* manga) are composed of more than letters and punctuation marks; they also contain pictures²². Gaiman is well aware of this, insofar as he makes his living writing both comics and prose, although he does not illustrate either himself. The elements from which they are constituted may differ, but comics texts are no less ‘fragile’ than those conveyed entirely in writing. *Fullmetal Alchemist* contains words and pictures, which are arranged across its

pages in panels and word balloons. Before exploring the layout of comics pages more generally and the ways that these can be 'read', it is worth dwelling a little on the various relationships between words and pictures, and the ways in which they can be arrayed and juxtaposed to produce particular kinds of text.

Words and pictures are often taken to belong to completely different spheres of representation. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing famously argued that the purity of painting and poetry should never be compromised²³. As a 'pure art of language', poetry is necessarily extended in time, for words can only be spoken sequentially; painting is a 'pure art of vision', the elements of which are always arranged side-by-side. Painting, therefore, belongs to space. To mix poetry and painting—language and vision, words and pictures, telling and showing, time and space—is to produce 'freakish' writing, the consequences of which must necessarily be monstrous. To weaken the boundaries between different realms of representation in this way is to compromise the integrity of them all. Comics are monstrous because they insist on doing just this. They fall awkwardly between the literary and visual arts, such that looking at comics seems to be neither reading nor viewing, but some problematic composite of the two. Comics are often understood as fundamentally deficient, precisely for this 'failure to be either a real text or just a proper image'²⁴. They pose a problem in their refusal, or perhaps inability, to choose²⁵.

The gap between words and pictures has consequences far beyond the organisation of the field of representation. W.L.T. Mitchell argues that the differences between the two are manifest in the problems reconciling a culture of reading with a culture of spectatorship. He wants to shift the terms of the debate to focus, not on the difference between forms, but on the ways in which words and pictures are used and related to each other.

The real question to ask when presented with... image-text relations is not, 'what is the difference (or similarity) between the words and the images?', but, 'what difference do the differences (and similarities) make?'. That is,

why does it matter how words and images are juxtaposed, blended, or separated?²⁶

In this section, and the next, I want to think through some of the different ways in which words and pictures can be combined to produce texts.

Gillian Rose is interested in the different uses of images in social science writing²⁷. She identifies two possible ways in which social scientists can relate (wordy) texts and (pictorial) images to produce social scientific accounts: images can be used to *support* texts, or they can be used to *supplement* them. When images are used to support texts they facilitate the research process, rather than produce the academic account itself. Social researchers often work with photographs (for example), sometimes in conjunction with participants, in order to draw out evidence with which they hope to answer a set of research questions. The photographs are instrumental in carrying out the research, but they are superseded by the written academic account that is derived from, or inspired by, them. The photographs enable researchers to access knowledge about the world, but they do not communicate that knowledge in and of themselves.

For example, childhood researchers often advocate the use of photography and drawing, among a slew of other methods, as a means of engaging children in research and eliciting their views. Partly, they do this for ethical reasons; they want to devise methods that take advantage of the competencies children possess—rather than those in which they may be deficient—and, in doing so, they hope to go some way towards evening up the imbalances they see as inherent to adult-child research relations²⁸. This is not the only reason for turning to ‘visual’ methods, however. Photography and drawing are often combined with more traditional, talk-based social science methods—interviews and other conversational techniques—in order to access information that may be difficult for their participants to put into words²⁹. The knowledge sought could not have been acquired—and the social science account could not have been produced—without the use of photographs or drawings. However, the knowledge is not derived directly from, nor is the account communicated through, the photographs or

drawings themselves. At the end of the research process, it is the wordy text that must account for the research findings.

This may seem to have very little to do with reading (or writing) comics. However, if we understand the comics story as eluding the images with which it is told, we might think of the *story* as wordy entity resulting from reading, or looking at, comics. That is, the comics reader constructs a (verbal) narrative from the pictorial and textual elements with which they are presented, and this forms the story. Indeed, it might be said that I did just this when I ‘read’ *Fullmetal Alchemist* at the beginning of this chapter; I produced the story (and typed it out) from the pictures and words presented on the page. Yet, this written account is inadequate in various ways. Comparing my version with the images of the manga pages themselves (in Figures 2.1 to 2.4), it is obvious that there is much more to the story than is contained in my written account. This would be true, no matter how much detail I put into my ‘story’ because the pictures add something of their own, which cannot be adequately substituted with words. It is for this reason that I have reproduced the pages themselves alongside the written account of my ‘reading’.

Rose explains that, in social scientific writing, pictures add something to a research account when they are employed as a *supplement* to words. They exceed the written report in various ways and can be allowed to show themselves on (more or less) their own terms. She identifies two particular relationships between words and pictures in social science writing: ‘specified generalisation’ and ‘texture’. Perhaps more traditionally, pictures in social science texts are used to lend veracity to an account by specifying the generalisations made in the text. Pictures are deployed as ‘figures’ and tied to the text through the captions attached to them. Indeed, all of the figures in this thesis perform this kind of supplementary function in relation to my written account of the practices of reading *shōnen* manga, even if my captions make little effort to explain them.

Eric Livingston argues that the processes of captioning in social scientific research reveal the alchemic transformations involved in producing ‘instructed readings’.

For example, he explains that photographs displayed in introductory sociology textbooks are always divorced from their context and lack obvious thematic content in their own right; they display only the 'sheer presence' of a scene. On their own, they say nothing intelligibly *sociological*. Through captioning—adding a line or two of text below, or otherwise next to, the picture—a photograph can be offered to the reader as an illustration of a specific social phenomenon. The caption offers a description that is 'plausible but not transparent' from the photograph itself³⁰. In this way, captioned photographs teach students to see the world in terms of sociological analysis:

In sociology, students must be trained to view the familiar, ordinary world of everyday action as providing indicators of the structures of action that lie beneath it. The captions use the natural analysability of action—the possible ways in which photographs could be seen—and distort and transform it, making the photographs into evidence for interpretations of them. Their authority comes to live within the objectivity of the social phenomena that the photographs are intended to illustrate, and in our ability to see photographs as possible illustrations of those phenomena.³¹

Used in this way, pictures supplement a text, but they are not able to provide an account in and of themselves. As 'texture', pictures gain more autonomy in producing the social scientific account itself, at least in part. That is, they do something that the words do not, and perhaps cannot. For example, John Wylie's 'Smoothlands' presents fragments of the experience of landscape in both written text and photographs³². The photographs are scattered throughout the text, and they interrupt its flow, just as the text interrupts theirs. These photographs are not 'figures'—readers' attention is not directed towards the appropriate picture when they reach the relevant section of the text—but evoke something in themselves that the written account lacks, or at least approaches differently.

Both of these concepts might be appropriate, to differing degrees, in understanding the relationships between words and pictures in *Fullmetal Alchemist*. While they are not 'captioned' in any recognisable way, the pictures might be said

to specify the generalisations of the written text, however minimal that written text is. For example, the first panel of the section I ‘read’ at the beginning of this chapter (see Figure 2.1) shows a ‘rumbling’ onomatopoeia, ‘GRM RM RMB’. Many things make this kind of rumbling sound: it could be traffic noise, a rockfall, someone’s stomach, or something else entirely. However, the onomatopoeia is juxtaposed with a picture of dark clouds in this panel. By relating the picture to this ‘word’³³, readers interpret this as the rumbling of thunder. While it is possible to interpret some interactions between word and picture in *Fullmetal Alchemist* in this way, the autonomy given to images in telling the story make ‘texture’ a more useful notion in explaining this relationship. The story is told as much, if not more so, in pictures as words. The two perform different functions, but the tale is told between them both. In this way, the relationship is less ‘supplementary’ than ‘symbiotic’.

Illustration

The comics artist Will Eisner makes a distinction between *visuals* and *illustrations*³⁴. Visuals are autonomous to some degree; they can replace a written text to varying degrees. Illustrations remain tied to a written text and can only reinforce and repeat the content of that text. However, the addition of pictures to a text is a process in which neither the text nor the pictures are passive, and from which neither can emerge unaltered. William Moebius explains that children’s picturebooks are more than albums of pictures, or texts with some pictures thrown in to add interest. Picturebooks invoke a more integral relationship between word and picture, such that readers experience them as a ‘total design’. The pictures and words in a picturebook probably can stand in isolation to some extent, but the story is certainly diminished for it, as Moebius explains:

The story in the child’s picturebook... unfolds for us just now, a variety-show of images and texts. We anticipate the next while looking at the one before, we laugh now that we see a character that we had not noticed before, we let our eyes wander off a familiar character’s face to a puzzling word on the page and back again. Unlike the framed settings of a Biblical text of a

Raphael or Rembrandt, the pictures in a picturebook cannot hang by themselves; picturebook texts do not fare well when they are extracted and anthologised in various bibles of children's literature. Each works with the other in a bound sequence of images/text, inseparable in our reading experience one from the other... In the picturebook, we read images and text together as the mutually complementary story of a consciousness, of Lyle the Crocodile's ways of being, his growing and suffering in the world.³⁵

W.L.T. Mitchell is interested in considering the specific constellations of pictures and words mobilised in particular media, and in specific works. The obvious starting point for such investigations may appear to be those media—such as film, television, theatre and comics—in which the relation of image and word is already posed as a problem³⁶. However, for Mitchell, the problem does not simply arise between different forms of representation, nor does it trouble only those media that insist on amalgamating them; the issue is unavoidably present within representation itself. Put simply, all arts are 'composite' and all media are 'mixed'. There is no purity to be found in representational practice, however much 'modernity' might have tried to convince itself otherwise. Writing itself deconstructs the possibility of pure representation, either verbal or visual. In its graphic form, writing is more than a supplement to speech; it is an inseparable stitching of the visual and the verbal. As an art of both language and vision, writing is 'the imagetext incarnate'³⁷. Similarly, the visual burrows inside the verbal through the imagery conjured up in words through all manner of 'ekphrastic' strategies³⁸.

Mitchell identifies three broad ways of conceiving the relationship between the visual and the verbal: imagetext, image-text and image/text. In 'imagetexts' words and pictures are combined to produce a composite, synthetic whole. David Carrier argues that comics are not a hybrid medium, but a composite art³⁹. Successful comics seamlessly combine the visual and the verbal. It is in this sense that Carrier sees the speech balloon as their defining characteristic: comics are a narrative sequence with speech balloons. In the balloon, the (verbal) word is made image, but the word balloon itself is always as conventional as the letters and punctuation

marks it contains. These balloons blur the word/image binary because they are neither within the picture space, but nor are they external to it. Word balloons are always ‘imagetexts’.

Thierry Groensteen argues that comics form a system based on the relational play of a plurality of interdependent images, which are both separated by and overdetermined by their coexistence on the page⁴⁰. These images are arranged spatio-topologically in panels on the page, and across pages. Word balloons create a ‘network’ within this spatio-topological apparatus, which allows comics to simultaneously mobilise the verbal and the visual. While the spatio-topological organisation of a comic is important, it remains inert in isolation from the relations to which it is submitted in the process of reading, which Groensteen terms *arthrology*⁴¹. To emphasize the relation—indeed the very relate-ability—of the visual and the verbal within a medium is to understand a work as ‘image-text’.

However, these relationships are always uneasy. For Groensteen, problems of ‘depth’ in the relationship between the comics panel and the word balloon reveal tensions between ‘textuality’ and ‘pictoriality’ in comics. The pictures belong to the panel, and the ‘image zone’ created by it; the word balloon creates a ‘textual zone’ that floats over the panel and obscures part of the image. The pictures rely on perspectival codes and the practices of staging planes in order to create an illusion of three-dimensionality. The word balloon, as a textual zone, asserts the flatness of the writing surface and, in so-doing, betrays the illusion of depth in the pictorial zone of the panel beneath it. The word balloon can never be fully accommodated within the pictorial panel, but it cannot be entirely autonomous either. The bubble, and the words it contains, is a visual approximation of those uttered and/or heard within the panel. The utterance belongs to the panel, even if it seems to assert a surface from which the picture pulls away. The balloon and the picture, therefore, cannot belong to different planes; they are always complementary pieces of a puzzle arrayed on the surface of the panel, however problematic this assemblage may be.

In this way, word balloons reveal a disjuncture within representation itself. Frank Cioffi argues that the problematic gap between the visual and the verbal is always-already at work in comics⁴². He argues that some comics—such as Art Spiegelman’s much celebrated *Maus*—are able to productively exploit the dissonances between words and pictures, and to make effective use of the impossibility of perceiving the two simultaneously. The rupture in representation is the problem posed by image/text relations. The important thing, for Mitchell, is to maintain their radical incommensurability. That is, the possibility of their being both relation and non-relation between the visual and the verbal⁴⁴³. The monstrosity of the *shōnen* manga text (which I discussed in the first chapter) arises from the incommensurability of words and pictures. Yet, to read *shōnen* manga readers must begin to domesticate these monsters; they must make use of the tensions between the words and pictures to find and produce the story in the elements they encounter on the page.

Perry Nodelman argues that there is necessarily a degree of irony in the relationship between words and pictures in a text. However closely matched they may seem, they can never be fully congruent⁴⁴. In children’s picturebooks, the two interact in complex and dynamic ways, such that the story is told in neither one nor the other, but by both simultaneously. The text and illustrations do not, and cannot, simply mirror one another. This is, at least in part, because of the different valences of the words and pictures, as Christina Desai explains:

The art is an integral part of the story without which much of the meaning and mood would be missing. Whether the plot of the story could be understood without the illustrations is an irrelevant question, since the illustrations do have an impact in either case.⁴⁵

Words and pictures come together to tell the story, each contributing something of its own. As such, illustration is not simply additive, and never redundant; the practice of adding pictures to a written text performs an alchemy and produces a story that cannot be reduced to any of its constituent parts. Desai explains something of the alchemy of illustration through the relationships of word and

picture in Allen Say's illustrated novel, *El Chino*. The novel relates what might, at first, seem to be an 'ordinary' sports story about a boy who takes up bullfighting. The text closely follows the classic structure of its genre: despite an initial lack of ability, the main character perseveres and overcomes obstacles to become proficient in a sport and, eventually, he is able to compete and win. But *El Chino* is not a 'generic' sports story⁴⁶; Desai argues that it is transformed by its illustrations. The words and pictures are closely complementary, but their juxtaposition utterly changes the character of the story. While the text seems to relate a straightforward action tale, which employs minimal poetic device, the protagonist's emotional transformation becomes the central theme of the story in the illustrations. The text drives the plot forward; the illustrations slow down the action and create a mood of introspection. Because they perform different functions, the interaction between words and pictures allow *El Chino* to be both an action tale and a character study.

The illustrated story exceeds both the written text and the pictures through which it is told. As such, picturebooks might be said to present a 'poetry' of word and picture, which communicates something of that which lies beyond the reach of either words or pictures. For Moebius, such poetic qualities can enable children's picturebooks to be far more profound than might be expected, given their intended audience: 'the best picturebooks can and do portray the intangible and invisible...ideas that escape easy definition in picture or words'⁴⁷. Desai explains how, in *El Chino*, Allen Say uses words and pictures to say something more than either could alone, which enables the story to succeed in more than one genre simultaneously. This is the 'magic' of a well-crafted picturebook. The strange alchemy is an unarticulated—and unarticulatable—force through which words and pictures combine to become something other than they could be alone. But, like any good magic trick, it obscures and misdirects its own workings in order to succeed at all.

Framing

Moebius argues that the associations between words and pictures do not reside in the texts themselves, but arise in the active imagination of the reader. He describes

this as a kind of ‘plate tectonics’, in which words and pictures remain distinguishable as they scrape and slide against each other. This causes ‘semic slippage’ between the two—as well as among the pictures and, indeed, among the words themselves. Christopher Couch uses the same geological metaphor to describe the interactions between the multiple texts and pictures on the page in Outcault’s late-nineteenth-century newspaper cartoon series, *The Yellow Kid*⁴⁸. The comics were presented as full-page compositions and, for this reason, they are often referred to as single-panel cartoons. However, Couch argues that, in typesetting multiple texts with pictures within a single frame on a page of the newspaper, *The Yellow Kid* was able to present readers with a single, unified, ‘tectonic’ design that dispersed an extensive narrative across the page. The lack of overt panels is unimportant; it is the interaction between the textual and pictorial elements on the page that counts.

Thierry Groensteen regards the panel as the smallest unit in the comics system. This does not mean, however, that the panel is the least unit of *signification* in comics; the panel may be broken up into the different informational elements it contains, but it cannot be reduced. Framed and isolated by empty space, the panel is contained by and takes part in the sequential continuum of the comic. The panels—as discretely packaged pictures, or combinations of pictures and words—share space on the page, before they enter into any other relationship. As such, the system of comics, as it is described by Groensteen, is always primarily spatio-topological⁴⁹. Comics are composed of multiple panels arranged on the page. What matters in the first instance is the form, area and site of those panels on that page. The story emerges from the relations between, and within, the panels, which Groensteen terms arthrology. It is in this sense that comics can be described as ‘telling stories in space’⁵⁰.

The panels in *Fullmetal Alchemist*, like many—perhaps most—comics, do have frames, which delimit the panels and close them off from the surrounding gutters. For Groensteen, frames are important because they close off panels. In so-doing they claim fragments of space-time for the story, in which they gain coherence. This is only possible because the practice of framing in comics has both a

separative function and an action of closure; in Groensteen's terms, comics have both a spatio-topia and arthrologies. I will return to closure and arthrology in the next section, but here I want to concentrate on the separative function of framing.

Marcus Doel and David Clarke argue that, as a medium, film is articulated in and through its editing. Montage—the process of selecting and piecing together sections of film to form a, more or less, continuous whole⁵¹—is the 'essence' of film. They explain that this is because film, to a greater degree than any other visual technology, is concerned with 'the sequencing of precisely cut components torn from their original contexts'⁵². Comics are also concerned with the sequencing of precisely cut components, albeit in the absence of any original context. Despite this, Groensteen insists that montage is not a useful concept in studying comics⁵³. He explains that cinematic montage is articulated only in time, while everything in comics must be articulated across space⁵⁴. The temporality derived from this dispersal is a function of the practice of reading rather than anything inherent to the arrangement itself. Additionally, cinematic montage takes place after filming; layout in comics is invented at the same time, and sometimes before, any drawings are realised on the page. On this basis, Groensteen argues that comics scholars should leave montage to the cinema and concern themselves with that which cinema cannot do: page layout.

Bart Beaty and Nick Hyguen's translation here loses much that is conveyed in the original. In the French edition, Groensteen terms the spatio-topological arrangement of comics *mise-en-page*, which is translated as 'page layout' in the English edition. In film theory, *mise-en-scene* is a term used to describe the spatial organisation of the film shot, while montage refers to its temporal organisation. Groensteen's term, *mise-en-page*, indicates that comics are primarily organised on and through the space on the page, while any temporality in comics must be produced by the practices of reading. Comics creators can exercise no direct control over this temporal sequencing; they can only arrange elements on the pages of their work. While montage may be an inappropriate term for comics scholarship, the function of separation—'the cut'⁵⁵—is as integral to comics as it is

to film. In comics, this separation occurs through the process of framing, even where the frame is absent.

The spatio-topia, let us not forget, is part and a condition of arthrology: one could not connect the visual utterances if they were not distinct. The separative function is always in the work, even if the frame, which ordinarily is its privileged instrument, finds itself deliberately dismissed.⁵⁶

For this reason, although seemingly devoid of panels, *The Yellow Kid* can properly be considered a comic because its elements are deployed spatio-topologically. The separative function embedded within its *mise-en-page* implies that there are panels, even if they are not formalised and framed. For Doel and Clark, this separative function is the source of film's potential. Through the cut, cinema causes reality to stutter and, in doing so, it draws attention to the ways in which reality is mediated rather than represented. Cinematic realities are *produced* 'in the most literal sense of the word'⁵⁷; they are not ready-made, but are made to appear. Through the juxtaposition of images—which are necessarily differentially charged, if only due to their sequentialisation—cinematic montage is a force of disjuncture which exposes all that appears to be fully and irrevocably given to the impossibility of ever being so. Realities, as they are produced in film, are never whole; they are fissured by formlessness and non-sense. For this reason, Doel and Clark contend that montage is the archetypal figure of nonrepresentational thought. In comics, the gutters—the absences that rupture and fragment that which is made present in the panels—present the fissure in representation in space, while cinematic montage realises it in time.

Gutters

The comics artist and theorist, Scott McCloud, explains that the gutter 'plays host to much of the magic and mystery that are at the very heart of comics'⁵⁸. The reason for this is that gutters participate in the work of conjunction and relation as much as they do in the processes of scattering and distribution. This is what Groensteen means when he says that the spatio-topia is both 'part and condition of

arthrology' (the relations to which the panels arrayed on the page are submitted by the system of comics⁵⁹). However, these relations cannot themselves be embedded within the 'system', as Groensteen describes it; they must be realised in, and through, the work of reading. The task of arthrology is the production of 'closure'.

McCloud argues that comics demand much of their readers, not in the sense that they are difficult to read, but because they draw an otherwise 'passive observer' into active engagement with the text. Regardless whether audiences for any kind of cultural text can be described as 'passive observers', the result of this is that comics readers are able to produce, or recover, a story from the fragments of words and images presented to them in panels separated by gutters. Closure is the gestalt perception of the world; through closure readers are able to perceive the whole by observing the parts. Closure is an important aspect of many media. Indeed, McCloud explains that closure in film and television is 'constant and overpowering'⁶⁰. However, he believes that closure is especially important to, and uniquely deployed within, comics. Closure is the agent of change, time and motion in comics, but only where the audience willingly and consciously collaborates. The comics story itself can never be an involuntary or imperceptible result; it is always a deliberate achievement. In this sense, what McCloud calls 'closure' is simply the alchemy of reading by another name—or, perhaps, not by another name. McCloud explains that closure is 'a kind of alchemy' at work in the gutters, through which readers are able to find meaning in even the most jarring of juxtapositions⁶¹.

The important thing is that the reader must always *find* or *produce* meaning in these juxtapositions. To explain this, McCloud shows us a sequence of two panels⁶². In the first, we see two men, one of whom is wielding an axe and threatening the other, who is running away. In the next panel we see a cityscape at night and 'hear' someone scream (via onomatopoeia). Yet, McCloud insists that the reader, as much as himself and, presumably, the axe-wielding man, is 'responsible' for this crime. The murder itself never actually happens—it is not present anywhere in the comic—but readers know that a murder did occur. The aporetic gutter between the panels—in which both nothing and everything happens—has been bridged by the active processes of imaginative production. The openness of these processes

mean that: 'To kill a man between panels is to condemn him to a thousand deaths'⁶³. It is not only that the man will die anew each time the comic is read, but also that the manner of his death can be infinitely varied in readers' imaginations.

Readers are forced to consider the fragmented and fragmentary panels as a whole story because of their sequencing. As such, McCloud understands page design and arrangement of comics—the *mise-en-page*, although he does not refer to it as such—as necessarily vectorised in the direction of reading. He argues that the comics page presents the reader with a kind of 'temporal map'; it portrays time by means of space⁶⁴. Panels are arranged sequentially on the page in the direction in which they are to be read, and by reading them in sequence they each come to occupy a distinct time slot within the story. As such, contained parcels of space on the page become equivalent to discrete bundles of time in the story. Comics present their readers with a staccato series of 'moments' separated by gutters, which come to gain coherence as a story, arrayed in time, through the alchemic practices of reading. In this chapter, I want to concentrate on the ways in which readers work with the separative functions of gutters, but I will discuss and critique this idea in detail in the next chapter, *Irresponsible Pictures*.

Groensteen warns against fetishising gutters in and of themselves. They are only the symbolic site of absence—a zone on the paper—not the absence itself. The gap remains, whether or not the comics creator leaves a blank space between the panels. In 'closing' this gap, the reader does not fill the voids between the visible panels with 'ghost panels'⁶⁵. That is, the story cannot be fully presented by investing ever-more incrementally successive panels between those framed on the page: '[t]he separative function is always in the work'⁶⁶. It is folded into the action of closure, which cannot be realised without it. (To adapt Doel and Clarke's argument about the separative function of montage in film) the sequences of panels in comics are inherently untotalisable; 'the frame also refers to the absolute proximity of noncontiguous spaces and times, a manifold and inexhaustible 'unseen' that can never be actualised as a framed seen/scene, but which nevertheless is pullulated and ramified to infinity'⁶⁷. The ellipse does not belong to

a set of virtual images that might complete it, but to a pure virtuality that necessarily exceeds all that is given.

In this sense, comics are not an ‘invisible art’, at least in the way that McCloud claims they are. Comics are not as subtractive as they are additive⁶⁸ because nothing pre-exists the comic’s creation. Everything that is not present in comics has not become *invisible*; it never actually existed and could only ever be a pure virtuality. Unlike in film, where there is something to leave behind on the cutting room floor—even if digital editing makes this ‘floor’ metaphorical—comics are produced from scratch. Their ‘cuts’ are conceived and created as, and before, the drawing is produced on the page⁶⁹.

Braiding

The gutter may not be the seat of any virtual images, but it is the site of semantic articulation in comics. There is a logical fallacy at the heart of comics in which all the panels necessarily intervene. Readers, in presupposing that there is meaning to be found within the comic, search for the ways in which the panels relate to each other. In doing so, they *produce* meaning and come to believe that it resides in the text itself. Groensteen argues that the comics panel is fragmentary but it always finds itself caught up in a system of proliferation; it can only ever be rendered meaningful as a component in a larger apparatus because it can never, in itself, produce the totality of an utterance.

Here, Groensteen parallels Gilles Deleuze’s argument about the apparatus of cinema⁷⁰ by arguing that comics panels are neither enunciations nor utterances. Instead, panels are *utterables*, with semantic potential⁷¹. The material from which cinematic films are composed constitutes neither a language nor a language system⁷²:

It is a plastic mass, an a-signifying and a-syntactic material, a material not formed linguistically even though it is not amorphous and is formed semiotically, aesthetically and pragmatically. It is a condition, anterior by right to what it conditions. It is not an enunciation, and these are not

utterances. It is an *utterable*. We mean that, when language gets hold of this material (and it necessarily does so), then it gives rise to utterances which come to dominate or even replace the images and signs.⁷³

Adapting Deleuze's argument, Groensteen is able to assert that comics form a semiotic, rather than semiological, system which is devoid of signs (or, at least, it is an unfinished system of signs)⁷⁴. Utterances—and stories and readings—are not given by visible images, nor are they products of imagetext constellations. They are always a consequence of the (alchemic) transformation of the utterables arrayed on the page⁷⁵.

Groensteen explains the alchemy at work on the materials arranged on the comics page in terms of arthrology. He identifies two different arthrologies at work in comics: restricted arthrology, which is governed by the breakdown (*decoupage*), and generalised arthrology, which produces a network through the action of braiding (*tressage*). The breakdown produces a set of proximal and linear relations⁷⁶, in much the way that Scott McCloud does when he posits his typology of transitions between neighbouring panels in comics⁷⁷. However, restricted arthrology does not simply produce (linear) relations between proximate panels; it also works to link the words and pictures within those panels. These immediate relations gradually build to form a larger, narrative sequence. The task of the comics creator is to break down the story they wish to tell into a sequence of panels and to manage the transitions between them⁷⁸. The comics creator needs to think this through carefully in order to produce a *mise-en-page* that can effectively convey his or her story to readers. The task assigned to readers is the 'recovery' of this story from this *mise-en-page* by producing closure across these transitions.

In restricted arthrology, the model of organisation in the comic is that of the (linear) strip or chain; general arthrology, on the other hand, takes the network as its model. It is for this reason that Groensteen's system can be described as spatio-topological. The action of braiding produces distant and translinear relations between any aspects of a comic that can, potentially, be related to any other. Groensteen explains that braiding is 'like an addition that the text secretes beyond



27



26

Figure 2.5

Arakawa. *Fullmetal Alchemist* Vol 2. Pages 26–27.

its surface⁷⁹ in that it produces a set of supplemental relations that are ‘never indispensable’ to the (straightforward) telling of the story. In Groensteen’s system, the conduct and intelligibility of the story is the concern of the breakdown alone. However, the conduct and intelligibility of a story of any significant length is unlikely to be simply the product of a set of linear and proximate relations. David Carrier notes that, as readers, we cannot perceive a text, of any kind, in its entirety all at once⁸⁰. Readers must synthesise separate scenes, recall past events, and anticipate conclusions if the story is to make sense to them. Groensteen argues that comics must be arranged as a ‘multiframe’, which comprises all the frames in a comic⁸¹. Any comic which spans multiple pages cannot be comprehended as a whole on any of its individual (page) surfaces, but can only ever be viewed as a

double-page spread within the complete multiframe. All fragments of a comic are positioned within this multiframe, which allows the reader to relate panels and events at any point in the story to those found elsewhere in the multiframe. Indeed, often comics creators rely upon these, more or less, distant relations in order to tell their stories effectively.

In 'reading' some pages of *Fullmetal Alchemist* at the beginning of this chapter, I produced a range of relations: proximal, distal, linear and nonlinear. For example, the first panel on page 26 (which is reproduced for convenience in Figure 2.5) contains, or fails to fully contain, a picture of dark clouds and some free-floating letters. These letters are an onomatopoeia—'GRM RM RMB'—a rumbling sound. As readers, we are able to identify this as a meteorological rumbling because we related it to the dark clouds against which it is juxtaposed in the panel. This is further confirmed in the foreground of the next panel, where we see Ed looking upwards. The rumbling onomatopoeia is repeated in this panel, just above his head. A speech bubble floats above the onomatopoeia and its tail points down towards Ed. Inside the bubble is the text, 'It's gonna rain for sure today'. Linking all this together, we are able to read this as Ed's reaction to seeing the dark clouds in the sky above him, and hearing the rumbling of thunder. In the background of this second panel, we find Ed's brother, Al, standing in front of a door, holding onto a chain that is hanging from a bell. We know that Al is ringing the doorbell because an onomatopoeic 'ding ding' has been placed next to the bell, and also because small lines placed either side of the bell indicate objective motion: the bell is moving from side to side. We can identify this doorway as the Tucker's front door by relating it back to the second panel on page twelve of the chapter, where we saw Roy Mustang standing in front of the same doorway and ringing the same doorbell (drawn from an almost identical angle) when he brought the boys to the house the previous day. We are also able to identify Ed and Al as the protagonists of the series from having seen them in repeated panels within this chapter, and perhaps in other chapters in the series.

In the next panel, we look out at Al from inside the house as he holds the door open. The onomatopoeia in the top left-hand corner of the panel indicates that the

door has creaked as it opened. The two speech bubbles, each with a tail directed towards Al, contain the text 'Hello...Mr Tucker? It's us again.' The next panel 'pulls away' to provide a longer view of the corridor with Al silhouetted in the doorway. The onomatopoeic 'hush...' emphasises the stillness of the dark, empty corridor. Al was expecting an answer but the house appears to be deserted. On the left-hand side of the panel there is a speech balloon, containing the text, 'Huh?', the tail of which points 'back' towards Al. The determination of direction here results from the interplay between the perspectival coding of the picture and the flatness of the word balloon, such that the tail seems to stretch back from the surface of the panel towards Al in the depths of the image. From this we know that Al is surprised to find the house empty. The three panels here—showing Al ringing the doorbell, calling through the open door, and then puzzling over the lack of response—are not sufficient to explain Al's confusion. And they certainly do not explain why the boys go on to search the house in the next panel.

It is not unusual to call at a house only to discover that the inhabitants have gone out. The usual course of action in such circumstances would be to come back again later, or perhaps to leave a note. However, on page twenty-one of the chapter it was established that the boys would be returning to the house today and that the Tuckers were expecting them, even looking forward to their visit. This is why Al did not expect to find the house empty. Indeed, he expected the kind of welcome they received the previous day (on pages twelve to thirteen), when Ed was pounced upon by the family dog, Alexander, as Nina and Tucker ran to greet their visitors at the door. Today, the house seems very different from the chaotic family home the boys arrived at the previous day. An ominous mood is created through the contrast between the house as it was presented on earlier pages and the eerie stillness extended across all of the panels in this spread, with their dark shadows, grainy screentones, and creepy sound effects.

To read *Fullmetal Alchemist*, then, is to bridge the gutters and to connect the fragmented panels up in all manner of ways. The more general relations required are both *translinear* and *nonlinear*. The story is not simply a linear narrative relayed by the management of vectorised transitions in the 'breakdown', and the more

'general' connections between the panels do more than simply amplify an effect already present in this breakdown. Each panel must be connected in myriad relationships with the other panels in the 'multiframe'—the sum of all the fragments in the text as a whole. The story arises from the efforts of readers who produce this network of relations, which yields a (story) 'world' that exceeds its breakdown, and cannot be reduced to any or all of the panels of which it is composed. This 'world' can be experienced and brought about only through the alchemic work of reading.

Story Worlds

Groensteen explains that comics creators present their readers with a disseminated series of panels in which meaning is subject to the principle of *différance* (delay), which knows no definitive limit⁸². For Jacques Derrida, there is an undecideability at the source of meaning. (Written) texts are always an interweaving, but one that is necessarily subject to all manner of slippages through which texts are deformed and reformed. This play of differences attests to the impossibility of ever attaining full presence.

Whether in written or in spoken discourse, no element can function as a sign without relating to another element which is itself not simply present. This linkage means that each 'element'—phoneme or grapheme—is constituted with reference to the trace of the other elements of the sequence or system it contains. This linkage, this weaving, is the text, which is produced only through the transformation of another text. Nothing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.⁸³

There are notable differences between comics and the 'purely' written texts Derrida was working with, but similar processes are at work in them. The comics creator can only present the reader with a series of fragments (panels, word balloons, onomatopoeia—all of which are nothing more than some ink carefully arranged on the page). The story the comics creator wants to tell can only be

realised to the degree to which the reader can decrypt the interdependence of these fragments through the alchemic practices of reading. In *Fullmetal Alchemist*, Hiromu Arakawa breaks her story down and presents it to her reader in the various elements arrayed across the pages of her manga. The reader encounters these panels, and works with them to produce closure by actively forming a range of proximal and distal relations between them. The various fragments are never simply present or absent; they are traces of a broader story that is derived from them, but which somehow seems to elude them.

The disseminated pages of comics cannot produce a continuity. Comics offer their readers a story that is full of holes—literally in the spaces/separation between the panels, and figuratively in the gap between words and pictures—that must be reconciled in the processes of reading. As Groensteen explains:

The panels return nothing but the fragments of the implied world in which the story unfolds, but this world is supposed to be continuous and homogeneous, everything transpiring as if the reader, having entered into the world, will never again leave the image to which he has been offered access. The crossing of frames becomes a largely unconscious and mechanical operation, masked by an investment (absorption) in the virtual world populated by the story. The diegesis, this fantastic world, which comprises all of the panels, transcends them and is where the reader can reside.⁸⁴

While the story may be full of holes, the consistency of the (story) world into which the alchemy of reading projects the reader allows it to hold together. Moreover, in so doing, the virtual world in which the story takes place then appears to belong to the text itself; the fragments of word and picture come to seem meaningful in and of themselves.

The transcendental world of the story always remains empirical, however; it does not abandon the materials from which it emerges, even if its emergence cannot leave them unchanged. Deleuze opposes his 'transcendental empiricism' to Kant's 'transcendental idealism'. For Kant, sensory experience only makes sense when it is organised intellectually according to the doctrine of the faculties, in terms of

categories that are always-already attributed to all experience⁸⁵. For Deleuze, knowledge is derived from experience, but that experience always exceeds our ability to comprehend it⁸⁶. The ‘transcendental’ in Deleuzian empiricism does not postulate an ultimate meaning, but a retrospective actualisation. What is transcendental in Deleuze’s empiricism is the relation, but only insofar as relations are external to their terms⁸⁷. The terms which seem to surround the relation are only determinable after they have been related. The world cannot, therefore, be pre-defined; it must be produced and experienced as it happens. The various fragments connected and assembled in reading *Fullmetal Alchemist* gain retrospective coherence, and some intrinsic meaningfulness, precisely because they have been subject to connection and assembly. As such, the seeming consistency of the text is nothing more than the coherence and continuity of the work of reading itself⁸⁸.

For this reason, the real minimal unit in comics is not the panel—as both Groensteen and McCloud contend—but the *assemblage*, which is always spatio-topological in the first instance. To read *Fullmetal Alchemist* is not to interpret it, but to *experiment* with it. Ed Elric is not the only one with a discovery to make in these pages of *Fullmetal Alchemist*; in reading *Fullmetal Alchemist* we (as readers) discovered—and, indeed, produced—the text within the elements presented to us, such that we could then recognise that text as saying what it can very obviously be read as saying⁸⁹. This alchemy of reading is always an impossible transformation, rather than an ‘equivalent exchange’. In *Fullmetal Alchemist*, equivalent exchange is articulated almost as a version of the scientific principles of the conservation of mass and energy (which views them as components in a closed system, such that they can neither be created nor destroyed only rearranged). This is said to be the fundamental principle underlying all alchemic reactions. However, through his adventures, Ed Elric discovers that alchemy does not operate according to this principle of equivalent exchange, as he had been led to believe; its impossible transformations are never quite as calculable as he had hoped. Similarly, the story-worlds produced through the alchemy of reading exceed the elements of their texts, but are never estranged from them. This is the case, even though, upon

reading, these story-worlds seem to belong to those splashes of ink on a page encountered as manga texts.



Figure 3.1

Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 5. Page 162. © Masashi Kishimoto 1999.

3. Irresponsible Pictures

Figure 3.1 is an image from an *omake* in which Masashi Kishimoto explains the way in which he goes about planning his action sequences with a set of thumbnail sketches. In planning his action sequences at least, Kishimoto's primary concern is with flow. As he explains:

I try to be very conscious of the flow of scenes in *Naruto*, so as soon as I come up with an idea for an action sequence, I choreograph it in a set of thumbnail

drawings, like storyboards. I try to keep the overall page count for the chapter in mind, but things usually keep expanding and opening out, taking up more and more pages while I work out the best camera angles, without even a thought as to where the dialogue will fall. Next I number the sketches, figure out which scenes are the most crucial, make sure that the two-page spreads will actually land on pages that face each other... And then I number the pages and break them down into panels. Then I discover that I've used up more pages than I'm supposed to have in the entire chapter... which means I have to go back and cut sequences and erase things.¹

Here Kishimoto describes the iterative process of sketching and ordering through which he designs the fight scenes in *Naruto*. He describes this 'thumbnail choreography' as a kind of 'storyboard' in which he juggles the demands of dynamic storytelling with the editorial constraints imposed by the magazine in order to produce the final pages for publication. This process might be likened to the practices of storyboarding in film or television. However, this broken down and disseminated 'storyboard' layout—or at least a refinement of it—is always the final, material product in *Naruto*; it is not simply a means of getting there.

In *Making Comics*, the North American comics artist turned comics theorist, Scott McCloud, devotes an entire chapter to the process of adapting a narrative project to the particular resources and demands of graphic narrative. He frames this process as a set of five choices to be made by a creator: the choice of moment; the choice of frame; the choice of image; the choice of word; and the choice of flow². Some consideration needs to be given to each of these choices—although not necessarily in any particular order—in order to determine what information is necessary and how it will be distributed in a work. For example, in his explanation of his process of planning action scenes, Kishimoto explicitly attends to and prioritises issues of flow and framing ('the best camera angles'), while he is almost entirely unconcerned with the choice of word ('without even a thought as to where the dialogue will fall').

Despite this, McCloud explains that the first of these choices—the choice of moment—is perhaps the most important choice because it is only through the careful selection of ‘moments’ that the story can be broken down into ‘readable chunks’³. Once a creator has determined which moments they need to isolate to adequately convey a particular narrative, they can draw out a sequence of panels, each of which should further develop the plot—however incrementally. The four other choices—of frame, image, word and flow—are concerned with how best to present each point or ‘moment’ so as to tell the story most effectively and to guide the reader through the work. As such, McCloud likens the comic story to a dot-to-dot puzzle: a series of points that can be joined together (in the correct order) to produce a coherent and recognisable whole⁴.

Similarly, Thierry Groensteen understands this set of decisions to be made by creators as constitutive of the ‘breakdown’, the process through which a story is fractured into a series of discrete temporal units:

[The breakdown] seizes pre-existing narrative material (drawn up or not, somewhat vague or already structured), and transforms this fable or discourse into a succession of discrete units, the panels, which are frequently associated with verbal utterances, and that are links in the narrative chain... To each panel corresponds a situation in the flux of the story. This situation arises from what we can call the chrono-topia (or temporal segmentation); it also corresponds to a place in the structural economy of the sequential discourse.⁵

In this way, the story is broken down into a linear sequence of temporally delimited chunks or ‘moments’ (which Groensteen refers to as the ‘chrono-topia’). Each of these moments is captured by a separate panel. The panels are arranged on the pages to produce a ‘spatio-topia’ from which any (sufficiently competent) reader should be able to (re)assemble the story from its constituent parts. The breakdown distributes information within a comic; it attributes ‘modes of enunciation’ and distils them in (story) time by organising them and determining their arrangement in the *mise-en-page*. In this way, the *mise-en-page* converts the

already sequential organisation of the story into a spatio-topological apparatus; the action of the breakdown is to produce a chain of ‘moments’ within the narrative which are rendered as a sequence of panels arranged cumulatively on the page, according to whatever reading protocol is in place in a work.

In much the same way, Scott McCloud places the relationship between time (in the story) and space (on the page) at the core of his project to understand how comics work. He insists that, insofar as they fracture and disseminate stories, ‘[comics] panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments’ on the page⁶. To produce meaning from comics, readers must learn to perceive time spatially; they must find (story) time in the spatial relations between the panels on the page. The sequence of panels is always vectorised in the direction of reading. Comics creators convert their stories into a succession of ‘moments’ displayed as panels in sequence. By reading each panel in sequence readers reverse this process; they recover the story disseminated in the panels by rendering space on the page as time in the story. In this way, McCloud understands the *mise-en-page* as a kind of ‘temporal map’, which enables readers to navigate through—and (re)produce—the story⁷.

Yet, to pick up from where I left off in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, Groensteen argues that comics present an incomplete and open-ended semiological system⁸. Through the alchemic action of reading, a ‘story-world’ (of sorts) emerges in the reader’s imagination from the elements arranged on the page as readers produce relations between the fragments—the pictures, letters and panels—dispersed across the page. But this ‘story-world’ emerges from the action of more than one type of arthrology. While McCloud tends to focus entirely on what Groensteen terms the ‘restricted arthrology’ of proximate and linear relations within comics, Groensteen also notes the emergence of a ‘braided’ network of distant and translinear relations which constitute what he terms a ‘generalised arthrology’. However, as I argued in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, these braided relations are not merely a supplement to a system that proceeds primarily through a succession of immediate, linear relations; the ‘story’ emerges as much from the wider network of relations produced within the ‘multiframe’ (the sum of all the fragments of which the text is

composed) as it does from the cumulative reading of successive panels on the page. The networks of relations (which can be linear, translinear and nonlinear) that are produced in and through the practices of readers are important because they pose problems for dominant theorisations of the relationships between time and space in the formal organisation of comics⁹.

In this chapter, I want to use examples from Kubo Tite's *Bleach*, Hiromu Arakawa's *Fullmetal Alchemist*, and Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto* to think through the 'geography' of *shōnen* manga form. In this way, I want to approach *shōnen* manga in much the same way that Marcus Doel and David Clarke conduct their analysis of film form¹⁰. That is, in this chapter at least, I am not concerned with the geographies *of* manga (the ways in which manga are produced, distributed and read by particular people in particular contexts and places). Nor am I concerned with the geographies *in* manga (the documentations, representations and simulations of space and place within particular manga works). What I want to think through here are the geographies through which manga are realised *as* manga, or what Doel and Clarke might call the geographies of manga *qua* manga. Doel and Clarke argue that films are realised in and through the action of montage; *shōnen* manga are realised through the action of the practices of reading on the *mise-en-page* in which their spatial and temporal organisation is intertwined.

Panels and moments

Scott McCloud is often credited with the claim that comic panels contain single, discrete 'moments' of time (for example, in Scott Bukatman's argument that comics are a 'medium of the instant'¹¹). However, while McCloud does refer repeatedly to the 'choice of moment' in *Making Comics*, the argument he advances in *Understanding Comics* is far more nuanced than this straightforward claim—even if it remains problematic. McCloud does initially describe comic panels as distilled moments in sequence, but he goes on to problematise this straightforward claim. He explains that 'time in comics is infinitely weirder than that'¹². Rather than arguing that individual panels present *instants* within the story, McCloud goes on to argue that panels have *discrete durations*. The precise temporal coordinates of



Figure 3.2
Arakawa. *Fullmetal Alchemist* Vol 2. Pages 40–41.

each panel may be more or less ambiguous, but each panel (as a portion of space on the page) contains a bounded parcel of time in the story.

These parcels are often literally bounded by their frames—thin lines drawn around the edges of each panel. One consequence of this bounding is that the contents of each panel are designated as a continuous image; all

Implied panels?

Figure 3.2 shows a spread from the end of the *Fullmetal Alchemist* chapter we ‘read’ in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, in which Ed reflects upon the horrific events that occurred in the chapter and rails against his own impotence despite being a powerful alchemist.

of the elements within the panel are presented as spatially and temporally coincidental. A continuous image alone cannot designate time because, as Malcolm Turvey explains, 'there cannot be an image of time, at least not in the sense of an image that depicts time'. While an image can depict events that happen in time, time is not 'some thing' in which events happen that can be 'revealed, pointed to, and described' in a picture¹³.

However, McCloud explains that, in comics, the spatial and temporal coincidence of continuous images is compromised by the introduction of 'sound' into the panel, most commonly as written/spoken dialogue or onomatopoeia¹⁴. McCloud explains that sound can only exist in time¹⁵. While a silent panel might isolate a single instant from the overall flow of time within the story, the introduction of 'sound' necessarily forces the duration of a panel beyond the instant. This is different to the ways in which readers encounter dialogue in other textual forms. For example, novel readers often encounter 'sound' in the form of quoted dialogue amidst the various other ways in which words are

In this box, I am interested in the speech balloon in (or floating over) the fifth panel of this spread. All the other speech bubbles on these pages appear to be contained within the boundaries of their encompassing panels, but this particular speech bubble floats over, and escapes the limits of, the fifth panel. The panel shows Roy Mustang looking backwards, but not turning around, while he listens to Ed Elric talk. The picture contained within the panel shows his reaction to what Ed has to say—or, more accurately, his (seemingly passive) non-reaction, which only serves to increase Ed's frustration. Thierry Groensteen argues that word balloons presuppose panels. While panels can exist without word balloons, speech bubbles are not similarly self-sufficient. An isolated balloon within an empty space on the page attests to the existence of a panel, whether that panel is visible or not. Within Groensteen's system of comics, the panel occupies a discrete and singular site within the totality of the comic's 'multiframe', the plane on which the entirety of the story—or, at least, the

deployed to tell the story. The meaning that readers find in novels is not (or, at least, not usually) dependent on the graphic design of the text itself. In comics, on the other hand, words are treated 'graphically' such that the 'text reads as an image'¹⁶. The words, often presented in stylised fonts and/or word balloons, become part of the continuous image within the panel, and in doing so they implicate sound into the image-space of the panel. This is why McCloud argues that graphically presented 'sound effects' in comics introduce 'time' into panels that might otherwise be understood as a sequence of instants within the story.

He argues that the temporal limits of the panel must exceed the time taken for the 'sound' to be 'heard' in the story. When a panel contains multiple speech bubbles those bubbles are usually arranged in the order in which they are 'spoken'. Each bubble occupies its own parcel of 'time' within the panel's overall duration, but there is no simple or absolute way to calculate exactly how much story time passes through each speech bubble within a panel, or through each panel in the story. The panel itself gives

sequential discourse—is arrayed^a. Panels are juxtaposed with one another within this multiframe; they are not generally superimposed upon each other.

In Figure 3.2, Ed's speech (which is contained in the word balloon) does not 'belong' entirely to the panel over which it floats. Similarly, the word balloon in panel 6 does not originate from the contents of that panel. This balloon continues Ed's speech, and the panel beneath it shows Al listening to the words. These bubbles seem almost to belong to an implied panel, at least part of which is superimposed on the panels containing Mustang and Al's(non-) reactions. Groensteen's system does allow for balloons which overflow their panels. However, Groensteen explains that these balloons are always attributed to a speaker within a certain panel by an appendix, or 'tail', even if that speaker is positioned 'out of frame' and, therefore, not visible^b. The balloons in these panels lack such attribution—they have no tail. The balloon superimposed upon the fifth panel

some general indication that some time has passed in the story, but it is usually impossible to quantify this with any certainty.

The shape and size of a panel may give some general indication of its duration: McCloud notes that small, narrow panels often occupy less time in the story than more expansive panels that occupy more of the space on the page. In this way, the shape of a panel can affect the reading experience and shape the reader's perception of time passing within a panel, but this is by no means an absolute equation. Large panels can indicate the importance of an event or panel within the story, even if that event is only fleeting within the passing of time in the story. Similarly, McCloud explains that borderless or wordless panels (of any size) can imbue their contents with a sense of 'timelessness'. This can be compounded when a panel 'bleeds' off the edge of the page. As McCloud explains, without a frame to bound the contents of a panel, '[t]ime is no longer contained... but instead haemorrhages and escapes into timeless space'¹⁷. As such, any indication of duration is usually given by the contents of a

does not seem to belong to the panel inhabited by Mustang; it does not imply a an 'out-of-frame' Ed who would be locatable within the coordinates of perspectival space if only the panel frame extended further. The relative positions of Ed and Mustang are such that the two could only be contained within the same panel if it were re-drawn from a completely different angle. Neither does the position of the word balloon indicate Ed's position relative to Mustang. The balloons in the fifth and sixth panels of this spread seem to belong to an implied panel, the boundaries of which are difficult to ascertain. In this panel, Ed continues to sit on the stairs and rail against the injustice of the events to which he's been witness. The speech belongs to this implied panel, which occurs at exactly the same time as the events pictured in the panels drawn on the page. As such, this layering of (implied) panels complicates the spatio-topological layout of the page, and problematises the notion of linear temporal progression between successive panels on the page.

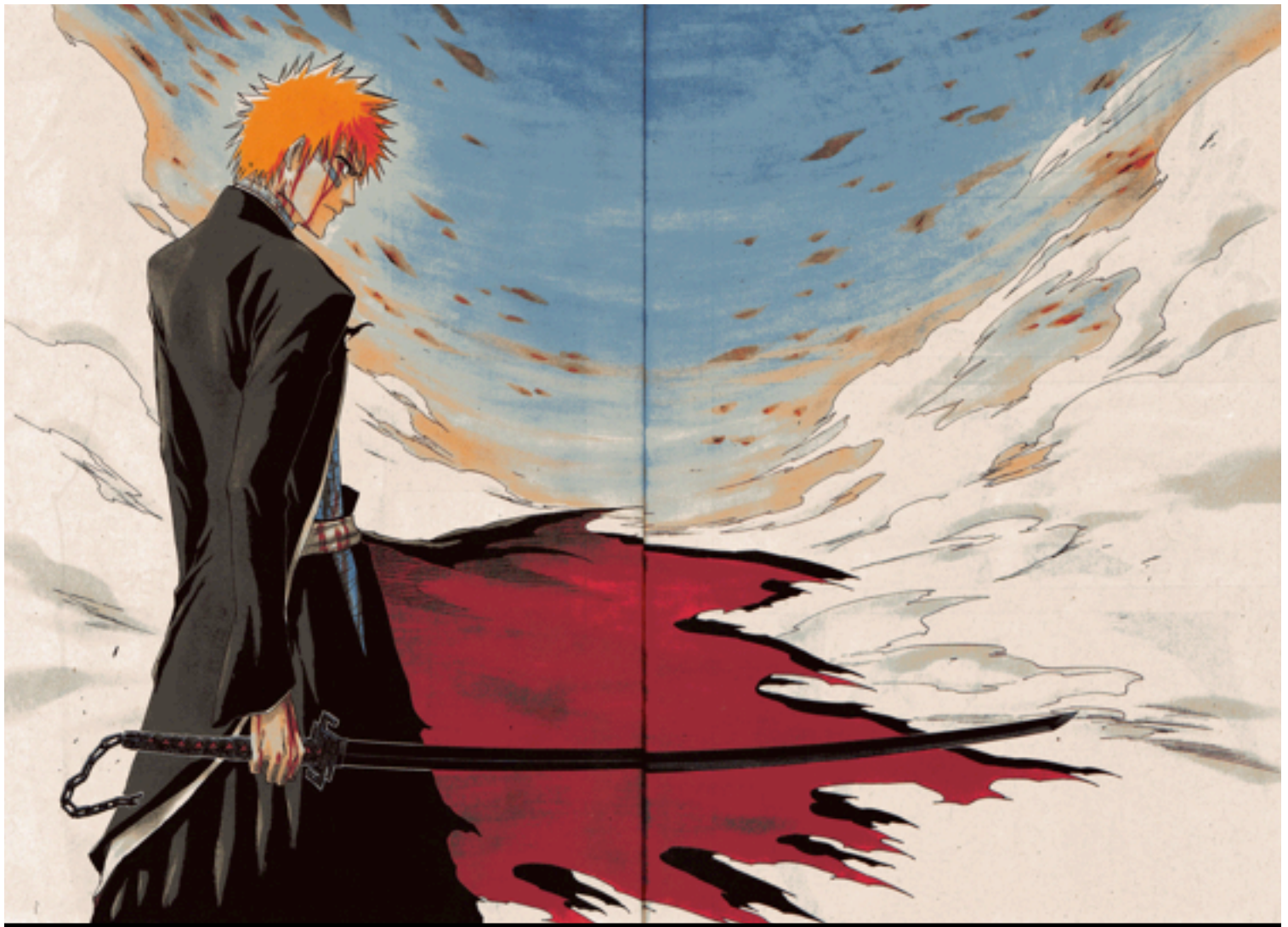


Figure 3.3

Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Ch 162. Pages 404–405. © Tite Kubo 2001.

panel—the images and words contained within it—rather than by the panel itself, or its frame. Similarly, it can be difficult to gauge how much story time elapses between panels on a page, unless something about those panels lends more or less calculable duration to the ‘gap’.

Patchwork temporalities

Bankai

Figure 3.3 shows a double-page spread from *Bleach* Chapter 162. Unusually, the entire chapter was printed in colour in the magazine. This spread is taken from a longer fight sequence between the series protagonist, Ichigo, and one of the captains of the Soul Society,

McCloud understands *mise-en-page* in terms of linear relations between the past, the present and the future, but which are always contingent on the reader's progress through the text. Wherever a reader's eyes are at any given moment is always the 'present'. 'Pastness' and 'futurity' are determined in relation to this 'present'; all the panels that have already been read compose the 'past', while all those that have yet to be read remain in the 'future'. This is the case even though the reader can (usually) see multiple panels simultaneously, by virtue of their co-presence on the page being read. The events that occur within each panel must always be *presented* because pictures cannot be marked for tense in the same way that words routinely are¹⁸. I can say that someone walks into a room, that they walked into it, or that they will walk into that room, but I can only ever draw a picture of someone walking into the room. Indeed, I can only draw a picture of someone in that room and try to suggest that they are in the process of walking through carefully selecting a pose and making use of other techniques to suggest motion in the image. The picture only comes to

Byakuya. The major plotline of the series revolves around Ichigo's quest to save Rukia, who has been taken captive and is about to be executed by the Soul Society. During this plot arc, Ichigo has become a far stronger warrior and learned many new skills. In particular Ichigo has just mastered the second release of his *zanpakû-to*. This powerful and difficult technique, known as 'bankai', is usually only achieved by captains of the Soul Society after many years of practice and training. Ichigo has achieved bankai in an unimaginably short time. The event shown in this panel is only a very brief moment drawn from the fight, but it displays an extremely significant turn of events. Presenting the revelation as a single panel spread across, and bleeding off, an entire double-page spread, emphasises the importance of the turn of events. Without mastering bankai, it was very obvious that Ichigo could not defeat Byakuya and rescue Rukia; having mastered bankai, Ichigo is able to take on Byakuya and perhaps even win.

There is also an element of humour to the spread. Before this point in the

gain a 'tense' through its context. In comics, this temporal context arises from the position of a panel within a sequence on a page. This contextual 'tense' is necessarily contingent on the progress of the reader at any time.

Mark Bernard and James Bucky Carter argue that graphic narratives approach time in a distinctive and productive way. They broadly agree with McCloud about the complexities of conflating space and time in the processes of reading comics. However, while McCloud emphasises the linear relations between panels—most notably in his theory of transitions¹⁹—Bernard and Carter are interested in the complex, *trans-linear* relations between panels that are co-present on the comics page. Because each panel is presented within a sequence of other panels, every panel is inevitably and visibly 'haunted' by those that precede it and those that will follow it. They argue that the *mise-en-page* in comics allows creators to play with the 'simultaneous, multitudinous dimensionality deeply intertwined in and part of individual [reading] experience'²⁰.

story, readers did not know the form of Ichigo's bankai. Each *zanpakû-to* in *Bleach* has a very different form and abilities. Despite this the second release (the bankai) of all the other *zanpakû-to* in the series is considerably larger and more impressive than their ordinary forms. Throughout the series, characters have commented upon the unusually large size of Ichigo's *zanpakû-to*. However, this spread reveals the more powerful release of this *zanpakû-to* to be far smaller and less impressive than its ordinary form; Ichigo's bankai appears to be nothing more than an ordinary, black katana. The large spread, then, seems to be something of an anti-climax and, over the next few pages, Byakuya insists that it cannot be a 'real' bankai. He mocks Ichigo for his failure to properly achieve the feat and bemoans his arrogance for even believing that it was possible to do so. Ultimately, however, Ichigo's bankai is a 'real' bankai—its small size is due to a concentration of its power of speed—and Ichigo is able to go on to defeat Byakuya with it.

They explain this through an example drawn from Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's much acclaimed *Watchmen*. In the opening pages of this graphic novel, readers are shown a pair of detectives investigating a murder. The panels on these pages are a mixture of the 'present' action (the detectives investigating the scene) interspersed with 'past' action (the murder taking place). The *mise-en-page* here displays a checkerboard of temporalities, such that 'past' events are juxtaposed with their effects in the 'present'. Bernard and Carter explain that, in so doing, Moore and Gibbons show how 'the past can continue to both rupture the present... and to reverberate throughout the space-time continuum'²¹. These kinds of 'patchwork temporalities' are not unique to graphic narratives, but they are inherent to the form of comics. Whereas creators of other media can only 'bridge the dimensions' by making recourse to 'obstructive technique' (such as split-screen effects in film or columnar differentiation in literature), patchwork temporalities are 'part and parcel of the very nature of sequential art'²². In this way, comics can be said to produce a curiously

Presenting the past

Individual panels in *shōnen* manga do not always indicate the 'present' within story time. Indeed, whole pages, sections or chapters may not pertain to current events within the story. Most commonly, these sections are flashbacks to past events, but *mangaka* do sometimes include sections of prolepsis in the text (in premonitions, for example). Many *shōnen* series make ample use of flashback techniques. In part, this is an artifact of their ongoing serialisation: as a series unfolds—sometimes over a decade or more—new characters, situations or events are introduced and these often require some element of 'back-story' for explanation. Even so, many *mangaka* do seem to choose non-linear forms of storytelling as a means of creating suspense or otherwise making their stories more interesting and engaging. For example, Hiromu Arakawa chose to begin *Fullmetal Alchemist* somewhere in the middle of the story, and to gradually reveal her characters, plotlines and settings by weaving backwards and forwards in



Figure 3.4

Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 16. Pages 118–119. Print. © Tite Kubo 2001.

haunted ‘continual present’. Each panel can never be fully or self-sufficiently ‘present’ because it must always participate in the ‘multidimensional’ *mise-en-page* in which it finds itself inevitably ruptured and compromised. In this sense, the panel might be more usefully understood as producing a ‘fugitive present’:

narrative time as the series has unfolded.

Extended sections of a *shōnen* manga series which show events in the ‘past’—and which might span a few pages or several chapters—are often produced with blackened, inked gutters. Figure 3.4 shows a spread from a flashback sequence in Tite Kubo’s *Bleach*. This sequence shows

In every moment, the pressures of the past enter into dissonant conjunction with uncertain possibilities of the future. The fugitive present is both constituted by this dissonant conjunction between past and present and rendered uncertain in its direction by it.²⁵

Connolly argues that the device of flashback in film is never simply (nor inevitably) concerned with representing the causality of the past on the present. Flashbacks expose the workings of time beyond straightforward, linear chronology. By way of an example, he argues that Orson Welles presents a set of subjectively mediated flashbacks, which accumulate throughout *Citizen Kane* to form a composite that exceeds any of the singular perspectives within the film. The film presents a model of perspectivalism in which no single perspective can be elevated to a position of 'objectivity'. The composite is built up, but it never becomes fully coherent. The assemblage of analepsis in *Citizen Kane* fails to provide any kind of deeper explanation; indeed, it actively works against this kind of

the events which led to the death of one of Rukia's friends and colleagues, about which she feels responsible. This contributes to her ongoing characterisation and helps the reader to make sense of her passivity and resignation towards her imminent execution in the 'current' events of the story. The blackened gutters distinguish this sequence from the current events in the story, and help the reader to work out that these events occurred some years previous to the Soul Society plot arc.

The transitions between 'current' and 'past' events in the story is sometimes indicated by a gradual inking (or uninking) of the gutters around the panels. Figure 3.5 shows a spread from *Naruto* in which Naruto stares into the swirling water in the toilet bowl and reflects upon some advice given to him by Jiraya in order to help him to learn the difficult 'Rasengan' ninja technique for which his father was famous. The gutters around the first five panels in this spread, which show 'present' events are left uninked. A set of increasingly thick black lines around the sixth panel (which shows a 'close-up'

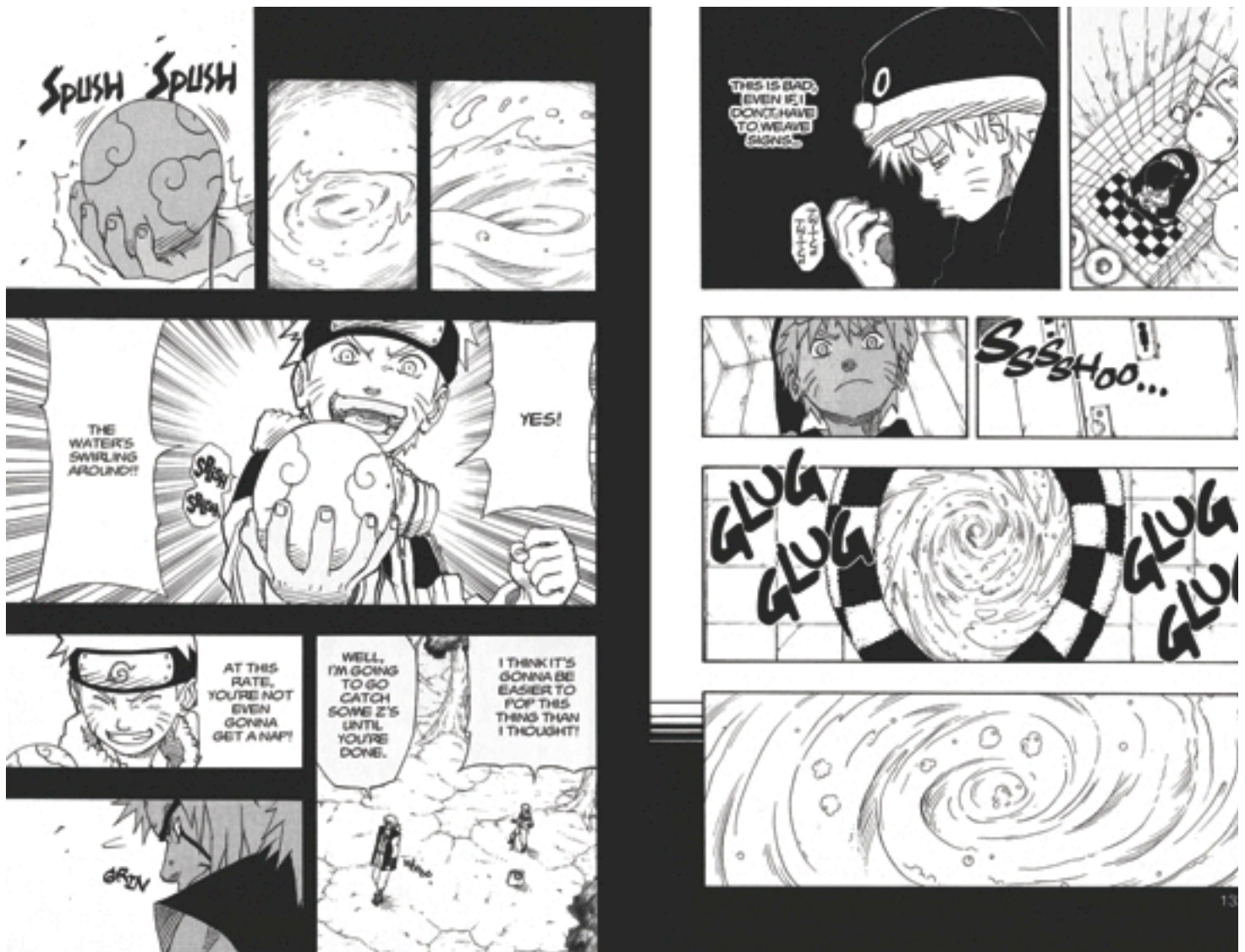


Figure 3.5

Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 17. Pages 132–133. © Masashi Kishimoto 1999.

logic. In this way, Connolly argues that the film portrays and exposes the complex and layered role that the past plays in the present.

While Connolly (and others cited in this chapter) are interested in a more general theorisation of time, my argument here is limited to the relationships between the spatial organisation of *mise-en-page* in manga

drawing of the swirling water in the toilet) mark the transition to fully inked gutters surrounding the remembered events from the past.

That is not to say that blackened gutters are *always* used to indicate the 'pastness' of the events in manga; inking the gutters is not a universal 'grammatical' marker for tense within



Figure 3.6

Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 42. Pages 94–95. Print. © Masashi Kishimoto 1999.

and the time within the story that emerges after the *mise-en-page* has been subjected to the action of assembly in the practices of readers. I do not intend to make any more general claim about the nature of time (or, indeed, space), beyond this. To do so would be far beyond the scope of this thesis.

Bernard and Carter argue that, by their very nature, graphic narratives

the ‘manga dialect’ of a broader ‘visual language’ with which graphic narratives are created. The blackness of the gutters must be interpreted within the context of the ongoing reading of the text. For example, the spread shown in Figure 3.6 has blackened gutters, but the events it shows did not take place in the ‘past’. The spread is part of an ongoing fight

present readers with a collage of panels which necessarily ‘decompose the shape of things’ and ‘rearrange them into a multidimensional vision’²⁴. They situate the techniques of graphic narrative within broader trajectories of cubism and futurism in twentieth century art and literature. For Bernard and Carter, graphic narrative is the ‘most precise culmination’²⁵ of these projects because the form routinely decentres perspective in order to express multiple states of being simultaneously. Similarly, Clare Pitkethly argues that, through the progressive reading of successive panels, the comics reader becomes a ‘perpetually displaced differentiator’ who bestows ‘temporal sense’ as they move through the text²⁶. Yet, Bernard and Carter’s reader is not simply ‘displaced’; they are always inevitably ‘multiplaced’ by the structural form of comics²⁷.

Clarity and intensity

The relationships between space (on the comics page) and time (in the story), as produced in and through the action of reading, are far more complex than is suggested by

in which the combatants are relying on their ninja illusion skills (*genjutsu*). Alongside *taijutsu* (physical techniques) and *ninjutsu* (special, and often magical, ninja techniques), *genjutsu* is a category of ninja technique in *Naruto* through which ninja are able to produce illusions and otherwise control the minds of their opponents. The blackened gutters in Figure 3.5 suggest the difficulties of grasping reality at all in an atmosphere of ninja illusion. Figure 3.5 is discussed further in the next box – ‘Multiplying the moment’.

Similarly, not all analepsis in *shōnen* manga is indicated by blackened gutters. Extended back-story plot arcs are often drawn with ‘empty’ gutters, like any ‘ordinary’ part of the story. The back-story arc which explained how Kakashi came to have a single ‘sharingan’ eye in *Naruto* is presented as a self-contained section of the series from chapters 239–244, which is entitled: ‘Kakashi Chronicles ~ Boys’ Life on the Battlefield’. Other than this separate title, which appears in the contents list of the *tankōbon* volume and on the first page of

McCloud's explanation of comics as temporal maps of stories. Neither time nor narrative are inevitably or straightforwardly linear. Manga are particularly interesting in this regard because the narrative structure and the *mise-en-page* are often designed to take advantage of and emphasise nonlinearity. Manga—and particularly fight sequences within *shōnen* manga—are written to produce an intensity of reading experience rather than to attempt to guarantee the clarity of storytelling.

For McCloud, clarity should be an important guiding principle in the process of breaking down a story and adapting it to the comics format²⁸. When clarity governs the choices creators make regarding moment, frame, word, image and flow, the outcome should be a clear, unambiguous sequence of panels from which sufficiently competent readers will be able to recover the story in a straightforward manner. Intensity, on the other hand, is concerned with that which adds interest or excitement to a story. Comics creators can make use of a wide variety of techniques which allow them to invest their stories with

chapter 239, readers can only determine that this section presents past events contextually. Regular readers know that Kakashi is now an adult and Naruto's *sensei* (his teacher, mentor and commanding ninja officer). This sequence features a much younger Kakashi, still in the process of training to be a ninja himself. Therefore, it must be a back-story arc.

The story of how Urahara came to be exiled from the Soul Society in *Bleach* is told in a separate 'Turn Back the Pendulum' arc, which is positioned between chapters 315 and 316 of the series. These chapters are numbered -108 to -97 to indicate that they took place in the past. As in the 'Kakashi Chronicles', the *mise-en-page* in the 'Turn back the Pendulum' arc looks the same as any 'normal' section of the manga. The panels within these extended flashback/back-story sequences are presented as if they were happening in the 'present'. Both sequences are marked out in some way as 'past' (both structurally and contextually), but the sequences themselves are constructed as they

intensity: extreme depth cues, 'wild variations' of frame size and shape; graphic contrast; exaggeration of pose or expression; 'virtuoso drawing technique'; 'breaking the fourth wall'²⁹; and the use of unusual angles, for example³⁰. McCloud pictures the process of creating comics as a balancing act between clarity and intensity. Creators need to ensure that they invest their stories with sufficient interest, but not in any way that will compromise the principle of 'pure, clear storytelling'³¹.

The balance between clarity and intensity is often further weighted towards intensity in manga than it is in European or North American comics. McCloud explains that, despite increasing amounts of cross-cultural influence and borrowing, manga do remain distinctive within the broad spectrum of graphic narrative style because they often routinely privilege intensity over clarity and, in doing so, exaggerate the sense of audience participation. The *mise-en-page* and character poses that are commonly found in *shōnen* manga are also found in 'Western' action comics, and increasingly so. This is largely due to a

would be if the events were currently ongoing in the story.

Multiplying the moment

Figure 3.6 shows a double-page spread from Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto*. The spread forms part of a plotline in which Sasuke sets out to take revenge on his older brother, Itachi, a renegade 'missing nin' who abandoned their ninja village after he murdered their entire (extended) family while Sasuke was a young child. Sasuke's quest for vengeance has, thus far, defined his entire ninja career and even his whole purpose in life. This quest culminates in a protracted fight to the death between the two brothers. Figure 3.6 is taken from the middle of this fight sequence. Here, Sasuke, who is crouching unseen behind the throne-like chair on which Itachi sits, has just stabbed his older brother through the chest with a stick. The spread shows Itachi's reaction to this turn of events.

The spread is composed of three panels, each of which occupies

shared concern about generating excitement for—and in—readers. Despite this, McCloud argues that manga readers seem to derive profoundly ‘visceral thrills’ from the intensive techniques activated in the process of reading manga, which they do not seem to get when they read most other forms of graphic narrative. This physical sense of participation places the reader ‘inside the action’³² of the manga, but the intensity of the experience often comes at the expense of ‘clear’—and certainly linear—storytelling.

Vision is often conceived of as an integrative and synthetic sense through which viewers gain a holistic (over-) view of a scene³³. This is close to the way in which McCloud imagines the action of reading comics. He hopes that readers will gain a clear and complete account of the story after they have (re)assembled the panels arranged on the page. Yet the assemblages of fragmentary panels presented on the manga page often seem to deny any such mastery. These assemblages of panels produce an effect similar to what the surrealists were trying to achieve through collage.

roughly one third of the total page area. The panels create a kind of (rectangular) ‘wheel’, each segment of which shows the same moment (or thereabouts) from a different perspective or angle. Arranged in this way, the spread seems to multiply and reiterate the moment in order to emphasise this important, and surprising, turn of events. Up until this point in the series, Sasuke had always been the weaker, younger brother. He had been striving to live up to—and surpass—his talented and more experienced older sibling. Having now stabbed Itachi through the chest, Sasuke has proved himself to be strong and cunning enough a ninja to be able to take on Itachi in a fight, and perhaps even to win. This is even more surprising because, prior to this occurrence, Itachi had appeared to be firmly in control of the situation and in no danger whatsoever from his angry younger brother.

The multiplication of a moment in this spread might be regarded as a stutter in the (story) time that would ordinarily pass across, and derive from, the process of reading a sequence of panels. This imbues the

Martin Jay explains that the surrealists were interested in collage precisely because it does not produce an holistic overview of a scene; collage exposes the differential play of presence and absence, presentation and representation.

Collage operates in direct opposition to modernism's search for perceptual plenitude and unimpeachable self-presence. Modernism's goal is to objectify the formal constituents of a given medium, making these the objects of vision, and beginning with the very ground that is believed to be the origin of their existence. Collage problematises that goal by setting up discourse instead of presence, a discourse that is founded on buried origin, a discourse that is fuelled by that absence:

Collage generates meaning through processes of indexical signification. That is, collage works through an interplay between the physical residue of an original source and the 'pattern' discovered in a work by those who view it. While the fragments from which manga are composed are not removed and recycled from any 'original

mise-en-page with intensity; it emphasises an event that is integral to the story. Groensteen describes this kind of technique as an action of 'nesting' or 'insetting' which deviates from the otherwise linear sequencing of the panels^a. This is a relatively common practice in graphic narratives of all types in which one or more panels are superimposed upon a larger panel. The larger panel can be said to include all of the smaller panels within it. These smaller panels usually present elements of a larger scene, which is encompassed by the larger panel in which they are implicated. The three panels in Figure 3.4 are not laid out on top of a larger pictorial panel (as is the case in all of Groensteen's examples); they are separated by blackened gutters.

The gutters in *Naruto*, as with many *shōnen* manga series, are usually left 'empty' such that they appear to be the colour of the paper on which the chapter is printed. Itachi and Sasuke are caught up in a furious battle of illusion (*genjutsu*), which makes it difficult—if not impossible—for the characters to determine what is 'real' and what is not. The panels in this

source' (in that they are drawn specifically for each spread), the *mise-en-page* always offers a fragmented vision which must be assembled by readers who 'discover' the 'pattern' in the panels scattered across the page.³⁴

In this way, the *mise-en-page* is more than simply a sequence of panels laid out across a page. A major problem with McCloud's analysis of comics is that he over-emphasises the individual panels and the immediate transitions between them. By focusing on the panel as the principle—or only—unit of analysis or assembly, he assumes a linearity of both narrative and perception. There is never any synthesis of vision, but a synthesis of story in the imagination which results from integrating incremental information from successive panels in the activity of reading. These panels remain distinct and the story emerges as a totalising overview. However, the panel is not the only unit at which graphic narratives are produced.

Manga series are produced and read at a number of different 'scales' in addition to the panel; they are variously encountered as *tankôbon*

spread are placed on top of a blackened 'void'. They are united and multiplied within this 'void', where it is impossible to distinguish between 'reality' and 'illusion'. The blackened void acts as a non-pictorial panel—or, perhaps, a 'non-panel'—which encompasses the three perspectives on this scene. This (non-)panel acts as both a 'negative presence' and a 'positive absence' because it 'contains the *presence of nothing*'^b.

For Groensteen, the action of inseting sets up a dialectic between part and whole by placing the various elements of a scene in relation to the encompassing (over-)view. This inevitably introduces a pause in the temporal progress of the story; it introduces a relationship of 'meanwhile' into a set of panels which are usually linked by 'then'. Inseting introduces a spatial relationship where, ordinarily, a temporal relationship should emerge. In so doing, it 'raises the stakes' for readers; it produces a remarkable gap in the spatio-temporal ordering of the page, without ceasing to participate fully in the *mise-en-page*. Groensteen explains that such insets are only very rarely

volumes, chapters, double-page spreads, and plot or character arcs, as well as panels. These units are not entirely arbitrary, nor are they merely incidental outcomes of linear processes of planning. In the *omake* from which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, for example, Masashi Kishimoto explains his process of ‘choreographing’ scenes as sketches of double-page spreads which are broken down into panels and organised so as to conform to the page requirements imposed by the magazine for each chapter³⁵.

Kishimoto also explained that *mise-en-page*, in his action sequences at least, was driven primarily by choices about ‘flow’. Yet, Kishimoto’s understanding of flow differs markedly from McCloud’s understanding. Kishimoto is concerned with the excitement generated through the flow of intensity in his action sequences, while McCloud largely places ‘flow’ in the service of directing readers through the panels on the page such that the story will emerge in the manner intended:

Choice of flow is partially about clearing your readers’ paths of

indispensable to storytelling in comics. The inset is always supplemental to the breakdown; it adds some kind of intensive emphasis to events but it is always subordinated to the ongoing march of the narrative. Indeed, the whole assemblage of inclusive and included panels participates in the breakdown as if it were a single, ordinary panel.

Yet, in dismissing the inset as merely supplemental – an unnecessary element which is excessive to the telling of the tale – Groensteen reduces ‘storytelling’ to the bare (and linear) relation of the plot as a simple sequence of actions. A single panel showing Itachi with the wooden pole thrust through his chest might have sufficed to inform the reader of what had transpired in Figure 3.6, but the supplemental relations introduced by multiplying the moment do add something to the story and, particularly, to the experience of reading that story. The spread emphasises the shock and pain that Itachi feels as he realises what has happened. Intensively ‘raising the stakes’ in this way is important to the ‘story’ even if it exceeds the minimal

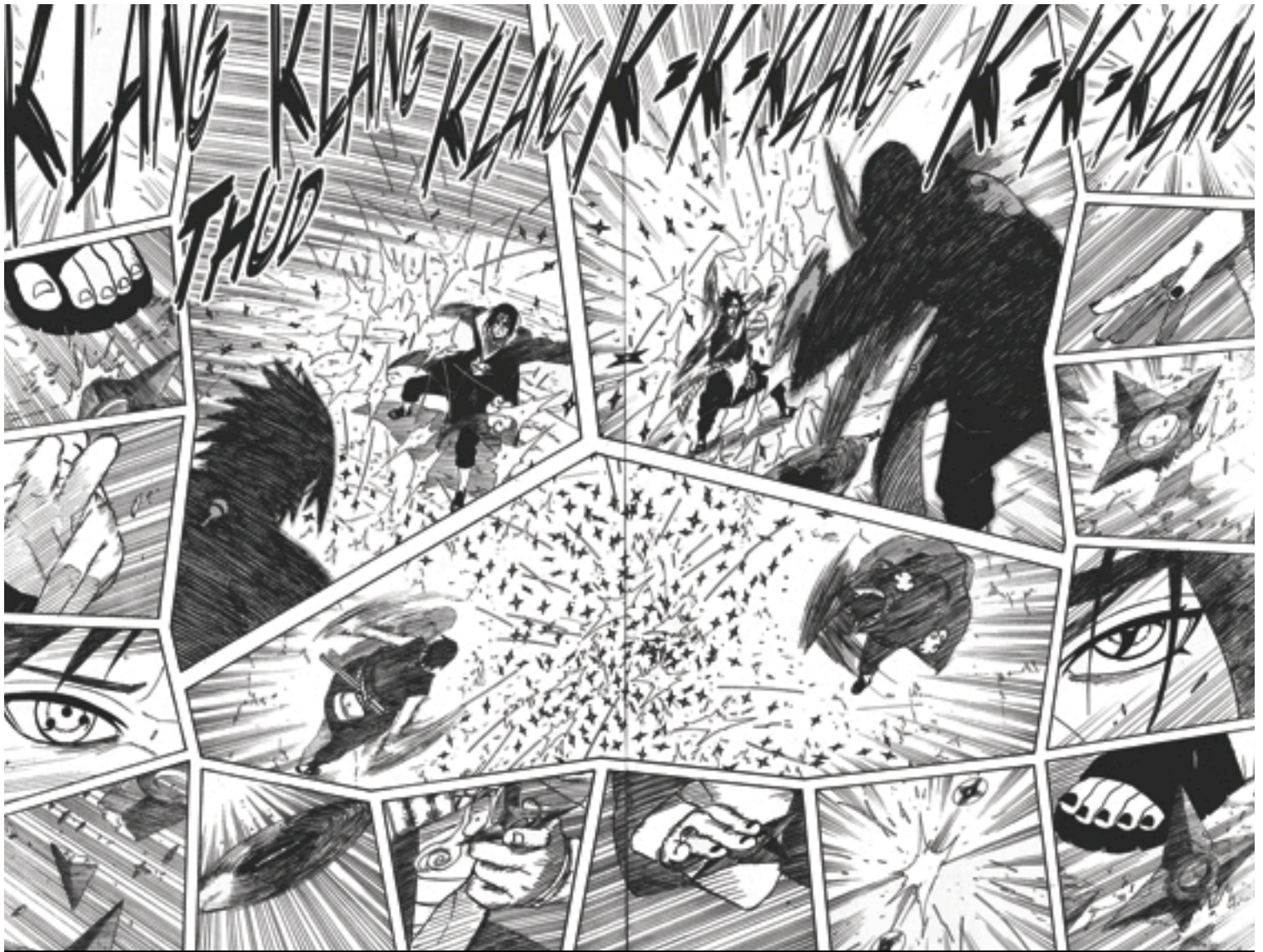


Figure 3.7
Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 42. Pages 140–141.

obstacles to a smooth reading experience. Equally important though, is how the sights along that path draw the readers' eyes...in the *order that best serves your storytelling goals.*

36

If a creator's goal is clarity of storytelling, they should carefully arrange the panels on the page such that they can easily, and coherently, be

information required to render the narrative intelligible.

Scattering the scene

Figure 3.7 is another spread from later on in the same fight sequence as Figure 3.6. Like the spread in Figure 3.6, Figure 3.7 offers an assemblage

pieced together by a reader following a linear reading protocol. The *mise-en-page* should sign-post the direction of reading and avoid any 'obstacles' in the sequence of panels. The transitions between each of the panels should enable the reader to recover the story in an uncomplicated, linear manner.

Clare Pitkethly argues that this kind of 'reductive mapping' attempts to 'prevent the [reader's] journey being anything other than a linear quest progressing towards a concealed presence [the story]'³⁷. Yet, for all that comics creators might try to guarantee the way in which their story will emerge after it has been subject to dissemination and (re)assembly in the reading process, they can never calculate their transitions so as to fully stabilise or capture meaning. There is an 'irreducible plurality' that is always-already 'within the medium'³⁸. As a result, comics ultimately fail in this quest to close off knowledge in which they '[dream] of deciphering a truth or origin which escape play'³⁹. The interesting thing about manga, and particularly action sequences within *shōnen* manga, is that there very often appears to be no intention to close down the plasticity of the work.

of fragmentary perspectives on the scene but in a more 'dynamic' way; rather than 'stilling' and prolonging a single moment within the fight, Figure 3.7 attempts to convey the violent action, rapid motion and clamorous noise of a fight to the death. While the spread presents a 'collage' composed of various perspectives on the fight, its 'baroque' *mise-en-page*^a fails to (even attempt to) offer a totalising overview of events. It is governed by the principle of intensity^b and, as such, it does not set out to guarantee 'clarity' in the reading experience. Kishimoto does not want to provide his readers with a blow-by-blow account of the action; he presents a cacophony of panels, lines, body parts, *shuriken* and lettering which is intended to evoke the atmosphere of the fight. The 'visceral thrills'^c of reading this 'shocking clash of images'^d comes as much from the process of assembling the fragments as it does from the synaesthetic techniques used to produce each element on the page.

Marcus Doel and David Clarke are interested in the potential for presenting ‘a shocking clash of images’ in film⁴⁰. They place montage — ‘the process of selecting, editing, and piecing together separate sections of imagery for a calculated effect, and the technique of producing a new composite whole from fragments of imagery’⁴¹ — at the centre of their discussion, as that which gives films their intrinsic geography as film. They argue that montage is the archetypal image of ‘nonrepresentational’ thought because it emphasises and insists upon the inherent nonlinearity of event structure. Through the action of montage, a composite whole is formed from an assemblage of views, the cuts between which ensure that the structure always remains open. Through montage, films ‘stutter’ and, in stuttering, they expose the openness of reality:

A medium that stutters is shocking not only because it breaks up reality effects, but also because it dramatises the fact that reality is not represented; it is mediated. Reality does not appear before us ready-made; it is produced in the most literal sense of the word.⁴²

The patchwork assembly of *mise-en-page* in manga can be understood in much the same way. The *mise-en-page* — and more broadly the ‘multiframe’ — encourages all manner of encounters between the various fragments of which it is composed from which events are precipitated. The performativity inherent to the *mise-en-page* goes some way to explaining why Scott McCloud believes that manga offer a more ‘participatory’ reading experience than their Euro-American equivalents.

Densifying the text

Allen and Ingulsrud have noted the flexibility of Japanese schoolchildren, who tend to employ multiple strategies when they read — and re-read — manga; they do not simply begin at the beginning, read all of the panels in sequence, attending to each element within those panels as they do so, and stop at the end⁴⁵. The children in their study approached the manga they read with a variety of aims, and they used a range of practices to achieve those aims. Indeed, individual children used different strategies at different times depending upon their exact purpose at that

time of reading. While some children were concerned with understanding the whole story, others focused on dialogue or facial expressions. Some skimmed the text for any points that were of particular interest to them and others scanned for jokes. In this way, they did not encounter the manga only as a linear sequence of panels.

As I noted in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, Groensteen uses the concept of 'braiding' to try to understand the networks of relations within a comics text that exist—or can be made to exist—beyond the immediate linear transitions of the breakdown⁴⁴. Each panel in a comic exists in (at least potential) relation to all the others. Each panel can be related to any and all the others in the series. Comics are suffused in—and operate through—an untotalisable set of intratextual relations: '[f]ar from presenting itself as a chain of panels, the comic demands a reading capable of searching, beyond linear relations, to the aspects or fragments of panels susceptible to being networked with certain aspects or fragments of other panels'⁴⁵. In practice, far more limited sets of relations tend to emerge because of the ways in which reading practices are shaped by the cultural contexts in which they occur. Nonetheless, unexpected readings can also occur. Whether or not something approximating the 'intended' story emerges in a reading, braiding acts to 'densify' the text.

For Groensteen stories are, by their very nature, developed as an irreversible linear chain. This vectorised disposition is always plagued by the series and networks which arise through the action of braiding. Braiding overdetermines the panel by producing 'hyper-topological coordinates' over and above the 'chronotopological coordinates' conferred by the breakdown. Groensteen refers to this as producing a 'tele-arthrology', which (super)imposes an associative logic on to the linear logic of the sequence.

The supplemental action of braiding may be especially important in serialised works, which juggle multiple plot lines at once. In these works, readers must move backwards and forwards among different installments in order to piece the story together. William Connolly explains that viewers of televised series draw upon a

background of 'virtual memory' which allow them to follow several story-lines across even substantial delays and interruptions:

In proceeding across interruptions from one scene to another, the viewer does not normally subject the previous scenes to explicit recollection. They form an implicit background, allowing the plot to unfold effortlessly. The past is folded into current perception as virtual memory, enabling the story line or joke to proceed. That is, the past operates on the present below the threshold of explicit memory.⁴⁶

Through the action of braiding, manga stories proceed in a similar manner. They do not simply accrue progressively; they are assembled from a diffuse range of 'information' drawn from multiple points at once. Readers do not always have to explicitly recall individual panels or actions from previous installments or pages. They are able to draw upon and accommodate new information within a broader background, which they produce in the ongoing process of reading their serialised texts.

Memory

Connolly's discussion of the role of 'virtual memory' in serialised television and Groensteen's discussion of 'braiding' in comics are, in some ways, quite similar. For Groensteen, comics readers can draw information from anywhere in the 'multiframe' in order to form a (non-visible) braided network from which the text can emerge as a meaningful story. Connolly explains that viewers of serialised television rely on virtual memory in order to pull multiple story lines and aspects of characterisation across scenes, episodes and seasons. He draws upon Henri Bergson's work on memory to explain the relationships between the event that viewers encounter as they view a series and the 'memory without recollection' that aids in the process of translating these encounters into meaningful perceptions. In Bergson's words:

[Memory] has retained from the past only the intelligently coordinated movement which represent the accumulated efforts of the past; it recovers those past

Connolly argues that this Bergsonian interpretation is useful because it enables us to think through a wide range of techniques and tactics through which affective memories can be manipulated in an attempt to structure perception and judgement. Clive Barnett is concerned that this account of affect—as something which operates in a kind of subliminal ‘layer’ prior to and underlying conscious thought—inadvertently casts film or television viewers in a passive role in relation to the determining powers of the media they view.

Classical media-effects research is often criticised for assuming a hypodermic model of media power, ascribing to ‘the media’ the ability to inject their preferred messages into the minds of their audiences. Connolly goes one better than this: his account of media-affects is meant almost literally as a hypodermic model of influence, with media technologies ascribed remarkable determinative power in infusing affective dispositions under the skin of their audiences.⁴⁷

In producing an untotalisable set of (potential) relations between any and

efforts, not in the memory-images which recall them, but in the definite order and systematic character with which the actual movements take place. In truth it no longer *represents* our past to us, it *acts* it; and if it still deserves the name of memory, it is not because it conserves bygone images, but because it prolongs their useful effect into the present moment.^a

For Connolly, virtual memory subsists as ‘intensive traces and fragments’ as well as ‘action-oriented memories below explicit recollection’^b. It does not need to be explicitly recalled (or to be made visible on the screen or page) in order to have effects on the processes of judgement and consciousness that arise from new encounters. Such fragments and traces are not merely ‘repressed’ memories; they are ‘virtual’ because they do not coincide with an articulable thought or coherent image. Yet serialised media would be very difficult, if not impossible, to follow if their audiences were expected to make sense of them entirely through mysterious and pre-cognitive processes of memory without

66. THE BLADE AND ME



Figure 3.8

Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 8: The Blade and Me. Page 91. © Tite Kubo 2001.

all of the fragments within a manga series, the action of braiding opens up the text, rather than closes it down. The ‘irreducible plurality’ of potential relations in a manga text mean that any number of readings can emerge, and lay a legitimate claim to the text itself. This is an argument that I take up at length in *Ships and Canons*. The past events ‘recalled’ through the braided networks that emerge from the

(explicit) recollection. Many serialised media employ a range of (more or less subtle) techniques for reminding their audiences of past events both in order to aid processes of recall in regular audience members and also to render the series intelligible to irregular or first-time audience members^c.

practices of reading manga do not emanate from a mysterious ‘unconscious’⁴⁸ or ‘anteconscious’⁴⁹ separate from and prior to conscious thought or cognitive activity. These relations are never a preexisting or latent property of the text itself; they are always ‘readerly accomplishments’ produced in and through the practices of readers⁵⁰.

Alec McHoul argues that reading is a process of building up a ‘stochastic store’, which is always a work-in-progress in an ongoing reading⁵¹. The text receives its sense from the ‘pattern-so-far’⁵² that emerges from the relations readers produce as they connect new information with their stochastic store. As such, the practices of reading are never ‘merely cumulative and prospective’; meanings can be ‘disassembled and reassembled retrospectively’⁵³. The seemingly effortless – and apparently ‘thoughtless’ – way in which many readers of a manga series are able to make connections across the whole network is an outcome of their familiarity with the series itself and with the practices of reading manga. This familiarity is built up through

Figure 3.8 shows the top tier of panels from a page of *Bleach* in which panels from the past are interspersed between the panels showing current events. The panels that are overlaid with a screentone composed of narrowly spaced horizontal lines show the events from the past; the other panels show the current sequence of actions. The arrangement of panels here is similar in both form and effect to the interwoven temporalities encountered in the opening pages of *Watchmen* discussed by Mark Bernard and James Bucky Carter^d. At this point in the story, Ichigo is training with Urahara after he has regained the powers he lost in a fight against Renji and Byakuya. As Urahara sets out to attack him as if he were an enemy, Ichigo remembers the experience of this defeat. Tite Kubo has placed panels showing flashes of Ichigo’s memories of Renji drawing his *zanpakû-to* in between panels showing Ichigo’s reaction to the combination of this memory and to the current attack. He makes these elements of the ‘past’ visible within the ‘present’ and, in juxtaposing them, aids the processes of braiding. The



Figure 3.9

Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 19. Pages 18–19. © Masashi Kishimoto 1999.

reading, and re-reading, that series over time. In this sense, the past does not operate on the present 'below the threshold of explicit memory'⁵⁴; it operates through the ongoing work of maintaining a stochastic store.

While Connolly's Bergsonian interpretation of memory in media-affects cannot adequately explain how readings are produced within texts, it

tier, and the broader chapter, shows Ichigo using these memories of his past humiliation and defeat to draw strength and resolve in his training in order to become powerful enough to rescue Rukia.

Sometimes *mangaka* produce this kind of patchwork temporality in their *mise-en-page* even where their readers

does hint towards a way of usefully rethinking the 'geographies' through which manga are realised as manga. In an untotalsable network of braided relations, 'every moment is a meanwhile and a meantime'⁵⁵. As such, it is useful to think through the *mise-en-page* (and the relations that arise in the process of reading it) in terms of Bergsonian duration rather than succession. The notion of braiding remains important here, as Elizabeth Grosz explains:

As a whole, time is braided, intertwined, a unity of strands layered over each other; unique, singular and individual, it nevertheless partakes of a more generic and overarching time which makes possible relations of earlier and later, and relations locating times and durations relative to each other. Such a durational—that is to say holistic and fragmentary—concept defies any simple linear model of the arrow of time, in which the time of beings, and processes, is elided in favour of a measured movement whose uniform regular beat generates an objective, measurable, clock time.⁵⁶

can have no 'memory' of the past events because they have not encountered them in the text before. Figure 3.9 shows a spread from *Naruto* which is taken from a longer section in which Tsunade has to decide whether she should accept Orochimaru's offer and betray her village, or whether she should accept Jiraya's offer, which he delivered on behalf of the village elders, and lead that village by becoming the Fifth Hokage. In making this decision she remembers her lover and younger brother, both of whom died in the last great ninja war, and compares them to Naruto, who she has only just met. The spread is presented as a patchwork of events from the present and various points in the past. The panels from the past are overlaid with a dotted screentone, while the contemporary panels are not. Some of these panels show Naruto's stubborn persistence in his quest to become a great ninja, while others show her lover and brother (who bears a striking resemblance, both in looks and attitude, to Naruto).

Readers have not seen any of the events shown in these panels,

This durational and braided concept of time differs markedly from the notion of time which currently dominates much comics theory. Scott McCloud visualises the flow of time in comics as a rope. The spatial distances on this rope can be translated directly as portions of time. In the same way, the spatial distances on the page can, to some extent at least, be translated into temporal segments of the story⁵⁷. While McCloud does problematise the equation of individual panels with instants in the flow of time, time overall is abstracted as a succession of discrete instants that can be placed-end-on-end; time is always ‘mechanical, homogenous, universal and copied from space’⁵⁸.

In contrast to this model, which understands time as an extension of space, Bergson sought to perceive of space as an extension of time⁵⁹. Bergsonian duration is defined less by succession than by coexistence. The continuity of time—its duration—arises from the role of memory in relating past to present. There is no abstract succession of instants, which can be designated as ‘past’, ‘present’ or ‘future’; the present is folded into the

although they are familiar with Naruto’s continued struggles and desire to learn difficult techniques and to be accepted by the other ninjas. This interweaving of past and future helps readers to interpret Tsunade’s decision-making process (and her character more generally) as she ultimately decides to become Hokage. Rather than relying on ‘virtual’ memory, this kind of *mise-en-page* functions by *making* ‘bygone images’ visible. In doing so it produces the action of the past in the present; it ‘prolongs their useful effect into the present moment’.

This continual weaving of ‘past’, ‘present’ and (more rarely) ‘future’ is a notable feature of *mise-en-page* in many chapters of *Naruto*. Slye RoCkz, a *Naruto* fan who participated in the online discussion I engaged in for the Still Life chapter, explains that one of the reasons he enjoys reading the series is that it ‘constantly reinforces past events in a relevant way’. Later on in the series, Naruto protects Tsunade and the village and is compared to the Fourth Hokage (his father) and Jiraya (his new mentor) through the *mise-en-page* in much the

future even as it passes into the past (and vice versa)⁶⁰. As Deleuze explains:

The past would never be constituted if it did not coexist with the present whose past it is. The past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: One is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass.⁶¹

same way that he is compared to Tsunade's family here. Slye RoCkz explains that the patchwork temporalities here both 'add to the emotions of current situations' and contribute to the ongoing characterisation of Naruto by emphasising his growth in maturity and power.

Duration is a constitutive integration of the moment, but such that moments remain differentiated—and differentiable. It is an awareness of the flow of change that simultaneously constitutes differences and relationships between particulars.

In his work on cinema, Deleuze argues that movement cannot belong to a sequence of images; no matter how close you are able to bring two instants together, movement will always elude the images themselves⁶². However it is subdivided, movement always occurs in concrete duration. This is similar to Thierry Groensteen's argument that the gap between panels in comics can never be eliminated. It cannot be filled, and the story made fully present, by bringing forth ever-more incrementally successive panels between those that are presented on the page. In this way, the comics story is never fully given nor fully giveable: it is constitutionally open.

Deleuze opposes two formulae for expressing movement in an image: 'immobile movement + abstract time' and 'real movement - concrete duration'⁶³. The first formula expresses only the linear transitions between closed sets, the parts of which—the immobile sections—are arranged sequentially according to the calculations of abstract time (quantifiable, linear 'clock time'). This formula expresses McCloud's theory of time in comics as being contained within managed

sequences of juxtaposed panels on the page, and Groensteen's notion of the breakdown. The second formula expresses the opening up of a whole, the movements within which are released in the relations between the closed system and open duration. Movement both expresses and effects (qualitative) changes in duration and constructs a 'whole' that is neither fully given nor fully giveable.

This goes some way towards expressing the braided networks of relations produced from the action of reading *mise-en-page* in manga. The 'movement' here is never visible; any illusion of movement in manga can only ever be slight in comparison to the cinematic illusion of movement. Doel and Clarke argue that it is impossible to present still images in film. They explain:

[T]he cinematic cut cannot be counted upon to still life and mortify time. Montage cannot keep still. Its cuts are inherently excessive and unstable. Indeed, we wager that no one has ever seen a *still* image.⁶⁴

Although manga readers do not perceive extensive movement with the pages they read, the disseminated and (re)assembled fragments which compose the manga *mise-en-page* open up the text in much the same way. As such, the manga text finds itself 'animated' in and through the practices of readers⁶⁵. In this way, manga are able to produce and express experiences of movement that are not opposed to stillness⁶⁶.

The manga text is, therefore, constitutionally open to multiple readings and re-readings. *Mangaka* are always faced with—and must work with—the impossibility of adequately calculating or fully determining their stories in advance, however carefully they might manage their *mise-en-page*. The manga text always presents the possibility of multiple pasts depending upon which connections are braided into a particular act of reading. Each present moment is contingent upon the past (s) that are connected to it, and so the manga text is always confronted with the possibility of multiple presents that cannot be reconciled. The *mise-en-page* both displays and relies upon the shifting, multi-layered characters of the past and the nonlinear experience of time in the practices of reading. It cannot adequately be

understood as a progression; it is better viewed as a 'layered simultaneity'⁶⁷ that must be assembled and braided through the practices of individual readers.

Irresponsible pictures

Manga do not provide their readers with temporal maps with which to navigate through, and discover, the story; they present readers with something more akin to what Brian Massumi terms 'abstract map[s] of transformation'⁶⁸, which must be activated through the practices of reading. This brings to mind a particular, and much maligned, translation of the word 'manga' itself. In written Japanese, manga is made up from two kanji characters⁶⁹: 「漫画」. The first of these characters, 「漫」, which is read as 'man', is usually translated as 'involuntary' or 'in spite of oneself'. The second character, 「画」, which is read as 'ga', can be translated as 'brush-stroke' or 'picture'. However, in his early work, Frederick Schodt picked up on another possible translation of 「漫」 as 'corrupt'. From this he translated 「漫画」 as 'irresponsible pictures'⁷⁰. Paul Gravett, among others, is dissatisfied with this 'morally charged' definition, which he claims has been largely responsible for the 'effective stigmatisation of manga in the West'. Yet, he doesn't entirely abandon Schodt's translation:

This book is no eulogy or apology for manga. If anything, it will show that they can indeed be 'irresponsible', irredeemably so, often the products of unfettered individual minds allowed to respond to the moment and to their readers' desires. But it will also show that manga's 'irresponsible pictures' may well be their greatest strength.⁷¹

My argument in this chapter—indeed, in this entire thesis—echoes this final sentence, but without passing any moral judgement about the content of manga. The notion of 'irresponsible pictures' is useful here because it avowedly does not imply a set of orderly, linear relations between successive panels. It emphasizes the promiscuity of the fragments themselves, which can be formed into all manner of complex but always contingent networks and relations, which are always open to renegotiation. Each of these fragments has no inherent allegiance to the others; the

fragments must be related and networked in individual acts of reading. That many readers arrive at something approximating the same story indicates the extent to which reading practices are shared amongst and developed within particular communities. Yet other readers, who may employ different practices, may find other readings. The final chapter in this thesis—*Ships and Canons*—explores some of the different readings that can emerge and the ways in which these are negotiated within particular communities of manga readers.

The irresponsibility of manga's disseminated and (re)assembled fragments is a strength because it provides for an engaging and exciting reading experience. Manga readers are necessarily implicated in the action of producing relations and networks within the text, from which the story emerges and through which it gains intensity. I explore the intensive experience of reading manga in the next chapter: *Still Life*.



Figure 4.1

Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 22. Page 166. © Masashi Kishimoto 1999.

4. Still Life

There is something—perhaps many things—‘wrong’ with the pages shown in Figure 4.1. This double page spread from Masashi Kishimoto’s *Naruto* appeared in the Japanese *Weekly Shōnen Jump* magazine as the last two pages in chapter 195. Between the publication of the anthology magazine and the later release of *Naruto* Volume 22 something unusual happened to these pages: they vanished. That is not to say that the version of chapter 195 was two pages shorter in the *tankōbon* edition than it had been in the magazine; the original spread was replaced by another spread entirely. The English translation of this new spread is reproduced in Figure



Figure 4.2
Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 22. Pages 104–105.

4.2. It is very unusual for manga to be altered after their initial publication, other than where they are 'localised' so as to be suitable for publication in markets beyond Japan¹. Ordinarily, there just is not the time for *mangaka* to go back over old material in the relentless schedule of weekly manga publishing. Kishimoto himself explains: 'trying to maintain a weekly publishing schedule leaves me very little time for the luxury of fussing over art, so it's pretty rare for me to redo anything once it's down on paper'². These pages are interesting because Kishimoto did take the time to redraw them, and he did so after they were published.

The original pages were not abandoned completely. They made it into the *tankôbon* edition as an *omake*: "Kishimoto Masashi's Manga Reject Special"³. Here Kishimoto explains that he was badgered into redrawing the spread by his twin

brother, Seishi. Seishi Kishimoto is also a professional *mangaka*, who is best known for his series *O-Part's Hunter*⁴. As Kishimoto explained:

When my twin brother saw [the spread], he pestered me so much with 'It's so uncool', 'Boring', 'Do-Over' that even though there wasn't much time, I did revise and redraw the two pages for the graphic novel edition.⁵

Kishimoto replaced the 'boring' spread with a new version, which is presumably less 'uncool'. In other *omake* Kishimoto discusses chapter outlines that he has rejected at various stages of drafting. None of these pages ever made it into print; they were rejected because Kishimoto, in conversation with his editor, decided to take the plot or the characters in a different direction. For example, *Naruto* volume 1 contains an *omake*—'The Kakashi That Might Have Been'—which shows a rejected outline for the second chapter. Kishimoto explains that the outline was rejected because they (Kishimoto and his editor) decided that Kakashi would be a more effective and interesting character if he were introduced into the story in another way⁶. In contrast, the changes made to the final two pages of chapter 195 do not significantly alter the characterisation (although, as we shall see, they do significantly enhance it) or shift the course of the plot. Indeed, the spread itself is by no means pivotal to either.

Other than a (relatively minor) change to the way in which Kidōmaru fires the arrow—he releases it with his mouth in the new version, rather than with his fingers—exactly the same things happen in both versions of the spread. However, the 'emphatic experience'⁷ of reading these events is different in each spread; the *intensity* of the spread has been altered such that they affect readers in different ways. As a *One Manga* user known as Isledebananas told me, 'the second version conveys the feeling of the situation at hand far better than the original'. The original version is 'quite lacklustre', even 'bland'. This means that '[i]t doesn't properly give the mood and thus falls short'. For Isledebananas the replacement spread is so much more effective that 'one doesn't even have to read anything. Anyone who looks at that can tell exactly what Kidōmaru is planning and what his feelings are about doing so'.

Most of the *One Manga* users who responded on my thread felt that the changes to the spread enhanced the Kidōmaru's characterisation. Mt Ohara explained that the changes made to the spread 'alters the feel from that character quite a bit'. The new spread 'displays more physical strength from the character' and suggests a 'cocky attitude that adds a bit of depth to a relatively minor character'. Sagitta felt that the first spread presented an almost 'noble-esque looking' version of Kidōmaru. He believes that the replacement is incomparably better than the original because Kidōmaru 'just looks a lot more menacing, it's his horn and hair that look way more evil and cool looking. He lets the arrow's wire go by opening his teeth a bit and that's just epic!' Enriching the characterisation in this way adds to the tension of the spread because it further emphasises the perilousness of Neji's situation (Neji is one of the 'good guys', so most readers will want him to win). Indeed, as Yoshimoto Izoto explained, the second spread emphatically 'puts emphasis that he plans to kill Neji in one hit. It gives the reader the notion that Kidōmaru is about to go all out on Neji for the last time'. For Mt Ohara changing the dynamics of the spread was definitely worthwhile because it 'adds more to the story than just the sole page'.

The changes made to the final pages of chapter 195 are important and interesting because they expose something about the intensive properties of *mise-en-page* in *shōnen* manga, and in *Naruto* specifically. They provide a useful starting point to begin thinking through the ways in which affect and intensity—as something that is experienced in the body—can be expressed in and through the assemblages of words and pictures produced by *mangaka* and encountered by manga readers. Kishimoto made changes to both the structure of the spread and the composition of the individual panels within it. The spread has been completely rearranged; it has almost been turned on its side, and skewed slightly. The top half of the original spread is taken up by a large panel that spans both pages. In the revised version, this panel still spans the pages, but there is no longer any symmetry in the overall layout. The large panel, which occupies about two thirds of the entire spread, has been moved so that it now occupies the whole of the right-hand page and some of the left-hand page. The five smaller panels that ran beneath the large panel in the

original spread have been reduced to four. They run vertically down the left-hand side of the new spread. The vertical gutter is also slightly askew, which means that none of the panels in it are entirely rectangular. The *One Manga* users felt that there were two main advantages to the new page structure: the new spread is ‘more dynamic, with the smattering of diagonal lines’ and ‘the panel sequence is much more intuitively easier to read’ (the quotations from Lone-ant here usefully represent the general consensus).

The changes Kishimoto made within the panels of the spread also altered the intensity of the reading experience. The first panel in the second spread has been redrawn to give a perspective on the scene from a far higher and slightly skewed angle. Readers no longer look up at Kidomaru standing in the tree; they look down on him preparing to take his shot. Kidomaru is also given what Slye RoCkz describes as a ‘cooler’ and more dynamic pose in the revised version; he is shown mid-jump, whereas the original had him standing in the tree. Yoshimoto Izoto explained that Kidomaru’s pose in the original spread was far too casual:

The other picture makes it look like he could do it anytime, any day, and that he was stronger than Neji to begin with, since it doesn’t look like he’s trying intently to kill him. Whereas the second one offers much more muscular involvement, intensity, and the fact that he really had to put effort behind his technique to try to kill Neji.

The second panel in both spreads ‘zooms in’ to focus more closely on Kidomaru’s facial expression as he prepares to take his shot. In both spreads, this panel is a more tightly framed version of the larger panel that came before it. There are only three panels showing the arrow being aimed and fired in the revised version, while the original devoted four panels to this. In the *Jump* version, Kidomaru is shown pulling back the bowstring with his fingers. This is followed by a panel which looks down the arrow towards his target (Neji). The next panel returns to Kidomaru, and presents a tightly framed picture of his fingers releasing the bow string. The final panel looks down the arrow again—this time from a slightly different angle—as it flies towards its target. In the *tankôbon* version, readers are

shown a slightly skewed, third-person-perspective view of the arrow aimed at Neji, followed by a close-up side-view of Kidomaru releasing the arrow with his mouth. The final panel is almost unchanged from the original version, except that the arrow has been overlaid with screentone—as it is in the third panel of the new version. For Callibretto, the newer, shorter sequence is far more dynamic because there is less unnecessary repetition and more varied ‘camera angles’⁸ in the spread. For Callibretto, the added dynamism is important because it takes advantage of the structural features of manga to produce tension and suspense in the scene:

[T]he original had several repeating shots that make the scene static. The last four panels in the original is basically cross cutting the hand and the tip of the arrow to show tension. It may work in animation, but in still pictures they looked almost identical. Rather than feeling tension, you're feeling it's stale instead.

Much of the written text has been repositioned, and some new onomatopoeic effects have been added to the new version: a ‘Shoom...’ joins the ‘Reeee...’ in the first panel; the second panel now features a ‘Grrr’; a ‘Krik’ is lost from the third panel; the ‘Fwip’ in the fourth panel (which was originally in the fifth panel) has been joined by a ‘Peh’. The text, ‘Striking accuracy: 100%. Destructive power: Maximum!’ was originally dispersed across the second and third panels, but is concentrated in the second panel of the new version. The only text that has survived the revisions almost unchanged is the ‘Die!!’ in the final panel, although the text has been made slightly larger, which makes this a more dominant element in the new panel. Lone-ant explained that these changes make the ‘sound’ work far more effectively with the ‘action’ in the sequence.

For Kishimoto, the reading experience is the single most important consideration in producing manga: ‘Everything must be for the readers. One must be able to change the expressions on their faces and make them say “Wow! That is so cool!” when they’ve finished reading it!’⁹. While the changes made to chapter 195 were very minor in the larger scheme of the series (in that they affect two pages in a series that stretches to some 500 chapters in length), they were successful in that

they made the reading experience ‘cooler’ in Kishimoto’s words (or, at least, in his translator’s). This is very important for a *shōnen* manga series, as Isledebananas explained:

Considering to what kind of demographic it [*Naruto*] is geared towards I would say making things unrealistically ‘cool’ or ‘awesome’ is expected. The second one does this better in addition to invoking emotion within the reader.

While some *Naruto* readers will describe elements of the series as ‘cool’, they are more likely to describe the series as ‘epic’ or ‘awesome’. Indeed, the readers who responded on my thread seemed only to use the word ‘cool’ because I had quoted Kishimoto in my initial post. In expressing their own opinions, rather than attempting to justify Kishimoto’s, they tended to use terms like ‘awesome’, ‘epic’ and ‘dynamic’ (as the quotations in this chapter demonstrate). It could be argued that this simply reflects the kinds of colloquial language commonly used in online communities, and elsewhere in everyday life (particularly among younger people). However, it is important not to dismiss the terms used by ‘ordinary’ readers to describe their ‘ordinary’ (as in non-scholarly) engagements with texts. As Rita Felski argues, it is important to take such ‘ordinary’ motives for and practices of reading seriously¹⁰. Extending this point, I would argue that it is equally important to take ‘ordinary’ accounts of those reading practices or experiences just as seriously. As such, I want to think in more detail about the aesthetic qualities of a *shōnen* manga text that readers refer to as ‘awesomeness’ or ‘epicness’ in order to understand how these qualities are able to hold readers’ interest in a series that has become a seemingly interminable series of fights which beget fights which beget yet more fights.

The epic and the awesome

In the traditional sense, an epic is a long poem which narrates the adventures of legendary or otherwise heroic figures, or perhaps the great histories of a nation. The term is often used to refer to those poems that derive from traditions of oral

storytelling, such as the Homeric epics of Ancient Greece. In less technical usage, the word epic can be used to describe some long work (a book or a film) or experience which portrays heroic adventures or which covers an extended period of time. In this sense, even something as mundane as a traffic jam or a trip to the January sales can be termed 'epic'. Whatever its usage (technical or colloquial, noun or verb), the epic connotes notions of something which is great in scale (often in time, but also in deed) and which presents or describes events of great import. Many *shōnen* manga—*Bleach* and *Naruto* included—can straightforwardly be described as epic because they are long-running tales of heroic adventures on which the fate of the world rests. Similarly, the term 'awesome' suggests that an object or experience is impressive to the point of daunting; it can inspire that feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear and/or wonder that we refer to as awe. Again, the grand events (in both scale and import) portrayed in *Bleach* and *Naruto* could be said to be awe-inspiring.

And, yet, I want to argue that the epic and the awesome in the experience of reading *shōnen* manga express more than these straightforward notions of grandiosity and import. As well as referring to a grand extension in time or space (both of the events themselves and their wider import), epicness in *shōnen* manga can express a forceful experience of bodily *intensity*. The sheer viscerality of this bodily experience is awesome because of the impression it makes on readers. In this way, the epic and the awesome refer to affective properties of *shōnen* manga as they are *experienced viscerally in the bodies of readers*. I will explore the ways in which the impossible feelings of dynamism and grandiosity of intensive scale expressed in the epic and the awesome are realised in and through synaesthetic process of affective proprioception in *Bleach* and *Naruto* in the fourth section of this chapter. Before doing so, I want to dwell a little on the notion of affective atmosphere in *shōnen* manga and the ways in which this is implicated in a *fully embodied experience* of reading.

In *shōnen* manga, epicness and awesomeness are specific manifestations of the amorphous quality that is often referred to as the tone, mood or atmosphere of a work. In an affective sense, atmospheres are difficult to pin down; they are

‘something distributed yet palpable, a quality of environmental immersion that registers in and through sensing bodies while also remaining diffuse, in the air, ethereal’¹¹. Affective atmospheres are invisible, perhaps even ‘nonrepresentational’, but they are never inert. David Bissell argues that atmospheres should be understood as a propensity: ‘a pull or a charge that might emerge in a particular space which might (or might not) generate particular events and actions, feelings and emotions’¹². For Sianne Ngai, the notion of atmosphere, mood or tone (terms that she uses largely interchangeably) is a means of discussing the ‘global or organising affects’ in a cultural text. The affective atmosphere is ‘never entirely reducible to a reader’s emotional response to a text’ nor is it ‘reducible to the text’s internal representations of feeling’. Instead, ‘it can amplify or be amplified by both’¹³. Thus, while the tone of a work can be of any valence whatsoever, it sits alongside the ‘negative’ affects she discusses in *Ugly Feelings* because of its nebulous character and weak intentionality: tone is not clearly derived from or directed towards a particular object, which makes it difficult to define and articulate the ‘work’ that it does¹⁴.

The epic and the awesome refer to this kind of generalised feeling or aesthetic character of *shōnen* manga. The affective atmosphere never fully belongs to, nor derives from, the features of the text itself. Yet, neither can it be entirely autonomous. The epic and the awesome in *shōnen* manga emerge from the practices of readers who assemble the disparate elements they encounter in the text and make them ‘accountably connectable’ with other ‘evidences’ within the ongoing and ever-contingent emergent reading of the text¹⁵. The connections between tone and text can be demonstrated by articulating what Frank Sibley calls the ‘notable specific dependence’ of the aesthetic character of a work on its (non-aesthetic) features¹⁶. By way of an example, Ngai explains how evidence can be used in support of the judgement that objects have an aesthetic character of cute or gaudy:

Someone who succeeds in convincing me of the rightness of her judgment of an object as cute or gaudy will have done so by getting me to perceive it as she does, and she’ll have done this by directing my attention to its roundness, softness, and smallness or to its bright and intense colors.¹⁷

In this sense, attributing aesthetic character to an object or a text is similar to the process of finding meaning in a text. As I argued in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, meaning is not intrinsically there in the splashes of ink on the page but it can become attached to them through specific practices of readers. Yet, while finding meaning in a text might be understood as a purely intellectual activity, bodily feelings are always caught up in the experience of tone.

Tonal qualities provoke moments of intensity which are registered in the body. Simon O'Sullivan insists that affective intensities are always extra-textual and extra-discursive; they do not pertain to meaning because they occur on an asignifying register¹⁸. Always impersonal (in that it does not belong to a subject), affect exceeds the personalised experience of emotion, feeling or meaning. Yet, affects are never entirely estranged from emotion or meaning even if the two follow different logics:

An emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as

(Screen)tone

The term 'tone' is often used among manga readers to refer, not to the generalised atmosphere of the work, but to the various screentone techniques used by *mangaka* to add shading or texture to their line art. Screentones are patterns of (usually) black ink that *mangaka* can use as an alternative to, or in addition to, hatching techniques to provide shading to the black line art they produce as manga. Screentone is faster to apply and can be mechanically reproduced more reliably than hand-shading. As a result, it has become a standard tool in the manga industry. Traditionally screentone comes printed on adhesive, transparent sheets, which *mangaka* (or their assistants) can cut to size and apply over the line art on their pages. The technique can also be simulated digitally, and this increasingly replaces the use of sheets of screentone in manga production.

Screentone can be produced in an enormous variety of different styles and patterns. These patterns are most commonly composed of dots, lines or

personal. Emotion is a qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized.¹⁹

While Massumi does make a clear and useful distinction between affect and emotion in this quotation (as do many of those working with the concept of affect within geography), I want to follow Sianne Ngai's looser definition here. Ngai views the difference between affect and emotion as less a 'formal difference of quality or kind' and more a 'modal difference of intensity or degree'. She argues that this conceptualisation is useful because it diverts attention towards the transitions between emotion and affect: 'the passages whereby affects acquire the semantic density and narrative complexity of emotions, and emotions conversely denature into affects'²⁰.

O'Sullivan explains that the process of signification is a 'complex affective function' through which affects are

hatches (although an enormous variety of other shapes can also be used). The 'shade' of the screentone is determined by how closely these are spaced; densely patterned dots, for example, will produce a darker shade than more loosely patterned dots. The shading can be gradually lightened or darkened within a single screentone by altering the spacing between the elements from which it is composed (the dots, lines or hatching) to produce gradients. The elements of the screentone can also be formed into all manner of decorative shapes and patterns (very often circles or flowers), although this type of screentone is much more widely used in *shôjo* manga than it is in *shônen* series. Screentone can also be modified by *mangaka* (both manually and electronically) to produce special effects, such as starburst patterns, and they can be layered to produce various interference patterns.

In all kinds of manga, *mangaka* have been able to put screentone to all manner of different uses. In Figures 4.1 and 4.2, Kishimoto has used a fairly closely packed, dotted screentone to shade Kidomaru's skin,

personalised and made meaningful, even if they can never be fully contained²¹. He follows Deleuze and Guattari²² in approaching works of art as 'blocs of sensation' composed of affects and percepts, which await activation in and through particular acts of viewing or reading. In this way, the value of affect lies not in its autonomy (as Massumi might argue), but in the role it plays in the emergence of meaning in an artwork or cultural text²³. It is important to attend to the affective qualities of a cultural text because the emotional or the cognitive is never straightforwardly opposed to the affective. Rather, thoughts and emotions are derived from visceral experience such that the two are implicated in a unified process that is both cognitive and affective²⁴. As such, the practices of reading *shōnen* manga must be understood as more than a cognitive process in which meaning is extracted from or produced in the text; *shōnen* manga stories are realised in and through the embodied practices of readers. In the next section, I want to explore the ways in which the grandiose scale of the epic and the awesome is experienced intensively

giving him a darker skintone than most other characters in the series. In Figure 4.2, Kishimoto has used the same dotted screentone to shade the arrow in the final three panels. This screentone does not indicate the colour of the arrow, which Kishimoto has left white in the first panel. Instead, the screentone draws attention to the arrow in the final three panels. Kishimoto did not apply screentone to the arrow in any of the panels of the original spread.

As I noted in the previous chapter, screentone can also be used to indicate that the events in a panel occurred in the 'past' relative to the events in the panels surrounding it. Kishimoto uses less densely packed, dotted screentone to do this, while Tite Kubo uses lined screentone for this purpose in *Bleach* (see Figures 3.8 and 3.9).

Mangaka can, and often do, use screentone to contribute to the affective atmosphere of the manga. In the pages of *Fullmetal Alchemist* we read in chapter 2, for example, Hiromu Arakawa used dotted screentone to produce shadows,



Figure 4.3
 Arakawa. *Fullmetal Alchemist* Vol 5. Pages 28–29.

within readers' bodies.

A physical sense of participation

In their mock-instructional guide to drawing manga, Koji Aihara and Kantaro Takekuma set out to expose and parody particular aspects of the manga industry in Japan²⁵. Japanese publishers tend to categorize manga demographically. Commonly manga are

which contributed to the dark and ominous atmosphere in the Tucker house when Ed and Al returned (in Figure 2.1). She also used highly textured screentone to help convey Ed's shock and horror as he realises what Tucker has done on page 29 (which is reproduced here as Figure 4.3). This grainy screentone, which is darker at the bottom than it is at the top, has been laid on top of the image

classified as *kodomo(muke)* (intended for children), *shōnen* (intended for teenage boys), *shōjo* (intended for teenage girls), *seinen* (intended for men) or *josei* (intended for women), even though the actual readership of a series is often far wider than this intended audience. Each of these demographic categories encompasses a wide range of genre and subject matter. There are often prominent thematic and formal differences between each of the categories, such

of Ed in the final panel of this spread. Arakawa has left his eyes white to further emphasise the wideness of his eyes in an attempt to express something of the horror Ed feels as he begins to suspect what has happened. The graininess of the screentone used here contributes to the visceral, synaesthetic experience of reading these pages, which I discuss in the next section of this chapter.

that readers will often be able to determine whether an unfamiliar series is '*shōnen*' or '*shōjo*' (for example) simply from a glance at the page. There are also more or less subtle differences between series that are published in different magazines within a demographic category, which derive from the peculiarities of each magazine's editorial policy. Aihara and Takekuma include a chapter in which they detail the stereotypical features of manga within each of the main demographic categories. They also include a more detailed breakdown of the differences between each of the four main *shōnen* magazines. While these descriptions are intended as humorous exaggerations of common trends in manga, they are not necessarily unfair in their portrayal of each demographic type.

Aihara and Takekuma explain that *shōnen* manga stories are generally driven by fighting. Indeed, *shōnen* manga often contain little (or nothing) that cannot be described as 'fighting', or training in preparation for fighting. They term this the '*shōnen* manga plot shish kebab'²⁶ in which a manga series develops through a sequence of fights, which are characterised by what they call 'strong-opponent inflation'²⁷ and interspersed by 'heroic special training'²⁸. This sequence of fights will usually continue almost uninterrupted 'until the hero dies, achieves victory, or the series gets cancelled'²⁹. This is the case whether a series contains any actual

physical combat; sports stories—for example, *Prince of Tennis* (Takeshi Konomi, 1999–2008), *Slam Dunk* (Takehiko Inoue, 1990–1996), and *Eyeshield 21* (Riichiro Inagaki and Yatsuke Murata, 2002–2009)—and even Yumi Hotta and Takeshi Obata’s series about the seemingly sedate activity of playing Go (*Hikaru no Go*, 1998–2003) are organised around sequences of ever harder competitions and opponents in the same way as fantasy action-adventure series like *Bleach* and *Naruto*.

In addition to this focus on fighting, *shōnen* manga (and particularly manga published in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, as in all of the series named above) tend towards the unrealistic and excessive. As Aihara and Takekuma explain:

One of the keys to success for a *shōnen* magazine lies in the hyper-speed departure from everyday existence in the form of escape and fantasy. For *Jump*, the panel must be so wide that the editors don’t even have any room for their gripes, and the lines must be so fast that they make the reader dizzy. It’s all right to have thousands of bodies explode so long as the story is one of the great trials and tribulations the hero and his followers go through before achieving final victory.³⁰

The manga series published in *Jump* are characterised by the excessive nature of both the stories told and the visual techniques used to tell them; in *Jump* ‘anything is possible so long as you follow the golden rules of *effort, friendship, victory*’. In this chapter, I am interested in the extreme visual techniques which ‘make the reader dizzy’³¹ in *shōnen* manga—and particularly in *Shōnen Jump* manga.

Scott McCloud explains that manga readers seem to derive profoundly ‘visceral thrills’ from the intensive techniques used in *shōnen* manga, which they just do not seem to get from reading Euro-American comics. Something about these extreme page designs and layouts offer *shōnen* manga readers a physical sense of participation, which places them ‘inside the action’ of the story³². One of the ways in which manga are able to amplify this sense that the reader is ‘part of the story, rather than simply observing the story from afar’³³, is by creating a very strong



Figure 4.4

Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 20. Pages 42–43. © Tite Kubo 2001.

sense of place and mood by attending closely to the detail of scenes and producing *mise-en-page* characterised by what he calls ‘aspect-to-aspect transitions’³⁴. These transitions shift between different aspects of an overall scene and require ‘readers to assemble scenes from fragmentary visual information’³⁵. For example, Figure 4.4 shows a spread from Tite Kubo’s *Bleach*. The spread switches between various aspects of the scene—readers see faces in varying degrees of ‘close-up’ and from different angles and perspectives, a foot, a doorway, and longer views of the characters’ bodies—but it never offers an holistic overview of the scene.

The assemblage of fragments presented in Figure 4.4 is fairly representative of *mise-en-page* in *Bleach* (and also in many other *shōnen* manga). For McCloud, the manga reading experience is characterised by these kinds of ‘wandering

encounters with environments capable of placing readers within a scene'³⁶. Yet, while McCloud concentrates on the ways in which manga create a 'quiet and contemplative' mood and a strong sense of place by closely attending to the details of a scene³⁷, the assembled fragments in *shōnen* manga *mise-en-page* are very often typified by the complete absence of background detail. For Tite Kubo (*Bleach mangaka*), mood is derived from character rather than setting. He does not set out to situate his characters within epic vistas or grand spatial arrangements. Removing the background places greater emphasis on the characters and the interactions between them, as he explains:

The background is drawn to tell you where the characters are, but I don't think that's very important. I don't want to draw backgrounds in frames where characters come in. In *Bleach*, when a new character comes in, there are times when the background is blank. This is because I want the character to create the mood just by standing there. I think a world is created by the interaction of the characters, so I try to draw my characters under that premise.³⁸

There is not a great deal of background detail in Figure 4.4, save for the doorway in the first panel on the second page and the room shown in the final panel. Instead, the panels in the spread switch between different aspects of the characters (shown from different angles and perspectives), only including background detail where it adds something to the affective atmosphere. Yet, this does not mean that the characters are always simply shown against a plain white background; the panels are very often overlaid and otherwise adorned with a range of graphic devices, which are 'meant to move readers *emotionally*, as well as *literally* moving with the action'³⁹. Streaked backgrounds (as in the sixth panel of Figure 4.4) and other techniques for creating subjective motion in manga do not actually create 'literal' motion in still images or in those who read them; they produce a dynamic experience through the action of synaesthesia.

Scott McCloud argues that, while comics may be an overwhelmingly visual medium, it is nonetheless an 'invisible art' because it 'relies on only one of the



Figure 4.5

Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 19. Pages 100–101. © Tite Kubo 2001.

senses to convey a world of experience⁴⁰. In part, comics are able to do this because of the play of presence and absence produced in structuring pages into panels separated by empty gutters. While readers must process the information presented to them within the gutters in an entirely visual manner, the imaginative process of bridging the gutters requires no sensory input whatsoever. Perhaps

Motion Lines

A synaesthetic illusion of motion in the still images on the *shōnen* manga page can be produced through the use of lines. Lines can be used to suggest objective motion in an object or they can express more subjective motion. Objective motion lines trace the path that a limb (or other object)



Figure 4.6

Hiromu Arakawa. *Fullmetal Alchemist* Vol. 14. Pages 72–73. © Hiromu Arakawa/SQUARE ENIX 2006.

counterintuitively, McCloud argues that the gutters in comics are able to engage all of the human senses precisely because they offer no direct sensory stimulation at all. However, it is not only the absences within comics that are able to evoke emotional and sensory responses in readers; comics are able to make the ‘unseen world’ of the wider sensorium visible through all

would have moved through as a character (or object) arrived in the pose in which they are drawn in the panel. For example, in the first panel of Figure 4.5, Ichigo frantically cuts down the millions of petal-like blades produced in Byakuya’s bankai. The rapid motion of his *zanpakū-tō* (sword) is shown in the many paths and lines all around his body. Motion

manner of synaesthetic techniques⁴¹.

Vivian Sobchack notes that, in common usage, synaesthesia refers to the use of metaphors in which one sense is used to describe another⁴². For example, you may describe a gaudy t-shirt as 'loud' (describing the look of something in terms of sound) or the flavour of lemon as 'sharp' (describing the taste of something in terms of touch). In clinical use, synaesthesia is a 'genuine sensory phenomenon', which involves *involuntary* transfer between the senses⁴³. Synaesthetes may experience musical notes as colours⁴⁴ or, more unusually, they may experience musical notes as having a particular taste or smell⁴⁵. However, Sobchack argues that synaesthetic perception is far from abnormal:

As 'lived bodies'... our vision is always already 'fleshed out.' Even at the movies our vision and hearing are informed and given meaning by our other modes of sensory access to the world: our capacity not only to see and to hear but also to touch, to smell, to taste, and always to proprioceptively feel our weight, dimension, gravity, and movement in the world. In sum, the film

lines are not only used in *Jump* manga. The second to last panel in Figure 4.6 also uses objective motion lines to indicate the movement of Scar's fist as he pushes Gluttony to the ground in *Fullmetal Alchemist* (which is published in *Monthly Shōnen Gangan*). Hiromu Arakawa has used objective motion lines in another way in the background of this panel, and on top of Scar's body. These lines suggest the motion of Gluttony's body as he is pushed to the ground. Other, jagged lines and shapes at the impact site indicate the great force Scar has used in performing this action.

Scott McCloud explains that the use of this type of 'objective motion' lines in comics (including manga) has evolved as creators have attempted to represent motion (and the time spanned by that motion) in static pictures^a. Many of the techniques used were inspired by the kinds of blurring and streaking effects found in photography. When a static camera is used to capture images of a fast moving object, that object will often be blurred in the photograph,

experience is meaningful *not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies*. Which is to say that movies provoke in us the ‘carnal thoughts’ that ground and inform more conscious analysis.⁴⁶

She explains that, in the experience of watching films, the bodies of the audience engage in ‘a form of *sensual catachresis*’; the body ‘fleshes out’ the images it encounters visually into a broader range of ‘literal physicalised sense’⁴⁷. As such, meaning in films is always derived from ‘the carnal sensuality of the film experience’⁴⁸.

Much the same can be said about the experience of reading comics. Indeed, as I noted in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, David Carrier defines the medium in terms of the synaesthetic figure of the word balloon or speech bubble in which audible sound is presented visually⁴⁹. For Will Eisner, the word balloon is a ‘desperation device’⁵⁰ in that it attempts to capture sound—and make it visible. Yet, the device is able to convey the character and affective atmosphere of speech through changes to the size and shape of the bubble, as well as typographic changes to font of the writing it contains. In Figure 4.4,

while the background will remain in focus. The amount of blurring will depend on the shutter speed of the camera. Similarly, a camera moving with an object can focus on that object, but the background will be blurred and streaked as a result of its motion during the period of photographic exposure.

McCloud argues that, from their beginnings as ‘wild, messy, almost desperate attempts to represent the paths of moving objects through space’, motion lines have been refined and stylised to the point where they ‘almost have a *life and physical presence all their own*’ on the comics page^b. He explains that Japanese *mangaka* have developed motion lines in very particular ways to make the most of their expressive qualities. He refers to this as the expression of ‘subjective motion’ and explains that these techniques ‘[operate] on the assumption that if observing a moving object can be involving, *being* that object should be more so’^c. In Figure 4.6, Tite Kubo has not only used lines to indicate the rapid and wide-ranging motion of Ichigo’s



Figure 4.7

Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 41. Pages 104–105. © Tite Kubo 2001.

for example, Aizen’s calm speech is presented in round speech bubbles which contrast with the more jagged bubbles used to contain Hitsugaya’s shaky voice. The pages shown in Figure 4.7 (this time from a Japanese edition of *Bleach* because no official English adaptation had been released at the time of writing) also employ jagged speech bubbles. In this spread,

zanapku-tô, he has surrounded Ichigo with a set of ‘focus lines’ which radiate inwards from the edges of the page (where the panel bleeds off). These lines do more than focus the reader’s attention on Ichigo; they suggest a rapid ‘zooming in’ motion in the still image, as if he is moving closer to the reader (and Byakuya) as

Ichigo has transformed into an uncontrollable monster and lost the power of proper speech. The jagged speech bubbles and messy font, which have been rendered with loose brush strokes, convey the monstrous character of his howling (the text within the bubbles contains only vowel sounds rather than actual words).

The spread in Figure 4.7 also contains synaesthetic 'sound effects' (in the second and fourth panels). These onomatopoeic words imitate the sound of the action in the panel (for example,

the text in the fourth panel — 「ギユ」 — reads 'gyu') but the visual qualities of the text is intended to evoke the character of the sound as much as its echoic qualities. Mimetic language has a far wider scope in Japanese than it has in English, and its use is far more widespread in everyday language. In addition to words that imitate sound (*giseigo*), Japanese also utilises two other forms of mimesis: *gitaigo*, which suggest non-auditory senses or states of the external world; and *gijougo*, which express psychological states and bodily feelings⁵¹. The text in panel four suggests not simply the sound 'gyu' but the quality of fast motion and/or of forceful squeezing. In this way, *mangaka* are able to, and do, make use of the extensive mimetic vocabulary in Japanese to convey a wide range of affective states visually.

The synaesthetic qualities of Figure 4.7 do not only reside in the text on the page. The images themselves are designed to produce synaesthetic experience. *Shōnen* manga series (like *Bleach* and *Naruto*) do more than amplify the sense of participation in the manga reading experience; they offer a thoroughly embodied reading experience. The primary way in which *shōnen* manga are able to do this is through the use of haptic images. The image in the first panel of Figure 4.7, for example, is overlaid with fine lines and hatchings, which lend a sense of movement

he cuts down the blades. Hiromu Arakawa has also used these kind of focus lines in the first panel of Figure 4.6. This has the effect of drawing the reader towards Ed and Al as they intervene in the events unfolding before them. The kinds of technique used in these pages do not create literal motion in their readers; they afford a synaesthetic experience of proprioception from the action of viewing still images. In this way, they aim to 'make the reader dizzy'²⁹⁰.

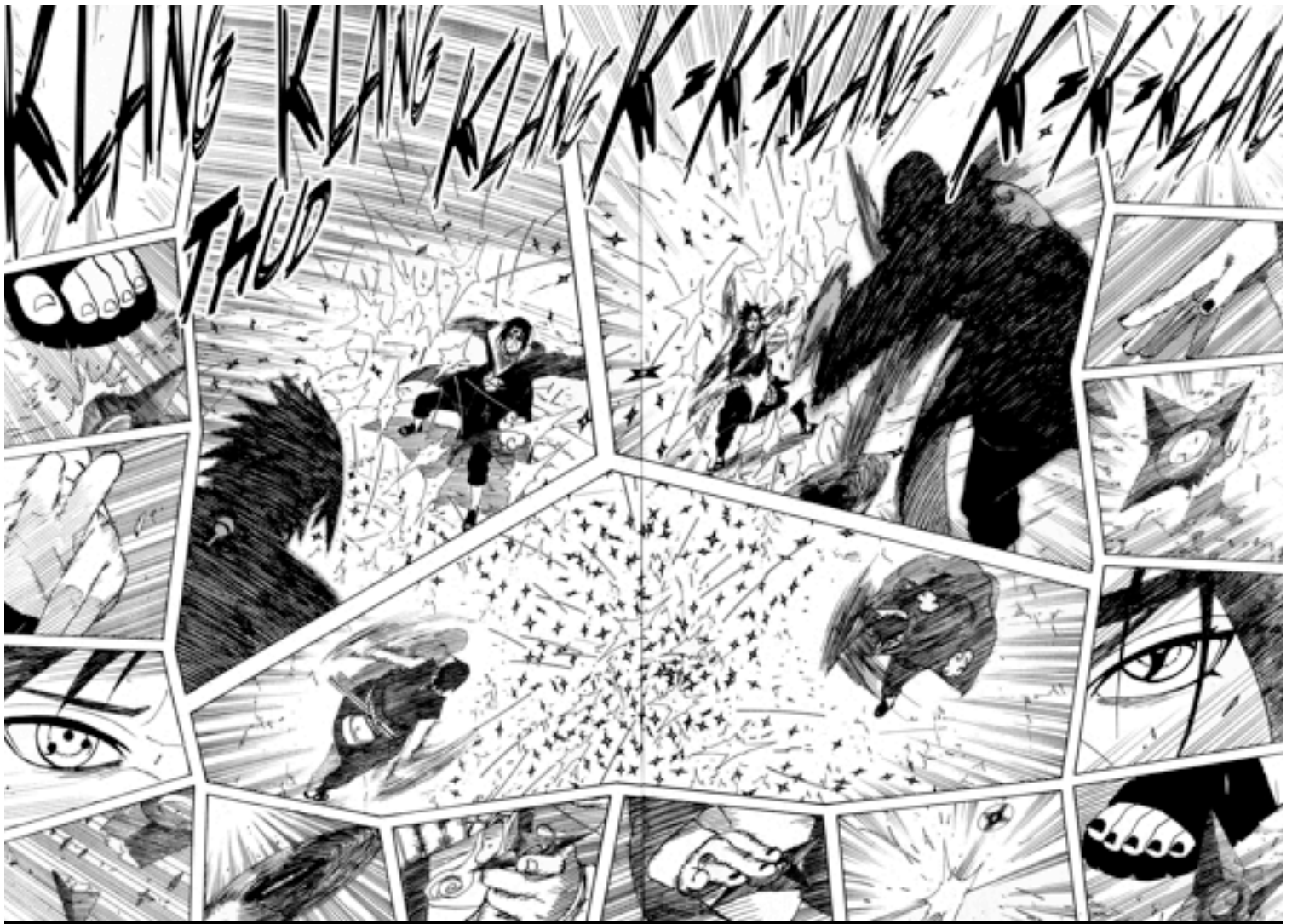


Figure 4.8
Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 42. Pages 162–163.

and a tactile quality to the image. The closely spaced focus lines in the second and fourth panels and the dotted screentone in the fifth have similar effects. As Laura Marks explains, ‘haptic images do not invite identification with a figure so much as they encourage a bodily relationship between the viewer and the image’⁵².

While an image itself may seem to possess these haptic qualities, they can only be activated through practices of haptic visuality. This notion of haptic visuality refers to the viewer’s inclination to perceive images in particular ways. To explain this Marks draws upon Deleuzian ideas about the difference between haptic vision and optical perception⁵³. Optical visuality often depends on a separation between the viewed object and the viewing subject; it promises a disembodied visual experience from a distance great enough to perceive forms and gain an overview

of a scene. In haptic visuality, on the other hand, the eyes perform as organs of touch; it is a close-range mode of vision which attends to the peculiarity of the image such that it perceives texture rather than form. Where optical perception concentrates on the representational power of the image, haptic vision privileges its material presence. In this way, haptic perception is a thoroughly embodied mode of vision, which combines all manner of tactile, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive experiences both on the surface and the inside of the body⁵⁴. While haptic and optic describe two very different functions of vision, Marks reminds us that they do not form a simple dichotomy. Both forms of vision are implicated in most acts of seeing. The important thing is to consider the balance reached in individual acts of seeing.

For Deleuze⁵⁵, processes of optical visuality afford an illusion of completeness in images that lends itself to the transfer of narrative. Haptic visuality does not assume that the image is self-sufficient. Instead, the viewer must draw upon their resources of imagination and memory to complete the images they encounter. Figure 4.8 shows a spread from *Naruto* which we have already seen in 'Irresponsible Pictures'. The reader is presented with a 'cacophony' of fragmentary views on the scene; there are hands, eyes, feet, bodies and many hundreds of *shuriken* (small, star-shaped flying ninja blades), but no single, overall view to allow the reader mastery of the scene in its entirety. Each of the (irregularly shaped) panels is backgrounded with subjective motion lines in various directions and many of the images are blurred to suggest objective motion in the figures. The entire spread is overlaid with jarring onomatopoeia rendered in shaky fonts. The resulting visual dissonance is both epic and awesome because it lends a synaesthetic viscosity to the reading experience. Assembling the fragments scattered on the manga page, and reconciling the numerous perspectives offered through its 'dizzy P.O.V. [point-of-view] framing'⁵⁶, requires a kind of haptic visuality. As Vivian Sobchack explains, haptic visuality requires a kind of 'volitional, deliberate vision' through which the viewer works to bring the image forth from latency. In this way, haptic vision describes a mutually constitutive exchange between viewer and image⁵⁷.

Mark Hansen is interested in how the body can produce this kind of affective ‘supplement’ to the perception of images in new media technologies — what he calls ‘a properly haptic domain of sensation’⁵⁸. The dynamism found in the still images of *shōnen* manga, which readers describe in terms of the epic and the awesome, is achieved through processes of what Hansen calls ‘affective proprioception’ in which the haptic is transformed from a modality of vision (a perception) into a modality of bodily sense (an affection). *Shōnen* manga readers do not experience any actual movement in the fragmented *mise-en-page* they encounter. The feeling of dynamism results from the movement within their bodies in response to the ‘impossible solicitation’ of the images. For Hansen, the haptic experience of new media goes beyond the ordinary co-functioning of vision and proprioception: it poses a problem that cannot be explained or resolved through synaesthetic realignment. Instead, he describes the experience as ‘a total short-circuiting of vision and a violent feeling of spatial constriction that manifest, literally, as a haptic experience in the space of the body’⁵⁹.

In a similar manner, affective proprioception can go some way towards explaining the kinds of visceral response readers derive from the experience of reading still images in *shōnen* manga. The processes of affective proprioception can produce an impossible grandiosity of scale and an aliveness in the embodied experience of reading *shōnen* manga, which is often expressed by readers in terms of the epic and the awesome. Feelings of dynamism or liveliness in the *mise-en-page* are what many readers look for in series like *Bleach* and *Naruto*, and this is also the kind of reading experience with which *mangaka* attempt to imbue their page. As Tite Kubo (the creator of *Bleach*) explains:

I think drawing is not about drawing points and planes, but about depicting moods. Words aren’t just lines, either. So whenever I draw or write, I do it in a way that *breathes life into the paper*.⁶⁰

And yet, affective proprioception cannot anchor itself in anything pictorial⁶¹. The visceral experience of reading *shōnen* manga is never entirely derived from the images on the page. *Mangaka* cannot simply rely on the haptic qualities of images.

The haptic in the experience of reading *shōnen* manga is as much a practice of reading as it is a quality that can be ascribed to images. In the final section of this chapter, I want to think about the impossibility of guaranteeing the clarity of either narrative or affective transfer in the experience of reading *shōnen* manga.

Affective storytelling

Clive Barnett is concerned that the account of affect as an autonomous entity which operates in a kind of subliminal ‘layer’ prior to and underlying conscious thought—an account which is very often derived from Spinoza via Deleuze and, often, Massumi—inadvertently casts audiences in a passive role in relation to the determining powers of the cultural texts with which they engage⁶². While I have tried to think about the ways in which manga texts can be invested with affective intensity, in this thesis I do not want to reduce readers to passive stooges who simply absorb the affects that are transmitted to them in the texts they read. *Mangaka* are never all-powerful. However carefully they attempt to invest their texts with affective intensity (or to ensure clarity or narrative transfer, for that matter), the outcome can never be guaranteed. As James Ash has argued in relation to videogames:

[A]ffective manipulation is necessarily a fragile achievement that is prone to failure and always reliant upon being continually reworked in relation to the creative responses users develop in relation to the designed environments with which they interact.⁶³

In *shōnen* manga, readers can and do produce a wide variety of different readings from their engagement with the same text. While *mangaka* may employ all manner of techniques in their attempts to produce an awesome and epic reading experience, many of their readers will find something else. Indeed, not all readers are looking for the epic or the awesome in *shōnen* manga at all or, at least, not at all times. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will look at the reading practices of communities of ‘shippers’, who look for love and romance amidst the fights to the

death in *shōnen* manga. These ‘shippers’ valorise a reading experience characterised by an affect known as ‘squee’, rather than the epic or the awesome.

However, readers are not all-powerful either. Some accounts from within reader-response theory seem to place interpretation above all else, such that those who produce those texts are rendered entirely inert. For Stanley Fish, for example, interpretation supersedes everything to the extent that readers almost seem to have no pre-existing or material objects to interpret⁶⁴. This is not simply a case of setting aside or diminishing the role of the author; it is a dematerialisation of the text itself. Although texts are realised in and through the practices of readers⁶⁵, those readers must produce meaning from the ink on the page (or the pixels on the screen, for those reading online). This pre-given, material text is produced by the *mangaka* in the attempt to tell a story. In this sense, I do not want to isolate the (material) text from its creators or its readers. The manga text may be a ‘fragile thing’⁶⁶, but it emerges from the combined efforts of the *mangaka* and its readers. As Rita Felski argues about literary texts in general: ‘while we cannot help but impose ourselves on literary texts, we are also, inevitably, exposed to them’⁶⁷. Neither text nor reader emerges from the encounter unscathed.

Similarly, a focus on reading as simply interpretive threatens to dematerialise the body along with the text. Attending to the role that affective atmospheres play in the practices of reading *shōnen* manga is to understand those practices as thoroughly embodied. Steve Pile shares some of Barnett’s concerns about the role of affect in contemporary geographical thought. He is worried that in constructing affect as ‘the pure non-representational object’ that ‘cannot be known, grasped or made intelligible’⁶⁸, geographers working with the concept of affect contradict themselves. For Pile, nonrepresentational theory’s engagement with affect is always (hypocritically) representational because it attempts to represent affect in language. In a similar manner, Rita Felski rejects the kinds of reclamation of aesthetic experience with literary scholarship which valorise the affective and the sensual at the expense of the rational and the conceptual. In this chapter, I have tried to work with a concept of affect that is deeply entangled with the production of meaning in and through the practices of reading *shōnen* manga. I am interested

in the affective experiences of reading manga texts, such that the 'story' is experienced viscerally within the bodies of its readers. This is more than a process of sympathetic identification or recognition. The processes through which meaning is produced in a *shōnen* manga text are thoroughly and inextricably embodied. In this way, I want to move beyond the dichotomy between reading (as somehow purely cognitive) and experience (as somehow purely affective), which is embedded in claims that '[y]ou cannot read affects, you can only experience them'⁶⁹. Indeed, there are other ways of knowing and experiencing beyond the cognitive and the affective, which are implicated in the processes of reading; for example, imagination and disposition are implicated the alchemic practices of reading *shōnen* manga alongside the cognitive search for meaning and the affective experience of visceral thrills.

Affect and intensity—as something that is experienced in the body—can be expressed in and through the assemblages of words and pictures produced by *mangaka* and encountered by manga readers. The specific means of expressing affective intensity are not necessarily something that readers need to overtly reflect upon in order to produce a story from the ink on the manga page (scattered as words and pictures, panels and gutters). Indeed, as I discovered in the course of my research, manga readers may be more or less willing or well equipped to reflect upon what exactly is awesome or epic about the series they follow for a wide variety of reasons. Nonetheless, affective atmospheres are an indispensable element of *shōnen* manga storytelling. The epic and the awesome cannot be merely supplemental (and thereby expendable) to the experience of reading *shōnen* manga. The visceral thrills are very often the point of reading *Bleach* or *Naruto* at all. Reading *shōnen* manga is an experience of 'still life' because manga texts and their readers are only *physically* moved in an *affective* sense. They are not made to move through extended space; the movement takes place *intensively* within the bodies of readers. The epic and the awesome are an expression of the grandiosity of this intensive experience.



Figure 5.1
Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 41. Pages 14–15.

5. Ships and Canons

Shortly following the release of *Bleach* chapter 350 ('The Lust 4') on *One Manga* on 19th March 2009, a discussion thread was started in the forums. The discussion on this thread is fairly typical of the weekly chapter discussion threads on *One Manga*. Indeed, the discussion that took place on this thread was similar to the ways in which fans of other series approach chapters or episodes of the cultural text they follow. For example, Henry Jenkins has carried out a study of *Star Trek* fans and

the strategies they use to discuss and evaluate individual episodes of the series¹. Like Jenkins's *Star Trek* fans, *Bleach* readers on *One Manga* used a range of general and series-specific criteria to evaluate chapter 350.

Many of the posters commented on the quality of the chapter, and explained why they found it interesting. At the end of the previous chapter, Ichigo was left battered and bleeding, with a hole blown through his chest, from his fight with Ulquiorra. His friends feared that he was dead. In this chapter, Ichigo is able to get back up and fight again because he has mysteriously received a massive 'power-up'—he has managed to gain a substantial boost to his powers and new abilities but without any additional training or any significant explanation—and this has also changed his appearance (as shown in Figure 5.1). While Ichigo's transformation is interesting, and it will help move the series towards a resolution, the chapter was not entirely well-received by *One Manga* users. Some, like Karogas, complained that the chapter was so predictable that he 'saw it coming a mile away'². Despite the predictability of the events, Criminal was still intrigued by how exactly they would play out:

This chapter was so predictable; it was foreshadowed forever and a half ago. It was still cool to see the exact way events played out, but not enough to warrant waiting a week... Next week better have a lot more dialogue.³

These comments parallel the concerns of many *Bleach* fans about the amount of 'content' in each chapter, and their ideals about how much 'content' there *should* be in a chapter. Too little happened in the chapter for it to satisfy Criminal as a weekly installment of the series. Including 'oohs' and 'ahhs', there are fewer than 100 words 'spoken'—either externally or as interior monologue—in this chapter, and Criminal believed that the next chapter should have more dialogue if it is to be worth waiting a week for. This lack of dialogue prompted claims from other readers that the chapter was 'too short'⁴. At 19 pages, chapter 350 is the same length as most chapters of *Bleach*, but the lack of dialogue made it feel somewhat empty. Shawnmac would have been more satisfied with the chapter had it provided 'more of an explanation of what is happening'. He situated the chapter

within what he perceived as a slump in the quality of *Bleach* over the previous few chapters.

Yet, other *One Manga* users were impressed with the quality of the chapter. Simlistic explained that she did not expect this type of transformation: 'I was expecting him to go into his full hollow form, but boy was I surprised! Ulq [Ulquiorra] got completely owned. Cero + Horns = OMFG<3'⁵. Similarly, Aerpoblast was very impressed by 'The Lust 4', and claimed it was a return to the kind of quality that had made him a *Bleach* fan in the first place:

Really tight chapter...What's for sure is *Bleach* is back full force. For some reason I was bored with all those captain vs espada fights. It all just seemed mundane and drawn out to me, but this new development is a refreshingly welcome injection of AWESOME!!!⁶

Many of the previous chapters (up until the beginning of Ichigo's battle with Ulquiorra) had been somewhat formulaic 'match-ups' between the captains of the Soul Society (the 'good guys') and the top-ranking officer in Aizen's Espada whose powers or temperament most closely matched their own (the 'bad guys'). At this point, many of the fans had grown tired of this pattern. So, while some fans complained about the formulaic predictability of this chapter, the fact that this chapter employed a different variety of *shōnen* manga formula—a power-up rather than a set-piece match-up—was evidence that the series was returning to what it does best.

Other readers compared 'The Lust 4' to other manga series, or to elements of *shōnen* manga in general. Aerpoblast compared the 'ridiculous powerups' in 'this epic chapter' to those in Akira Toriyama's *Dragonball Z*. He even provided a link to a parody of the anime version of the series on *YouTube* to demonstrate his point⁷. *Dragonball Z* is widely cited within manga and anime fandoms (and beyond) as the archetypical example of a *shōnen* series that relies on an ever-escalating series of power-ups to move the plot forwards, but this process of 'strong-opponent inflation' is characteristic of many (possibly most) *shōnen* series⁸. *Bleach* fans term

the process by which a character gets an unexplained, and often illogical, power boost or new ability to allow them victory over a stronger opponent 'plotkai'. A character's 'bankai' (the higher level, and extremely powerful, release of their *zanpaku-to*, or sword) was the ultimate power level possible in *Bleach* during the Soul Society arc (although this has been superseded in subsequent storylines). The term 'plotkai' emerged within the fandom when the achievement of bankai became a common plot device which allowed previously weaker characters to defeat ever-stronger opponents⁹.

While unexplained power boosts are very common (almost ubiquitous) in *shōnen* manga, they do not necessarily meet with approval from readers. JC Wicked, for example, bemoaned the way in which this particular trope was manifested in *Bleach* 350: 'I guess we're just sick of long hair power-ups in mangas'¹⁰. Other fans were less keen to dismiss the formula out of hand, even if they agreed that this was not a particularly well executed power-up. For example, Qane compared Ichigo's current power-up to those found in other series and found it lacking:

When you think it's all over there will nearly ALWAYS be a power-up given to the main character. Every manga has them sometimes. It's just the main character's feelings that make them power-up and sometimes it's better explained. All mangas have them, but at the moment *Bleach* has the least explained.¹¹

In 'The Lust 4', Ichigo hears Orihime, who has witnessed the fight, calling his name and resolves that he must protect her. He is then able to stand up and readers discover that he has transformed into something other than that which he was before. No explanation, beyond his insistence that he will protect Orihime no matter what, is given for either his new form or his new—very impressive—abilities. Had the power boost and new abilities been explained in a more effective way, Qane might have enjoyed the chapter more. Qane and other fans found fault with chapter 350 because it did not adequately measure up to the standards they expect from *shōnen* manga.

Another poster, Imppala, compared the events in this chapter to another manga series, Daisuke Moriyama's *Chrono Crusade*. He claimed that the events of chapter 350 are so similar to those in certain chapters of *Chrono Crusade* that the two may as well be the same series. As evidence, he even provided links to the relevant chapter of *Chrono Crusade* so that other fans could verify his claims and discuss them further¹². It is quite a common practice on the *One Manga* forums for users to cite evidence for points they make by linking to specific pages or chapters of a series. This kind of citational practice can be used to compare between series (as in this case) or between chapters within a series, to demonstrate the validity of a point users are making about the plot or characterisation in a series, and to illustrate a theory about the direction of the series as a whole. Sometimes comparisons are made, not only between series, but between fans of that particular series. For example, some of the readers who enjoyed 'The Lust 4' insisted that anyone who claimed to hate a *Bleach* chapter on *One Manga* was, in fact, a *One Piece* 'fanboy' looking to cause trouble. These accusations caused some angry debate, complete with counteraccusations that those who insist on defending the series must be uncritical *Bleach* fanboys¹³.

The posters on this *One Manga* thread did not only assess the 'quality'—or lack thereof—of chapter 350; they also speculated on what exactly Ichigo had become, and what his transformation could mean for the series as a whole. Blackleg was excited about the transformation, but found that he could only respond to it with questions, rather than theories:

I don't think I've ever seen Kurosaki sooooo bad*** before. I'm really curious to see what, if any new abilities he has acquired with this new form. Also I wonder what the landscape of his inner self looks like now. Who is in charge in there? Is hollow Ichigo free and living large in his mind, or is this something new, and where does this leave Zangitsu? So many questions.¹⁴

Many other posters speculated about whether Ichigo's consciousness and body had been overcome by his inner hollow, but few were willing to stake their claim with either side because of the minimal information provided in the chapter. Even

those who felt able to draw upon the evidence presented in the chapter were unable to reach all but the most tentative of conclusions. For example, Sosuke Aizen argued:

Maybe Ichigo is still himself but he just don't want to say anything... The first part where he wants to get up and help Inoue proves that... maybe. =P¹⁵

Many of the posters sidestepped this particular issue entirely and limited their speculation to attempting to place Ichigo's new form within the—far from universally agreed upon—hierarchy of hollows in *Bleach*. In the series, hollows are fallen (although not necessarily evil) spirits who are compelled to consume the other souls (even if they have to kill for them) and even other hollows. At various points in the series, Kubo Tite has introduced a number of different types of hollows in a hierarchical structure. The exact workings of this hierarchical typology is not (yet) clear in the manga. Accordingly, it is a subject of considerable speculation among the fans. Initially in the series, there were only hollows, with no typological differentiation. Then Kubo Tite introduced a class of giant super-hollows—Menos Grande—which were formed when many hollows joined together. After the Soul Society arc, he identified another class of hollows: the arrancar. Arrancar are hollows that have gained Soul Reaper powers and have taken their masks off. As such, they mirror the Visored, a group of Soul Reapers who have undergone 'hollowfication' and gained both hollow masks and powers (Ichigo is now a Visored). Aizen (the 'bad guy' of the series) has assembled a corp of these arrancar to fight for him, the ten strongest of which are known as the 'Espada'.

This hierarchy was somewhat complicated by the revelation of another scheme for hollow typology in the backstory for the Espada, Grimmjow. This backstory sets out an evolutionary scheme whereby hollows can grow in power by consuming other hollows. The Menos Grande are those hollows who have reached the first tier in this evolutionary process and have gained a form known as Gillian. As Gillian continue to consume other hollows they grow in strength and intelligence, gaining a sense of self, until eventually they become Adjuchas. At this point their

evolution is still incomplete, and those who go on to consume yet more hollows can evolve into Vasto Lordes. It is not entirely clear from the manga just how this evolutionary scheme maps on to the other hierarchical typology. There is much discussion among the fan base about which of the Espada, if any, are Vasto Lordes¹⁶.

Ichigo's transformation in 'The Lust 4' reinvigorated such debate among the posters on *One Manga* forums. For "FireFist" Ace 'the only significant thing' to be drawn from the chapter was that Ichigo is a Vasto Lorde (or at least his inner hollow is), while Ulquiorra is not¹⁷ He bases this assertion on the power disparity that seems to have emerged between the two since Ichigo powered up. Other readers disagreed, and argued that Ulquiorra is a Vasto Lorde; Ichigo is simply a stronger one:

Hm... I do think Ulquiorra is a Vasto Lorde... but probably this new 'Ichigo' is a much stronger Vasto Lorde... and of course, it's purely from assumption based on the 'Vasto Lorde silhouette'... ah... I really really like the new look of Ichigo¹⁸.

The only image as yet explicitly identified in the manga as a Vasto Lorde is a horned silhouette that was shown in the Grimmjow backstory. As Ichigo's new transformation looks similar to this silhouette, some readers argued that he must be a Vasto Lorde. This reasoning was not accepted by many of the other posters, who viewed this 'evidence' as circumstantial at best, and so the debate remained unresolved.

Ships and Shipping

The nature of Ichigo's power-up and transformation were not the only subjects of speculation among *Bleach* readers in online communities in relation to the events in Ichigo's fight with Ulquiorra. In the *Bleachness* community on *LiveJournal*, other readers were worried about whether or not the transformation reflected Ichigo's feelings for Orihime. Apathymoon posted a somewhat panicked entry on the

subject in which she sought evidence that her (and others) initial reading of the chapter was wrong:

Honestly, I'm panicking right now (my IchiRuki fangirl spirit too) about chapter 352!!WHAT'S WITH ICHIHIME BECOMING CANON IN CH. 352!? Is it true, friends!?! Is it!?! Was Ichigo reciprocating Inoue's selfish and childish love!!? WTF!? I'm sorry if I seem to be overreacting; it's just that I've been seeing the ego of IchiHime fans rise!? Is it doomsday!?! PLEASE, PLEASE, HELP ME...IS ICHIGO FINALLY GIVING IT ALL FOR the helpless Inoue?? I just feel like asking it in this comm[unity] cuz people here seem to have rational and reasonable opinions. I seriously need your explanation.¹⁹

Some of the terms used by Apathymoon here—‘canon’, ‘IchiRuki’, ‘IchiHime’—are likely to be unfamiliar because they are peculiar to the reading practices of a group of readers known as ‘shippers’. Shipping is an important practice in many fan communities, whereby fans choose to focus on a romantic or sexual relationship between characters in the cultural text they follow. These ‘ships’—the term is abbreviated from ‘relationships’—form the basis of much fan fiction writing, but they can become the focus of discussion for fans whether or not they read or write fan fiction themselves. As *Bleach* is a *shōnen* manga series the story is rarely focused around romantic relationships, even if the series overtly develops the theme of friendship. Shippers seek out the romantic undertones within the story and base their ‘pairings’ (another term for ships which is widely used within the *Bleach* fandom) around them. Shippers use a variety of strategies when referring to pairings. Portmanteau terms are often produced from the names of the characters involved (‘IchiHime’), but fans may choose to place an ‘x’ or a forward slash between the character names (‘Ichigo x Orihime’ or ‘Ichigo/Orihime’).

By posting on *Bleachness*, Apathymoon was able to elicit discussion and debate through which other community members could rationalise the (then current) events in the series such that they did not spell doom for a pairing between Ichigo and Rukia. Iheartsushi tried to ease any rising panic by arguing that it is simply in

Ichigo's character to go all out to protect his friends; his resolution did not indicate a special relationship between Ichigo and Orihime because Ichigo would 'probably do the same thing for Chad or Ishida if they were in trouble'²⁰. Other contributors, like spartydragon, argued that Ichigo's violent reaction could hardly be construed as loving or romantic.

Well, I suppose it's true if becoming a monster and killing everything around you is the truest and best way to say ZOMG! Iluvu2!! *sparkle sparkle*²¹

As a result, any IchiHime fans citing these chapters as 'evidence' for the canonical status of their pairing could be dismissed as simply 'trying way too hard'²². Some contributors went further than this to assert that, far from confirming IchiHime as the legitimate way in which to read the text, the events of chapter 352 actually reinforced and promoted IchiRuki as the authentic reading of *Bleach*. Amciel explained that Orihime clearly did not exhibit loving feelings towards the newly transformed Ichigo; she was horrified by this 'Hornosaki' and repulsed by his actions in the last few chapters²³. What is more, Kubo Tite chose to focus only on Rukia's reaction to the change in Ichigo's presence effected by his transformation, even though all his friends in Hueco Mundo would be able to feel it. For Amciel, this suggests that the 'One True Pairing' (often abbreviated to OTP) for the series must be IchiRuki, and that this would inevitably become clear as the series continued. The advice Amciel had for her fellow shippers, then, was: 'Breathe in... breathe out. Wait for the story to finish.'²⁴

All shippers have some kind of preferential investment in one (or more) pairings within a series, but the level of investment varies greatly between individual fans and particular communities. For many, shipping is simply an enjoyable diversion, which enhances the text. Shipping is a statement about how other fans would like to see the series develop as it progresses. For some fans, however, justifying and 'proving' the existence of their ship within the ('canonical') story can become something of an obsession, to the point that it dominates their (online) activities. As Debbiechan explains, shipping can cause 'ebullient, freakily smart and ordinarily interesting fan-type people' to become 'rabid obsessives who mumble

the same things over and over again... *It's not canon, It's practically canon, You have to read the subtext, Nothing is canon until the author makes it so—and my favorite—If I owned Bleach, everyone in it would be gay*²⁵. It would be unfair to imply that all shippers have quite this level of personal investment in their pairings; even those involved in debates over textual 'evidence' and 'canon' are often far less serious about it than Debbiechan suggests here. However, it is fair to say that shippers often attend very closely to the text. They often employ very particular reading practices, which allow them to pick up on aspects that may not be immediately obvious to other readers and to find meanings that can differ markedly from those found by more 'mainstream' readers. In this way, shipping is interesting as a reading practice because it complicates accounts of the text as a repository of singular meaning by illustrating the ways in which myriad different readings can be found in and supported by the text itself.

In this chapter, I am interested in the reading practices of shippers in online communities of *Bleach* readers and, particularly, in the ways in which they use textual evidences and the concept of 'canon' to produce something akin to 'non-scholarly' instructed readings of the text. As I explained in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, Eric Livingston argues that literary terms like 'irony' or 'oxymoron' allow literary critics to produce 'deeply reasoned' readings of a text. These terms shape the practices of readers and produce instructed readings which allow sufficiently tutored readers to read a text in the right way²⁶. Many *shōnen* manga readers are able to make use of terms drawn from literary scholarship to produce this kind of instructed reading. For example, a *One Manga* user known as Ultimate-x was able to attribute the term *deus ex machina* to the unexplained and improbable technique for high-speed self-regeneration which allowed Ichigo to survive his fight with Ulquiorra, while Ulquiorra perished:

The only thing I have to say is HIGH SPEED SELF REGENERATION lol. Or how I like to call it *deus ex machina*. And the *Shōnen Jump* trio all have that: *Naruto* /when he turned 8 tails to sage mode HIGH SPEED SELF REGENERATION/, *One Piece* /Luffy's almost certain death poison HIGH SPEED SELF REGENERATION/ and now *Bleach* lol. ALL HAIL HIGH

SPEED SELF REGENERATION. Oh yeah DBZ [*Dragonball Z*] has that as well.²⁷

By identifying the common *shōnen* manga trope of characters developing high-speed techniques for regenerating their bodies without any particular training or other explanatory circumstance as *deus ex machina*, Ultimate-x was able to make the poor plotting in chapter 353 accessible and comprehensible to other readers. Even if other *One Manga* users were unfamiliar with the term itself, the examples given, the repetition of the phrase ‘high speed self regeneration’, and the sarcasm employed in this post, would allow them to read this as an unsatisfactory kind of plot development. The term ‘plotkai’, which is commonly used among *Bleach* readers to describe an inexplicable plot sequence where a weaker character somehow masters a new technique or gains in power such that they are able to master a far stronger and/or more skillful opponent, is analogous to *deus ex machina*. The term provides a non-scholarly and *Bleach* specific vocabulary, through which readers are able to produce instructed readings of the series. Indeed, many fans (somewhat jokingly) insist that the final battle of the series will be resolved by plotkai, as the trope is so widespread in the series. Despite this, fans are not necessarily put off by the inadequacy of the plot development. Ultimate-x ended his post with: ‘But still great chapter’.

The concept of ‘canon’ performs a similar function in fan communities, albeit one that is not *Bleach* or even manga specific. It allows shippers, and other *Bleach* readers, to shape and direct the reading practices of others. Alongside related terms, like ‘fanon’ and ‘crack’, the notion of canon allows shippers to demonstrate their readings within the *Bleach* text itself. In the remainder of this chapter I want to explore these terms and the ways in which they are used by readers who ship *Bleach* before considering the implications that these different reading practices have for the text itself.

Canon

Because romantic relationships are generally tangential to the main plot in *Bleach*, there is much discussion among shippers about whether (romantic and/or sexual) relationships *might* or *could* exist between characters within the series. It seems that pairings between any and all of the characters in the series find support from some quarter of the fandom. The various ships coexist peacefully for the most part, but the *Bleach* fandom has, on occasion, been the site of its own 'shipping wars'. The main antagonists in these 'wars' seek to pair Ichigo Kurosaki (the main character in *Bleach*) with either Rukia Kuchiki or Orihime Inoue. Online relations among proponents of 'IchiRuki' (a relationship between Ichigo and Rukia) and 'IchiHime' (a relationship between Ichigo and Orihime) can sometimes be fraught, and the arguments that take place between these groups can spill over into discussions about and support for other ships. Despite this, many fans are happy to support all manner of incompatible pairings simultaneously as a means of enjoying the text.

Locating the *Bleach* canon

Defining the *Bleach* canon is further complicated by issues of multi-mediation, translation and cross-cultural interpretation. *Bleach* has expanded far beyond its original manga publication and is now available as an anime series and a set of feature length OVAs (original video adaptations), a number of video games, a card game, a wide range of toys and collectibles, a number of 'data' and art books, and even a series of stage musicals. As each of these iterations of *Bleach* differs from the others in various ways—and introduces all manner of new 'creators'—such expansion has tended to fragment the text. It also tends to fragment the audience. Few fans will experience the text in all of its incarnations; they are likely to focus their attentions on the materials available to them. For example, they may choose to read the manga and watch the anime without playing the video games or collecting the toys. Indeed, many fans may not be aware of the full extent of *Bleach*

Indeed, a good number of *Bleach* fans support and enjoy what are known as ‘crack ships’: couples whose relationships are almost universally considered to be completely unbelievable within the fandom and for which there is no reasonable evidence in the text itself.

Shipping debates might appear to be ‘frivolous’ or ‘nonsensical’ to those not involved²⁸, but they demonstrate much about the practices of reading, and the relationship between reading practices and the text. Indeed, as I hope the discussion in this chapter will show, the activities of fans are not dissimilar to the practices of literary and cultural scholars, even if the terms used and the tone of debate may differ. Both types of reader aim to produce deeply reasoned and convincing readings of the text and to instruct others in finding those readings for themselves. In this chapter, I want to think through the reading practices of shippers, and the debates that emerge about these practices in online communities, in order to think about the ways in which different meanings can be located within the manga text. I use material from online discussions

merchandising at all. Accordingly, the expansion of a series like *Bleach* into such a diverse range of other media provides the fans with a dispersed and fragmented range of material from which to assemble a canon. The difficulties involved in ultimately locating canon in an ever-expanding textual archive mean that debates about adaptation and paratextuality^a often become important concerns for the fandom.

For *Bleach* fans, the canonicity of the anime series has become a particular focus in such debates. *Bleach* was originally a manga series, which began serialisation in 2001. In 2004 an anime version of the series began broadcasting on Japanese television and is still ongoing today. Initially the anime series followed the plot and characterisation in the manga very closely. The *mangaka*, Kubo Tite, was even involved in the production of the series and particularly with the character design. The anime production team were able to produce the first two seasons of the anime by following the manga plot without having to produce much in the way of ‘filler’ material. Filler is

among fans of Tite Kubo's manga series, *Bleach*, in order to explore the relationships between the practices of reading and the text. In these debates readers seek, not to justify their choice of text, but to demonstrate the legitimacy of their reading of that text. In this way, I will show that the 'canonical' (Authoritative) text is not a pre-existent, singular entity waiting to be read by a sufficiently competent reader; it emerges from these debates as a result of the communal practices of reading.

Henry Jenkins explains that fans insist on affording popular works of mass culture the kinds of attention and appreciation that are usually reserved for the 'canonical texts' of traditional literary scholarship. Moreover, because they often choose to integrate texts into their own experiences and make them part of their lives, fans lack the requisite distance to produce 'serious' literary criticism. Jenkins is interested in the ways in which fans appropriate elements of texts and assert 'their own right to form interpretations, to offer evaluations, and to construct cultural canons'²⁹. It is interesting to note that in choosing

material that has been included in an anime adaptation but which is not found in the original manga. However, anime production moves much faster than periodical manga publishing. An individual episode of an anime can easily encompass multiple chapters of the manga, particularly if it is published in short weekly installments. This means that the animators often run out of 'source' material before the story can be concluded and they are forced to produce original (anime-only) material to fill the inevitable gaps. The major constraint in the production of filler material is that the animators cannot make any significant (or irrevocable) changes to the setting or characterisation without compromising the future development of the manga plot.

The first two seasons of the *Bleach* anime were able to chronicle the manga plot without too much resort to filler material, and what filler they did include tended to make use of the *omake* material from the source manga. *Omake* is additional material provided in-between the chapters and

their 'frivolous' and 'inferior' texts from the realms of mass culture fans do not simply assemble alternative 'cultural canons' in the mould of the traditional literary canon (however problematic that term may be). Indeed, fan communities have redefined the term 'canon' entirely.

Within fan lexicon, the canon refers not to the 'literary greatness' of a work but to the material that is (verifiably) in the source text itself. The canon is, therefore, a source of 'authoritative knowledge' rather than a statement about the 'quality' of the text. As 'textual poachers' fans appropriate this canonical knowledge—the 'facts' of the text—and adapt it to their own ends. These collectively 'poached' meanings—fan reading is always a social process for Jenkins³⁰—come to produce a grid of assumptions and knowledges which then provide a basis for future readings of the text. Within fan communities this unofficial knowledge is known as 'fanon', a portmanteau of fan and canon. However, the relationship between canon and fanon is far from straightforward. Far from being an easily verifiable body of 'fact', canon is

at the end of a volume of the *Bleach* manga, similar to the 'extras' often included on DVDs. However, by season three, the anime producers were faced with such a lengthy wait for the manga to accrue sufficient new material that they were forced to create an entire filler arc. Known within the fandom as the Bount arc, this self-contained storyline introduced a range of new characters and new powers that are not found in the manga. Once enough material had accumulated in the manga, the animation team were able to return to the manga story-line but they could only do so carrying the baggage of these additional characters. To delay the point at which they reached the limits of the manga plot again, the animators also needed to slow the plot of the anime down. This necessitated the inclusion of ever-increasing amounts of anime-only material and, eventually, other self-contained filler arcs. In addition to the filler material produced for the anime series itself, the success of the anime series (and the popularity of the *Bleach* franchise as a whole) drove the production of a series of feature-

a furiously debated topic within fan communities; the line drawn between canon and fanon is muddied by debates over divergent readings of the text to the extent that it becomes a problem of how to read 'correctly'.

Fanon has an uneasy relationship with the canonical elements of the text. Sheenagh Pugh describes canon as the 'source material accepted as authentic and, within the fandom, known by all readers in the same way that myth and folk-tale were once commonly known'³¹. Yet, in defining canon in this way, she exposes the contingency of canon's apparently indisputable factuality. The fannish canon is often *taken* to be indisputable fact within the fandom, but this is only illusory. Claims to canon rarely settle debates within the fandom; instead the canon is itself the subject of, often rather heated, debate. As Mafalda Stasi explains:

Beyond the bare factual minimum, canon constitution and interpretation are a highly controversial activity in the fannish milieu. Far from being a fixed and unproblematically shared set of references, the slash canon is based

length anime films (OVAs), which required the animators to develop whole new self-contained plots.

As a result, significant differences emerged between the anime and the manga. These differences can complicate discussions of canonicity within the *Bleach* fandom. Some fans view the anime as part of an expanded canon. As such, they are willing to take anime-only events and characters into account when they are discussing the series even if they are aware that this is controversial. For example, in the discussion of chapter 350 on *One Manga* forums, itsygothollow speculated that Ichigo's unexpected transformation would have consequences after the conclusion of the 'winter war', but that the severity of these consequences could depend upon how many people within the Soul Society knew about his hollow mask and Visored powers^b. Determining exactly how many characters know about the mask depends upon whether you are willing to take events in one of the feature-length anime adaptations into account. Only the Visored and a handful of other

on a collective interpretive process. It is possible to outline a continuum going from quite basic, hard-to-dispute 'facts' such as the occupations of the main characters, to highly debatable points of characterization.³²

The very existence of an entity that can be referred to as the 'slash canon' — a term Stasi uses — compromises the authority of canon as the stable and straightforward facts of the text itself. As something that is in any way distinguishable from the canon in general, the slash canon opens up the text to a multiplicity of competing readings, each of which can find a basis in the text itself. The slash canon is constructed by the collective interpretive processes within slash fan fiction communities and these processes differ from those of other contingents within a fandom. Yet, while canon is itself a highly variable construct, it is regarded as normative feature of the text by most fans. As Stasi explains: 'even when it is turned on its head and flouted, [canon] is hardly escapable'³³.

Canon opens up the multiplicity of the text itself but, in doing so, it makes it

characters had learned about Ichigo's powers at this point in the manga, but far more characters saw his mask in one of the feature-length anime OVAs, *The Diamond Dust Rebellion*^c.

Other fans are far more dismissive of anime material, and particularly that material that can be described as 'filler'. Within shipping communities it is commonplace to dismiss evidence offered to support a particular pairing if it comes from anime-only material. Such material is not 'Kubo-written'^d, which means that it cannot have any *authority* as canon. Indeed, some fans argue that those who only watch the anime should refrain from entering into the debate at all.

I noticed people who watch the anime really shouldn't debate because they'll get the anime filler (which can be kind of bad like right now) mixed up as actually canon, when Kubo never wrote such a scene.^e

Indeed, it is not only the presence of filler material that compromises the authority of any argument that is based on the anime. The anime is produced by a team of animators,

difficult to ascertain ownership of and control over the text. For example, the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*³⁴ prompted much speculation within fan communities about the nature of the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindlewald. Shortly afterwards J.K. Rowling confirmed in an interview that Dumbledore was, in fact, gay. But, far from ending the debate, Rowling's announcement only served to provoke arguments about the effect that statements of authorial intent could or should have over the material included in the text itself. It became a question of ownership of the text and how much influence an author can have—or should have—over how that text is read. Catherine Tosenberger notes that, while many fans took Rowling's statement to be a clear indication of authorial intent—and, therefore, evidence that they had been reading the text correctly or incorrectly—others dismissed the statement as extra-textual and, therefore, irrelevant³⁵. For these fans, Rowling ceased to have ownership and gave up any control over the text when it was published and released to its readers. Rowling denied that she was attempting to retrospectively regulate

based on their particular readings of the manga text. It is written and designed so as to take advantage of the particular capacities of animation as a medium in order to produce a series that is enjoyable and compelling to watch. There are, then, all sorts of differences between the anime and the manga even where the two attempt to relate the same events. These differences will delight or frustrate shippers in equal measure depending upon how well the anime and the manga appear to support their reading of the text as a whole. This is a particular source of contention between the IchiRuki and IchiHime camps within the shipping communities. Some IchiRuki shippers are especially dismissive of the anime because they believe that the animators include material that seems to support the IchiHime ship. They are particularly annoyed by this because they believe that the evidence for that pairing is completely absent from the manga. For example, in a thread detailing 'Absurd IchiHime Proof', CrystalICE1 argued that any

'her' text by virtue of her authorial status. She claimed that her original announcement was not extra-textual at all; she was simply participating in the reading of the text by discussing an element that is to be found in the book itself.

It is in the book. He had—it's very clear in the book... I think a child will see a friendship and a sensitive adult may well understand that it was an infatuation.³⁶

Tosenberger argues that Rowling may well have a case here. Many of the fans, presumably the 'sensitive adults' Rowling was referring to, had already found some slash subtext in the textual canon—and they had been writing fan fiction about it since the book's release.

Rhiannon Bury argues that 'authorial' or 'authoritative' readings within the *Six Feet Under* fandom were as much a product of the way in which fans talked about their reading as they were a specific way of reading³⁷. Such readings were the result of consensus about what kinds of discussion should take place within those communities and how textual meaning should be treated. Fans employed four distinct

suggestion of IchiHime in the anime could only ever be filler:

I think the IchiHime camp is trying to grab anything to hold on to at this point. I did not like the fact that the anime staff had to show Ichigo holding Orihime's hand. That was not necessary nor is it canon, it's just filler BS.^f

It is not entirely clear whether such material is strictly filler or not. Fans tend to regard filler as original material produced by the animators, which cannot be found in the manga. Yet, *all* of the material in the anime could be described in this way, regardless of whether they are reproducing events in the manga or inventing events of their own imagining that have been inspired by it. There are substantial differences between manga and anime as media. Animators cannot simply recreate the manga as an anime; they must adapt a story told in still words and pictures—and arranged in panels, frames and word balloons on the printed page—into a story told in minutely incremental stills which appear to move when they replace one another

strategies for interpreting their televisual text and placed them within a hierarchical framework which determined the degree of legitimacy given to an opinion or reading. The most authoritative strategy in use was a close reading of the primary text, similar to the kind of reading performed in professional literary scholarship. An opinion based on a close reading of secondary texts—such as interviews with the writer or information drawn from the (official) series website—was seen as a less legitimate form of engagement. Extra-textual interpretation based purely on personal experience was considered an even less legitimate form of engagement, while purely emotional responses with little or no support from the text itself were granted almost no authority. In a similar way, Rowling's announcement was given legitimacy because many fans did agree that evidence for Dumbledore's homosexuality was to be found in (a close reading of) the source text. It could be interpreted as more than simply a regulative statement of authorial intent.

on a screen in quick succession. The animators also have to produce a story that is supplemented with audible sound, while *mangaka* can only approximate sound with onomatopoeic lettering. This means that, in adapting the series, the animators are not only called upon to exercise their creativity when they are filling in the gaps in the anime left by the slow pace of manga development; they must literally fill in the gaps within the manga story itself, and always creatively. Accordingly, many *Bleach* fans do not view the anime as canonical in any way because only the manga is an original, *authorial* text produced by Kubo Tite (albeit with the help of his team of assistants).

The *Bleach* canon is fragmented and dispersed by more than simply the co-existence of the manga and anime series; the manga series itself is augmented with an array of paratextual elements. Gérard Genette explains that the term paratext encompasses all the liminal devices and conventions that mediate a book to its readers. Paratextual elements

Textual evidence

The thorny issue of canon is often central to shipping debates within *Bleach* fan communities. Fans regularly discuss the legitimacy of competing ships as well as the merits their chosen pairing (as a reasonable reading of the text itself). The vast majority of this type of fan activity is concerned with explaining the elements of the text that inspired a piece of fan fiction or fan art, or with straightforward speculation about the text, rather than anything so dramatic as the conduct of a 'shipping war'. There is a whole community on the website *Livejournal* for shippers who want to post essays in support of their preferred pairings. The essays on the *Ship_Manifesto* community are written by fans of a diversity of series, including *Bleach*. The ship manifestoes posted within this community are not necessarily intended to convince other fans to join that ship (to begin supporting the pairing); they are a means of celebrating aspects of the pairing and situating the ship within the textual canon. Although it is not the primary purpose of such manifestoes, a well argued piece can give other fans more

occupy the 'borderlands' of a text where they serve to frame that text and shape how it will be read in various ways⁸. Kubo Tite includes a short poem on the title page of each *tankôbon* volume. These poems do not appear in the version published in *Weekly Shonen Jump* and they are not directly involved in the story. Nevertheless they contribute to how the text is received by its readers. These poems are not the only paratextual element in *Bleach*. Other materials include: the title pages produced for each of the manga chapters; the cover images on each of the *tankôbon* volumes; the *omake* included between many of the chapters (usually small images, which are sometimes accompanied by dialogue) and at the end of some of the volumes (which usually give more information about a character); the results of the various popularity polls carried out by *Shonen Jump* and printed alongside some of the chapters in the magazine; and the author interviews included in issues of *Shonen Jump*. In addition to these 'peritextual' elements (those that are found within the manga itself), *Bleach*

'respect' for the ship within 'canon'. A well evidenced and convincingly argued ship manifesto can demonstrate a deeply reasoned reading of the text and guides other readers in finding that reading in the text itself. For example, x_darkhope-x commented on Debbiechan's manifesto in support of a pairing between Ishida and Orihime:

I'm actually an Ichigo/Orihime shipper. (Always have been since the beginning) I find that one more plausible in canon, however, there's no doubt in my mind that I don't reject the idea of IshiHime. I always liked it in fanon but never thought much of it in canon. Your essay sums up what I like most about IshiHime and I guess I respect it a bit more in canon now, though I won't be waving the hardcore IshiHime flag anytime soon³⁸.

On numerous internet message boards whole threads are devoted to asserting the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of particular ships and, while most shippers are simply concerned with enhancing their enjoyment of the text, this kind of discussion can result in the outbreak of (more or less messy) shipping wars. Textual evidence is

has accumulated a range of 'epitextual' materials (materials that are external to the manga volumes and magazine issues but which are, nevertheless, intended to influence the reception of the series). This includes the 'data'^h and 'art' booksⁱ authored by Kubo Tite. The anime is easily dismissed by some fans as non-canonical because it lacks *authorial* status, but these paratextual elements are produced by Tite Kubo himself. For this reason, many fans feel justified in drawing upon paratextual materials in their analysis of the text itself. As Ichiruki43bleachy explains: 'All the examples I used, are solely from the Manga and Tite [Kubo]'s other works, such as the poem. So it's all Canon'^j.

Towards the end of his book, Gérard Genette notes that he has failed to cover several important aspects of paratextuality^k. The elements he has missed—translation, serialisation and illustration—are all implicated in the processes of reading a manga series like *Bleach*. Indeed, far from being paratextual, the practices of illustration are fundamental to the text of a manga series. Serialisation is

perhaps the key element of any shipper's arsenal in these skirmishes. For example, the 'Ichigo and Rukia? Or Ichigo and Orihime?' thread on the *AnimeSuki* forums has been running contentiously for years. The forum moderators have been forced to close the thread to new posts numerous times in order to prevent the rising tensions within the thread from spilling over to affect the rest of the forum. Many of the posts on this thread go beyond offering a personal opinion on the question; they are concerned with 'proving' the canonicity of one of the ships and/or 'disproving' any canonical claims made by fans of the other. Indeed, some of the posts are not about IchiRuki or IchiHime at all. Instead these posts seek to intervene in the debate by providing canonical support for an alternative ship. For example, Devine Crescent Moon chooses to present evidence for a romantic relationship between Rukia and Renji on this thread because a canonical relationship between these two characters would compromise any canonical claims made for a romantic relationship between Ichigo and Rukia³⁹. This provides indirect

a particular issue for *Bleach* fans because it creates an, always-contingent, open canon¹. In an ongoing series, no issue of canon can ever be fully determined because everything can always be revised and altered in a later chapter. This is an ambivalent issue for shippers; it means that there's always hope for a pairing, but also hope for any other pairing too.

The majority of English-speaking *Bleach* readers only have access to translated versions of the series, which have necessarily undergone interpretation and adaptation in the process. English-speaking readers do not only have to reconcile the differences between the original Japanese version of the manga with the (official) English translation produced by VIZ Media; they also have to contend with the many amateur translations circulating on the internet as scanlations. There are often quite important differences between all of these translations and, as many fans initially (or only) read scanlations of the series, these differences can become the subject of much debate in online communities.

support to IchiHime shippers, who can use this to buttress their own (more direct) claims to canonicity.

Similarly, whole threads are made on other forums to store the 'canonical' evidence in support of a ship. These threads are sometimes accompanied by complementary threads on which posters seek to expose the flimsiness or untrustworthiness of the evidence presented by rival shippers. For example, a subforum run by Theresa Crane on *fanfiction.net* contains a thread where posters can deposit 'canon evidence' for IchiRuki and a thread where posters can detail the most 'absurd evidence' they've seen presented in favour of IchiHime by rival shippers. In this way, forum posters are able to invest their own reading of *Bleach* with authority while, simultaneously, delegitimizing competing readings of the text. They aim to demote readings in support of IchiHime to fanonical ravings, while asserting the unequivocal presence of IchiRuki in the text.

Crack shipping

As *Bleach* is an ongoing series—and, therefore, an 'open canon'⁴⁰—the

Such debate is particularly widespread among communities of those involved with scanlation, but other types of reader are also concerned with the quality of translation in the scans they read. For example, different scanlations of chapter 343 contained divergent translations of a phrase spoken by Ishida^m. In some scanlations this is translated as 'that mad scientist', while others translated the phrase as 'that disgusting scientist'. The line concerns Mayuri Kurotsuchi, who is the captain of the Soul Society's research division. Ishida fought against Mayuri during the Soul Society arc of the series and, during this fight, Mayuri was exposed to be a thoroughly unethical and unlikeable character. Some fans believe that the 'disgusting scientist' translation is far more in keeping with the characterisation of both Ishida and Mayuri. Ishida's contempt for Mayuri, even if he has been forced to accept his help, is important because it inflects upon their reading of the series as a whole.

The differences between the amateur and official translations can be far

events in new installments of the series can cause considerable anxiety amongst shippers (as Apathymoon's post on *Bleachness* demonstrated). In much the same way, new installments of the series can also provoke glee—or 'squee'—among shippers. For example, the events of *Bleach* chapter 353 and the spoilers⁴¹ for 354—not even the chapter itself—caused 'the biggest Freak-out Wednesday in the history of Freak-out Wednesdays'⁴² for fans supporting a relationship between Ulquiorra and Orihime who found much cause to 'squee (from the obvious UlquiHimeness of it all)'⁴³. In chapter 353, Ulquiorra is grievously injured from his fight with Ichigo and realises that he cannot live much longer. Ichigo refuses to kill him so Ulquiorra's body begins to disintegrate. He asks Orihime if she is afraid of him and, when she replies that she is not, he reaches his hand towards her. Orihime reciprocates but, before their fingers can touch, his hand disintegrates into the wind, followed by the rest of his body. Chapter 354 returns to Ulquiorra's thoughts in the moments of his decomposition. The hollows in *Bleach*, including Ulquiorra, are uncaring, heartless beings driven

more contentious, particularly where the fans have become accustomed to using a Japanese term only to find that it has been translated differently when the official editions are released. VIZ Media's translation of the Japanese word *nakama* (仲間) as 'friend(s)' in their English-language versions of *Bleach* (and many other series) has proved to be particularly controversial among the fans. Many fans, and scanlators, argue that the term should be left untranslated because it is 'untranslatable'. That is, it connotes multiple simultaneous meanings in Japanese and this complexity of meaning is lost when it is translated as 'friend'. They maintain that this is to the detriment of the story's thematic development. Other fans argue that insisting on leaving the word untranslated simply fetishises Japanese and marginalises those readers who do not possess sufficient knowledge of Japanese language or culture to understand the term. This is particularly problematic because the word *nakama* does, in fact, tend to connote 'friend' when it is used in *shōnen* manga. There is, then, nothing to be gained from

only by their insatiable desire to continue existing. But, while looking at Orihime, Ulquiorra finally realises what it is to care for someone. As he reaches towards her he remarks that he has finally found his heart. These events, or at least the rumours of them, led shippers to claim that it was now beyond all doubt that UlquiHime was canon.

Smile, people. It's true, that was a helluva UlquiHime CANON moment. Let everyone else argue about what canon means, what romance means—no one can take away what happened. The mutual connection and non-connection, Ulquiorra's redemption and Orihime's compassion. *What people denied for so long and what we can now say: see, we told you it was there and we said this day would come.*⁴⁴

After years of 'fighting over the meaning of panels that may end up in nothing', UlquiHime fans could now sit back and enjoy their 'beautiful CANON moment'⁴⁵. Chapters 353 and 354 (insofar as they could tell) were important to these shippers because they proved that they weren't 'reading the manga wrong'. They had

leaving it untranslated other than satisfying the elitist attitudes of some fansⁿ.

Similarly, many fans complain that the official translators remove the honorifics (suffixes added to names and professional titles to indicate the relative differences in social standing between speakers) from the Japanese text, or replace them with inadequate English 'equivalents' (commonly 'Mr'). Translators do this because they do not want to alienate readers who are unfamiliar with these honorifics, or with the intricacies of the Japanese social structures that they indicate. However, fans often argue that removing the honorifics distorts the 'feel' of the original Japanese and this can have important implications for how readers read the text^o. In this way, *Bleach* fans grapple with the paradoxes and contradictions of being an English-speaking fan of a Japanese cultural product. While there are some clear international influences in *Bleach* (for example, the chapter titles are always in some approximation of English and there is a noticeable Spanish influence on the

'seen what Kubo intended us to see'⁴⁶ and there could be no doubting their claims to canonicity.

This was a redeeming chapter for Ulquiorra. Kubo intended for it to be seen as such, and it was done in such an all-encompassing way as to leave virtually no room for rebuttle, regarding authorial intent.⁴⁷

Indeed, the feeling that this ship had been, *authoritatively*, promoted to canonical status was also shared by *Bleach* fans who were not involved in the more vehement shipping communities, or with shipping at all. On the *One Manga* forums, AkatsukiDaybreak commented that while he had always believed that UlquiHime was 'a ridiculous crack pairing and one of the purest examples of how crazy some shippers can be with misinterpreting characters and their actions'⁴⁸, the events of these two chapters had him wondering about its canonicity.

Despite this, the glee felt by many UlquiHime shippers was tempered with sadness. They got their canonical moment but at the expense of a much-loved character. Honeyhammer echoed

hollow characters), the series is profoundly embedded within Japanese culture. English-speaking manga fans, therefore, find themselves caught up in the issues of cross-cultural interpretation that arise from what Henry Jenkins calls 'convergence cultures'. They act as 'pop cosmopolitans' who 'walk a thin line between dilettantism and connoisseurship, between orientalist fantasies and a desire to honestly connect and understand an alien culture, between assertion of mastery and surrender to cultural difference'^p. Nevertheless, most fans will tend to accept the official translation as canonical when it is finally released because they believe that it has been approved by the *mangaka* and, therefore, must reflect his intentions.

Words and pictures

Many *Bleach* shippers do insist that love and romance are fundamental to the story however much they may be obscured by power-ups and blood splatter. For Mafalda Stasi, the production of slash fan fiction is not simply the 'bizarre hobby' of a 'naive

previous warnings within the fandom that shippers should not wish for canon because 'canon comes at a price in *Bleach*—one partner always dies'⁴⁹. This left no hope for the continuation of the ship. As such, their victory was largely pyrrhic; many fans reflected upon the bittersweet irony that their ship seemed 'to be simultaneously sinking and sailing faster than it ever has before'⁵⁰. Whether or not their celebrations were dampened by Ulquiorra's apparent demise, some of the posters on the *Bleach Asylum* forums were concerned about the title given to the latest incarnation of their fan club thread: 'WE ARE CANON'. They worried that this might seem arrogant and cause resentment among fans of other ships on the message board, perhaps to the extent of provoking another shipping war⁵¹. Replacing the very conspicuously celebratory title with something like 'Everything Divides Us' would have been 'safer'⁵² and it may well have been more appropriate in summarising the mood among UlquiHime fans at that time.

Developments which seem to support the canonical status of UlquiHime

set of scribbling women'; it is a legitimate part of the literary discursive field^a. In much the same way, *Bleach* shippers—many of whom do write fan fiction stories and produce fan art that focuses on pairings of all kinds—defend their practices as legitimate ways of reading the text, however much they might differ from those produced by the 'core' audience for the series. The romance may not be foregrounded, but it is *visibly* and demonstrably *there*.

The pictorial evidence for lots of the lovey-dovey is everywhere in *Bleach*. There's hardly any 'text' about love. Orihime is the boldly talky 'I love you' character. It makes sense that the romance here isn't overt—the form is *shōnen*, after all, but *Jump* knows that its audience is increasingly female, and the trinket makers know that girls in their 20s have disposable income and buy the plushies and Kubo loves women. *Bleach* has a LOT of romance that isn't just sideways to the plot—feelings push the narrative. Love isn't plainly stated—those 13 year boys who read *Bleach* for the action would throw up. But yes, Gin gives a look at Rangiku. Yes, Ishida looks pained over Orihime. Ichigo is gah-gah over Rukia. Orihime says she loves Ichigo and we also see it in her eyes but this

notwithstanding, fans of more marginal ships in *Bleach* tend to have less invested in asserting the canonicity of their pairing. This is largely because they have less to gain from doing so. Unlike many IchiRuki and IchiHime shippers (and, to a certain degree, IshiHime fans), those who choose to ship amongst the many secondary characters in the series do not mind that their relationship will never be (overtly) realised in the text. Ichigo, Rukia, Orihime and Ishida are all central characters within the story, and the relationships between them are important drivers of the plot. The Soul Society plot arc was concerned with Ichigo's desperate attempts to rescue Rukia after she is wrongfully arrested and condemned to death by her superiors within the Soul Society. Similarly, the Hueco Mundo plot arc follows Ichigo and his friends on a similar rescue mission after Orihime is kidnapped by the main antagonist of the series, Aizen. The emphasis placed on the relationships between these characters in *Bleach* gives many shippers hope that one or more of the pairings will become a formal romantic relationship before the series ends. Fans of ships between characters

reader doesn't see Ichigo giving Orihime a single look of encouragement. (I see Ulquiorra and Aizen giving one another sexy looks but that may just be me and Shini) And who loves who drives action. Orihime's choices, Ichigo's, Rukia's— all driven by romantic love to a large extent.^b

The romantic elements of *Bleach* are not so much in the dialogue and interior monologue of the (written) text; they are to be found by reading 'between the lines' of text (in the subtext) and, particularly, in the pictures. Many of the ship manifestos for *Bleach* characters set out explicitly to provide images from the text to support their analysis of the events occurring in individual chapters. For example, Celema's manifesto in support of a pairing between Nnoitra and Nel begins with a notice for readers with slower internet connections: 'Warning!: PICTURE HEAVY because I like evidence not assumptions'^c. Despite this, the status of these pictures as 'evidentiary fact' is far from straightforward. The pictures included in this manifesto are accompanied and framed by a commentary that is far more



Figure 5.2

Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 33. Pages 14–15. © Tite Kubo 2001.

whose relationships are not (directly) entangled in the main plot do not (usually) expect to see their pairings enshrined in canon.

This does not mean that these fans are not interested in situating their ship within the text, even if they do not expect it to be realised in canon. For example, shippers supporting a

interpretative than the initial warning suggests.

Figure 5.2 shows the Japanese original of an image used in Celemna's manifesto as evidence of the feelings Nnoitra has for Nel. As Celemna explains:

relationship between Nnoitra (one of Aizen's Espada) and Nel (an expelled member of the Espada who helps Ichigo in Hueco Mundo) are well aware that their chosen pairing is tangential to the plot. However, this does not mean that the feelings between the two characters cannot be read in the text itself.

I am not saying that Kubo needs to expressively make this canon, I am saying in this manifesto that what is provided makes it likely they are as 'canon' as a hollow couple can ever be. I don't ask that you agree but that you listen. Kubo Tite has made his world a very complicated one and I intend to be as close to what he's showing us as a fan can be.⁵³

Celemna's ship manifesto provides evidence, of varying kinds, that a pairing between Nnoitra and Nel is available in the text, even if it will never be explicitly acknowledged in the story. Various other ship manifestos attempt to situate even 'crack' pairings—couples whose relationships are deemed to be completely unbelievable by the fandom—within the 'canonical' text. Long before the events of chapters 353 and

[In the second panel] we can clearly see that he [Nnoitra] can't stand the way that Ichigo talks about Nel. This is one of his first truly 'thought provoking' glances which makes us wonder, geez, what's his problem?

We see that this look is not just a 'bored' rant because Nnoitra does several things [on subsequent pages in the chapter]. Not only does Nnoitra kick Ichigo in the face, but he soon becomes so angry with the hero that he goes into a serenade about how Neliel pissed him off and he couldn't stand it. Ichigo tells him to stop and he becomes so angry that he starts to break our hero's wrist^d.

The meaning of these glances is not necessarily immediately apparent; Celeмна needs to interpret them and situate them within her reading of broader events in the story. The pictures themselves do not, and cannot, stand up as *indisputable factual evidence* for the existence of the feelings argued for in the manifesto. Presumably there would have been no need to write the manifesto if they did. Instead, the text and pictures

354 lent the ship a kind of canonicity, UlquiHime was generally viewed as a crack pairing within the fandom. Yet, the pairing did attract a great deal of support among shippers who produced much in the way of fan fiction and fan art about the it. And, even though the fans held little hope that the ship would ever be 'factually' realised in the text, they argued for the existence of their pairing in the 'subtext' of the series⁵⁴.

On the whole, *Bleach* fans do not object to crack pairings; they tend to view them as harmless fantasies and entertaining diversions. Many fans do, however, object to attempts made to lend canonical authority to ridiculous and improbable ships by evidencing them from within the text. Crack shipping is sometimes referred to as 'guilty' shipping because, as ships with no reasonable evidentiary basis in the text itself, crack ships should only ever be a 'guilty pleasure'. They should not be treated in the same way as viable ships.

I fully believe everyone should be able to enjoy whatever they want (I have some het couplings I adore in other fandoms, as well as yuri that I

combine in Celemna's manifesto to produce an instructed reading Nnoitra x Nel in *Bleach*. This is similar to the role that photographs and other images play in social scientific texts (as I discussed in (Fullmetal) Alchemy). Eric Livingston explains that through captioning and other textual devices, sociological textbooks are able to render photographs as evidence of and for particular sociological phenomena. In much the same way, Celemna's manifesto allows other readers to see *Bleach* in terms of a relationship between Nnoitra and Nel.

Bleach fans find visual evidence 'for the lovey-dovey' in the actions of the characters and, especially, in the body language and facial expressions exchanged between the characters when they are shown in the panels. For example, Debbiechan is able to base her claims that Ishida has romantic feelings for Orihime, even if she is not yet aware that she reciprocates, in his almost 'obsessive' protection of her during the Soul Society arc. Ishida's concern is borne out in his body language and facial expressions far more than it is

think makes sense, but my real love lies in BL). Though I prefer it when people with guilty ships don't try to push it on me as canon (i.e. like arguing Zetsu/Ino in Naruto or something) and while I tend to stick almost uniformly with couples with a lot of subtext and opportunities, I do have a soft spot for Chad/Nova because while it was a filler character which makes it immediately guilty, I felt it made a lot of sense given that Nova rang true to some other *Bleach* personas.

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For Hardysmidgen the problem is not the 'guiltiness' of the ship itself but the claims made on its behalf; people can ship whomever, and whatever, they like so long as they do not insist that to produce an authoritative reading of the text. As such, the distinction between canon and fanon therefore takes on a moral weighting; it is a question of how to read 'properly'. Crack ships can only ever be fanonical. Indeed, this is precisely what makes them a guilty pleasure. However, as the apparent promotion of UlquiHime to canon in chapters 353 and 354 of *Bleach* shows, it is difficult to determine which ships

in his words. Debbiechan sees the importance of these physical manifestations of concern in the page layouts as much as the contents of the individual panels.

Kubo-san spends a great deal of panel time addressing how well the two work together and he throws Orihime in Ishida's arms for good measure as well. As I noted in my previous ship manifesto, there are nine panels alone in the Soul Society arc where Ishida has his arm protectively over Orihime. He rescues her from death a minimum of three times. His large hands hover over her form, and Kubo singles them out or draws them prominently. Then, at the point where Orihime and Ishida separate and Ishida has his final terrible battle with Mayuri, Ishida recalls his grandfather telling him that one day he will know what he wants to protect. Given that Ishida has been shown protecting Orihime rather obsessively and often in the Soul Society arc, one has to wonder... can you say *foreshadowing*?^e

While Ishida's actions might otherwise have been interpreted as noble, Debbiechan insists that they are depicted in the panels so as to indicate more carnal urges. But this is not simply a sexual tension; Ishida



Figure 5.3
Debbiechan. "Still There". Images © Tite Kubo 2001.

can and should be considered crack and which might have a legitimate claim on the text itself. In a fantasy/action adventure series written for teenage boys, like *Bleach*, where romantic attachments are not given a central place within the story, it may be that all ships are equally 'guilty' (or, perhaps, that none of them are 'guilty' at all).

cares deeply for Orihime and wants to protect her, both physically and emotionally. Indeed, Debbiechan demonstrates the care that Ishida feels for Orihime by collecting, and annotating, a series of 'tender' expressions on Ishida's face as he looks at or thinks about her during the Soul Society plot arc (Figure 5.3). In a similar manner, Debbiechan and other shippers sometimes refer to



Figure 5.4

Left: Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 37. Page 73. © Tite Kubo 2001.

Right: Mezzo. Reproduced by Debbiechan. "Lighten up Fandom".

Canon and Fanon

However much fans might debate its contents, they usually consider canon to be the text *as it really is*. Both within and outside of the *Bleach* fandom, the notion of fanon is used to describe useful extrapolations from the text, which can be categorised as 'interpretations' rather than 'facts'; it is 'the stuff we don't really know but sort

'significant' looks exchanged between characters in the manga as 'eyeball sex'^f. Figure 5.4 shows a fan edited page from chapter 317 in which the dialogue has been altered to foreground this so-called 'eye sex'. *Shoujo*-style^g pink bubbles have been added to the background of two of the panels. This draws greater attention of Rukia and Ichigo's facial

of agree on but that is open to challenge'⁵⁶. Fanon can be a complete fabrication, but it is often extrapolated—or wildly exaggerated—from a range of textual and sub-textual elements in the text. Any elements that are shared by a large number of fan interpretations but which have no real basis in the 'original' text can be said to be fanonical⁵⁷. However, fanon is more usefully conceptualised as a collection of fragments of characterisation and backstory that accumulate around the characters in a series until they become, for many readers, as much a part of that character as the attributes that have been explicitly assigned to him or her by the creator of the text itself⁵⁸. Fanon, then, is the *openly acknowledged* product of the collective interpretive practices of a community of fans as they read a particular cultural text. Henry Jenkins explains that fan communities produce a composite view of the series they follow—a meta-text—by integrating the many disparate elements they find in those texts⁵⁹. As new information is gathered from an (ongoing) series, it is slotted into this grid of shared 'assumptions' and 'knowledges' about the text. Some of

expressions, and particularly to their eyes, which serves to increase the 'emotional impact' of the exchange. Some commentary—which insists that Ichigo and Rukia are the 'poster couple of eyeball sex' in *Bleach*—has also been added in the bottom left gutter on the page. The aim here is to (humorously) exaggerate the shippers' reading of the two panels stretching across the middle of page 18 as a sexually charged glance between characters who feel more than friendship towards one another (Figure 5.4 includes a reproduction of the original Japanese page for comparison. The dialogue in the original translates as, 'Save the reunion for later! Hurry up and go, Ichigo!!', to which Ichigo replies, 'OK').

Other shippers annotate scans of manga pages to illustrate the arguments made in their ship manifestos, although most do not extend this quite as far as altering the dialogue or images. Indeed, altering the images would actually be counterproductive as their intention is to show that their ship is a visible feature of the pages themselves. The

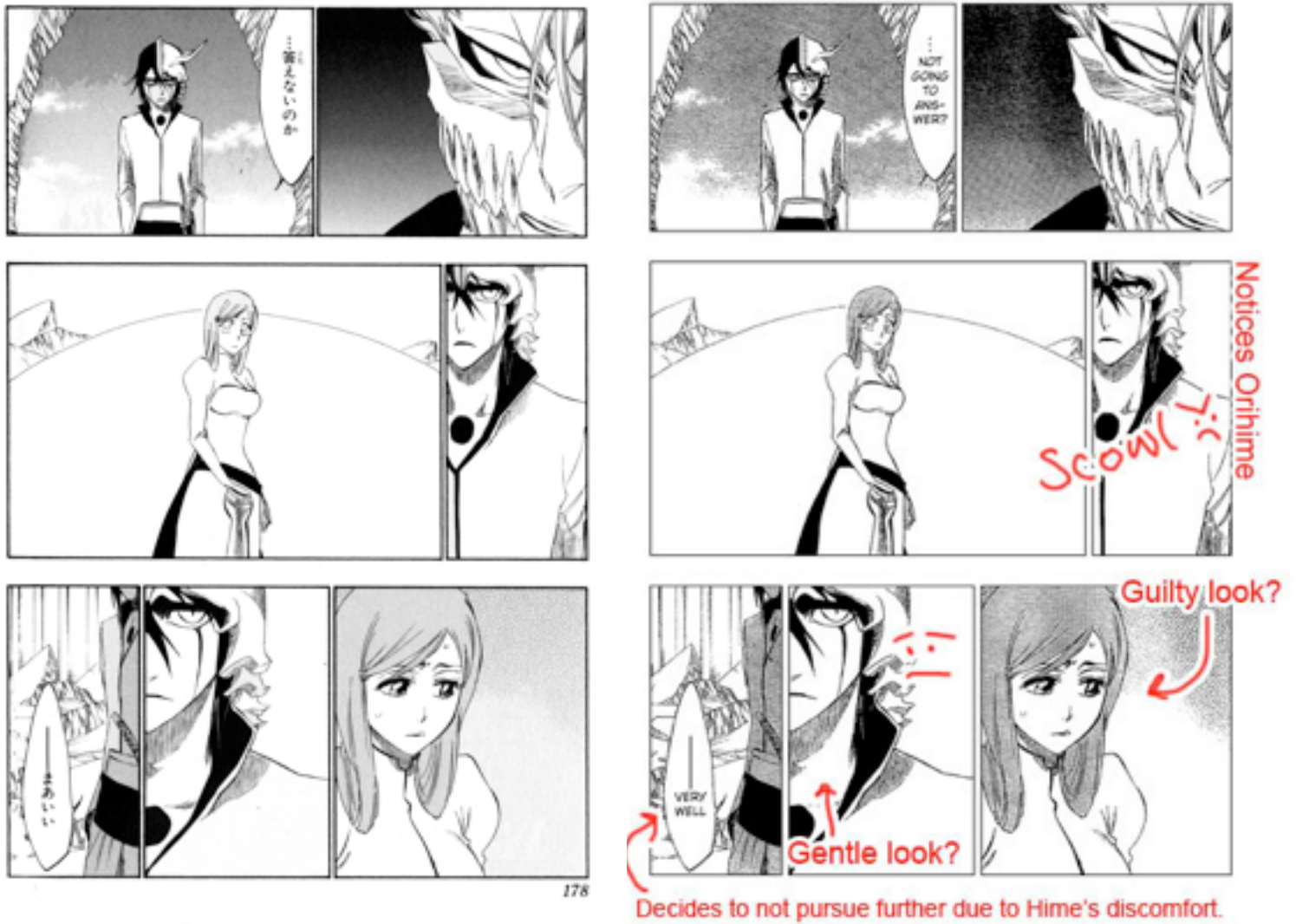


Figure 5.5

Left: Tite Kubo. *Bleach* Vol 31. Page 178. © Tite Kubo 2001.

Right: Halclouds. "Fascination: Ulquiorra Schiffer x Orihime Inoue (*Bleach*)"

this extrapolated information can come to gain a kind of institutional status within the fandom; certain ideas gain a broad circulation and assume a 'quasi-factual' status among fans. At this point they become fanonical.

This fanonical meta-text is not necessarily inferior to the canonical text. Fanon might be thought of as a kind of 'do-it-yourself canon': a body

annotated scans are usually accompanied by a detailed (written) analysis of the events occurring in the manga. This allows manifesto writers to explain how different facial expressions inflect the reading of the story. Figure 5.5 shows an annotated page from chapter 278. Alongside this is an extract from the commentary in

of work that takes on its own authority. Despite this, the term fanon is generally used pejoratively within fan communities⁶⁰. Used contemptuously, fanon not only fails to challenge the status of 'canon'; it actually serves to underline its authority. A *Livejournal* user known as Idlerat wants to celebrate the promise of fanon—rather than reduce it to 'sentimentalized cliché' or strip it of 'canonical authority'—as a body of verifiable 'facts' to be found in the body of fan fiction texts and other fan productions. In doing so, she seeks to objectify fanon in much the same way that the notion of canon objectifies its source text. Setting fanon up in parallel to the canon of its source text in this way seems to betray the 'promise' of fanon as much as any of the definitions Idlerat rejects.

While fan productions are often based in the shared assumptions of particular fan communities, those writings should not be understood as an inferior and derivative version of canon set apart from their source text⁶¹. Canon is no less a fannish construct than fanon; both canon and fanon are developed by the fan community as part of the

the manifesto relating to this particular exchange of glances:

At first she was surprised, then she lowered her head and looked away, as if feeling guilty. Why wasn't she angry? At the arrancar [Ulquiorra] who poked a hole in the chest of her favourite Kurosaki-kun [Ichigo Kurosaki]? And Ulquiorra, who was previously scowling, softened his expression upon seeing Hime [Orihime]. What was even more interesting was that he brushed away the fact that Grimmjow was breaking the rules like it didn't matter (amazing for someone who's so loyal towards Aizen), and made it clear that his only concern was to take back Orihime.^h

In analysing both the images and the events in the plot in this way, Halclouds is able to argue that Orihime and her arrancar captor, Ulquiorra, have become fascinated with one another. She does begin the manifesto with a warning (in large red letters) telling readers that the red textual annotations on the pictures is not intended to be taken seriously; they are an attempt to be light-hearted about a subject that many

process of reading and interpreting texts. Distinguishing between canon and fanon is an exercise of judgement rather than typology. In its fannish use, the concept of canon is little more than a way to authorize a particular reading of a text; it both lends legitimacy to a reading and imbues it with some kind of authorial sanction or intention. To designate a reading or interpretation as 'fanon' is to render that reading illegitimate and dismiss it as a kind of nonsensical—albeit enjoyable—fannish speculation. Canon and fanon, then, are *issues of reading* rather than (objective) properties of the text itself.

Alec McHoul has carried out a series of investigations exploring the alchemic production of textual objects in situated occasions of reading⁶². He insists that reading is never a private process; the practices of reading are always public, despite their illusiveness. McHoul likens the processes of reading to Harvey Sacks's description of the possibilities and consequences of predicting the outcome of a joke during its telling. There is always a possibility that some listener will 'guess' what the joke is

shippers take very seriously. Halclouds also warns readers that they should regard any claims about 'canon' in her essay in a similar manner. Yet, in performing the analysis at all, Halclouds is showing a basis for UlquiHime in the text; it may not be openly acknowledged (at least not at the time the manifesto was written) but it can be demonstrated in both the pictures and the subtext.

Shippers can find as much 'subtext' in the pictures alone as they do in the events they read from the combination of pictures and text in a manga series. Using practices that are not entirely estranged from the techniques employed by professional art critics (even if the terms they use appear very different), *Bleach* fans are able to find layers of symbolic meaning in the pictures presented to them on the page. This is more than a matter of interpreting facial expressions and body language; fans analyse all aspects of character design, including the outfits they are shown wearing. When Orihime was kidnapped and taken to Hueco Mundo, she was given a completely new outfit similar to the white robes

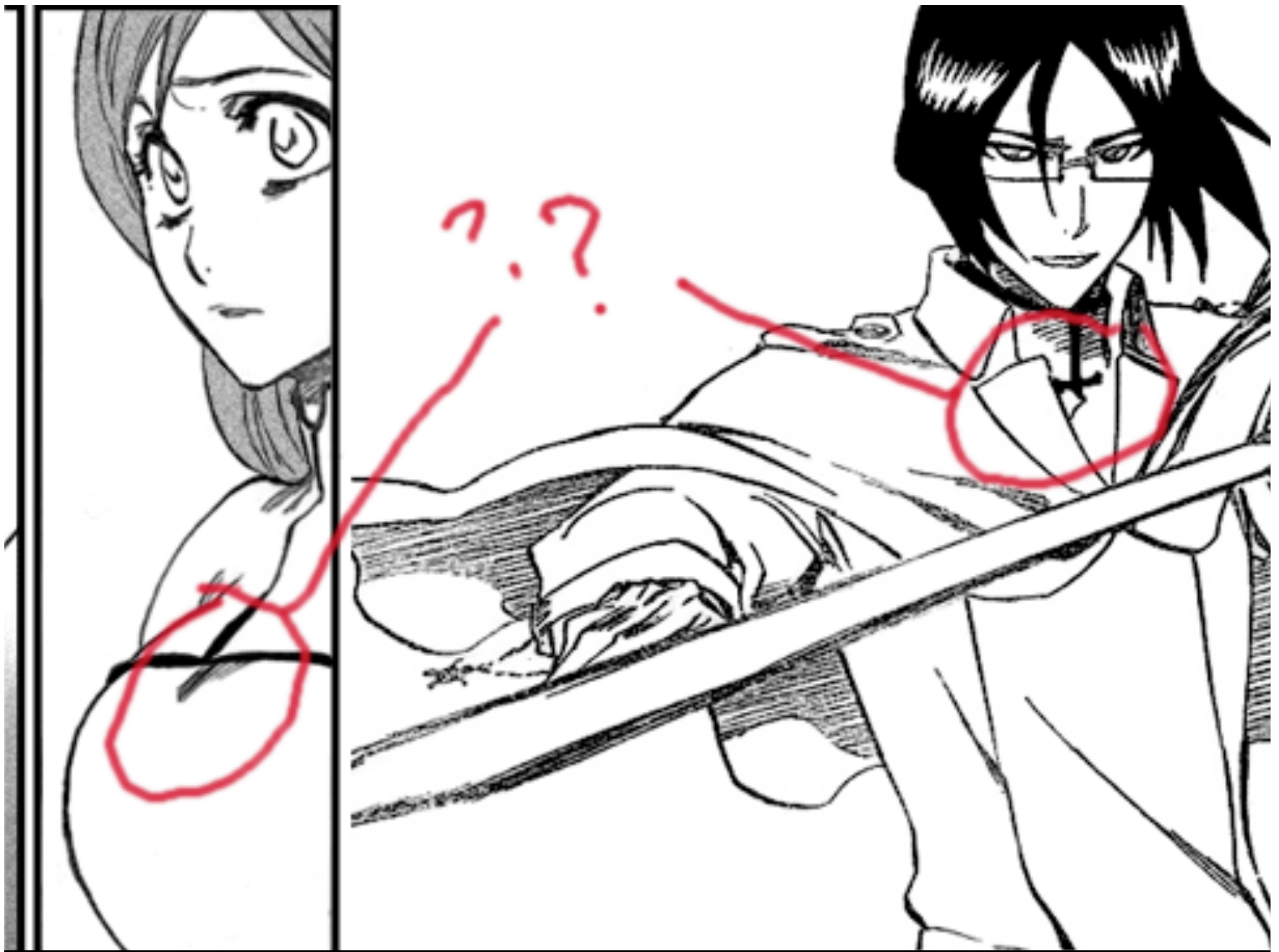


Figure 5.6

Debbiechan. "Still There". Images © Tite Kubo 2001.

about before it is completed. In interrupting the flow of the joke in this way, the listener discovers that he or she already knew what the joke was 'about' or had predicted the outcome correctly. Such 'guesses' often serve to spoil a joke or cut short its telling. In the case of reading, however, these kinds of outcome-predictions have almost the opposite effect: 'a guess which turns out to be a 'correct

worn by the Espada (Orhime is wearing this new dress in the page shown in Figure 5.5, while Ulquiorra wears his Espada uniform). This change of dress could be read as a declaration of the power her captors hold over her, but some IshiHime fans the change was far more exciting than this. Debbiechan declared that Orihime's long white dress mirrored

version' may serve to have a reader know that he or she is 'on the right track' rather than to prematurely close the reading'⁶³.

The online discussions and debates over ships and canon, which are reinvigorated with each new installment of *Bleach*, are fueled by and thrive on the continued success of this kind of predictive hypothesizing. The relationship between the text and its reading is, therefore, always a contingent 'matter of negotiation over a temporal course'⁶⁴. Each new installment is accommodated into a 'stochastic store'⁶⁵ in which it receives its sense from the emergent 'pattern-so-far'⁶⁶. However, McHoul argues that the practices of reading are never 'merely cumulative and prospective'; meanings can also be 'disassembled and reassembled retrospectively'⁶⁷. Events that had previously been overlooked or which had been read differently can take on new meanings when they are connected with new evidence. A ship like UlquiHime, which had previously been dismissed as 'crack', could come to gain credibility as a reasonable reading of the text. Indeed, UlquiHime shippers

Ishida's white Quincyⁱ costume rather than the Espada uniform. Particular evidence for this can be found in the similarities between the cross detailing at the neck of Orihime's new dress, which references the cross detailing on Ishida's costume (see Figure 5.6). For some fans this resemblance is more than coincidental; Debbiechan explains that Kubo Tite is 'a stylist' who is 'concerned with how his characters dress to represent their current roles'. The similarities between Orihime's new dress and Ishida's outfit, then, are suggestive of the relationship that is developing between them.

Bleach fans are not only interested in the representational qualities of the pictures; they also attend to the affective qualities conferred on the reading experience by the pictures and the page layout. In 'Still Life' I argued that *shōnen mangaka* design page layouts and panels to produce a visceral reading experience. For shippers the production of affective intensities in *Bleach* is not confined to conveying the violent tension associated with fight scenes; they respond to other intensities within the

could claim that it had always been a valid reading of the text.

The concept of canon is caught up with the action of predictive hypothesizing, in that it demands that the features supplied to a 'stochastic store' must be 'accountably connectable' with the evidence that emerges in the ongoing reading⁶⁸. The 'canon' is the consensually agreed upon, and adequately evidenced, 'correct version' of the text at any point in the temporal course of a reading. It is the reification of the 'imagined reality' of the text by the collective interpretive practices of a particular community of fans⁶⁹. More than this, the concept of canon as an 'objective truth or universal factuality' seems to promise an incontrovertible 'pure text' that cannot, in fact, exist. Indeed, No_remorse insists that canon is nothing more than an imagined construction applied to a text in order to stake the claims of a particular group of readers. It instructs readers in how to read the text *properly*. Its capacity to produce instructed readings of a text is what makes it such an important concept in discussions of shipping.

series and often seek 'squee' in their reading experiences (a term which refers to the high pitched squealing sound that shippers are supposed to make when they find support for their ship in the text). For example, every time Ichigo and Rukia are reunited in the storyline, IchiRuki shippers can experience the 'huge amount of emotional impact being placed in the pages. Two page spreads, and lots of in-depth dialogue'^k. In *Bleach* the kind of emotional impact experienced by shippers is not generally achieved through the overt techniques used in many *shoujo* manga, such as the use of floral and other patterned screentone backgrounds and the complex layering of faces, panels and dialogue^l; the emotional impact seems to be derived from a kind of pictorial subtext to which shippers seem to be acutely sensitive.

It takes time to learn to read Kubo—he cross-hatches so much and pictures are not clear sometimes, his panel sizes vary greatly and it's easy to skip over them, there are lots of all black or all white panels (those are easy, thank goodness) and while he shows action the same way most *manga-ka* do, he draws so well that there's a lot of

Canon and fanon are similar to McHoul's concepts of 'semiotic relativism' and 'semiotic realism'⁷⁰. McHoul notes that some interpretive communities tend towards semiotic relativism in that they employ methods for maximizing the possibilities for 'intelligible' readings of the text, while those communities that seek to minimize the potential of the text tend toward semiotic realism. Like the 'Batfans' McHoul describes, *Bleach* shippers are comfortable with a wide range of different interpretations of the text, and they will tolerate a wide range of reading strategies. Indeed, they are almost required to be if they are to ship at all. The concept of fanon is a means through which the community allows this multiplicity of contradictory readings to co-exist. Yet, for 'Batfans' there is always a 'bottom line' beyond which there can be no reinterpretation: 'the text cannot tolerate any statement beyond a certain point in the chain of reasonable doubts'⁷¹. Many *Bleach* fans approach their text with a similar attitude. They are willing to tolerate, and even embrace, 'fanonical' elements insofar as they do not threaten the integrity of the 'canonical' text itself. Canon is a

information in this foot here or that hand there—it's not just about what sword is swinging and where.^m

However, the attention shippers pay to the subtext (both written and pictorial) in extrapolating narrative from *Bleach* leaves them open to accusations of 'conjecture' when they provide evidence to justify their readings of the text. Shippers often feel that they must defend their reading practices against those who will only accept that which has been overtly 'stated' in the (written) text of the manga. They do so on the basis that manga stories are told as much in pictures as they are in words.

It's said that shippers read too much into facial expressions and build sandcastles out of imagined subtext. That may be true, but in a form like manga where both text and pictures carry equal weight, the speech bubbles only tell half of the story. Kubo-san [Kubo Tite], like other *manga-ka*, tells us about his characters with the mere turn this way or that of a pencil mark.ⁿ

Meaning in manga is derived from the curious alchemy of reading a composite text of words and pictures. This means that, far from promoting

semiosically realist defense strategy; it is a 'means by which the community guards against its "proper" readings being reinterpreted either from within or from elsewhere'⁷². Yet, canon can only ever exist as a contingent consequence of the practices of reading within particular fan communities. In this sense, all readings can only ever be fanonical: they are always products of reading rather than objective facts contained in the text. The textual canon only ever develops retrospectively; it is always a result of the practices of reading and the debates over reading that take place within fan communities. This is why it is so difficult to find absolute agreement over ships and canon.

Reading and the text

This kind of argument can be situated within what is broadly referred to as 'reader-response' theory within literary and wider cultural scholarship. As with what is usually referred to as 'New Critical Theory'⁷³, reader-response theorists do not seek to explain and analyse texts by recourse to claims about authorial intention. However, where New Criticism places

illegitimate practices of reading, shippers can lay reasonable claim to more 'accomplished' readings of the text because they attend to both words and pictures and the complex relationships between them rather than relying only on dialogic statements.

Despite this, the evidence provided by shippers remains resolutely open to further debate and interpretation; where some readers see sexual or romantic interest between a pairing, and provide pictorial evidence for this, other fans can only see friendship. To return to the argument made in (Fullmetal) Alchemy, the story or the textual meaning in *Bleach* does not inhere in the material text itself (it is essential to neither word nor picture); the story and meaning emerges from the alchemic processes of reading them. The processes of reading disguise the work they do such that, after the text has been read, the story or meaning appears to straightforwardly belong to and reside in the (physical) text itself. The splashes of ink on the page (the words and pictures, panels and gutters) become meaningful in and through

its trust in the stable and singular objectivity of the text itself, reader-response theory privileges the productive and performative aspects of the relationship between authors, texts and readers. In the title of his book, Stanley Fish poses the question: *Is there a text in this class?* In trying to answer this question, he reaches a fairly ambivalent conclusion—and not only because his ideas evolved and changed over the years in which the anthologised essays were written. Fish maintains that there can be no text in a university class—or in any other context of reading for that matter—if that text is to be regarded as a static and objective entity which pre-exists its own reading. The text can only ever exist insofar as it is ‘the structure of meanings that is obvious and inescapable from the perspective of

the practises of reading. The, often contentious, practises of communal reading carried out in online fan communities like those detailed in this chapter indicate that the meanings derived from a text can only ever be contingent, however much they may seem to be a pre-given and static attribute of that text. It is for this reason that canon and fanon only ever become ‘properties’ of the text retrospectively—and tentative ‘properies’ at that. In the first instance they are concepts used within the fandom in negotiating communal readings of a text. They are interesting because they expose something of the relationship between the practices of reading and the status of the text itself.

whatever interpretive assumptions happen to be in force’ in that particular class, or other context of reading⁷⁴. The text is not an object to be read and interpreted (it is not identical to the material form of the book, for example); it is a product of the *practices* of reading and interpretation. Fish challenges the seeming self-sufficiency of the text as an entity which pre-exists its reading and, indeed, directs its reader towards recovering the meaning embedded within itself.

Although it may seem to be a stable and material thing, Fish insists that literature is a ‘kinetic art’, which does not lend itself to static interpretation. This makes the actualising role of reading—and of the reader—inescapable. He argues that critics

and theorists should attend to the practices of reading and interpretation through which the text is actualised, rather than analysing the static shape of the printed page and idealising the assumed reader who can meet the demands of the text. In doing so, he attempts to displace attention from the spatial formations of the printed text towards the temporal experience of the reader. He gives readers joint responsibility for producing meaning in the text. This means that meaning cannot be understood as an entity contained in the formal patterns of the text prior to and independent of the activities of readers. For Fish, meaning is always an *event* created in and through the practices of reading. Conceived of in this way, literature can neither stand still nor can it allow its readers to do so.

Another reader-response theorist, Wolfgang Iser, explains that the English term 'representation' is problematically loaded because it entails, or at the very least suggests, some form of duplication. This conceals the performative qualities through which representation brings something new into existence. The text cannot reference a pre-given reality; it acts as a conduit for a connection between author and reader in the ongoing process of producing something that did not previously exist. In this way, Iser's work reconceptualises the notion of that which is 'given' in literature. The 'pre-given' text should not be viewed as an object of representation (a referential statement or the duplication of an existing state of affairs) but as a kind of script for performance, which 'lives only in its manifestations and it lives in every one of its manifestations'⁷⁵. The physical text only supplies materials from which something new can, and will, be fashioned. As such, there is necessarily an openness to the (formal) system in all literature. The meaning or story (in 'traditional' literature as much as in manga) is never fully given, nor is it fully giveable, because the text is constitutionally *open*. This means that literary criticism can only retain the concept of representation if theorists and critics turn their attention to the 'ways of worldmaking' (the practices through which texts are produced and enacted) rather than the apparently pre-existing worlds they create⁷⁶.

Stanley Fish appreciates that Iser's argument has much to recommend it, but he is concerned that it seems to reify and objectify the text, even as Iser argues against

its self-sufficiency⁷⁷. He rejects the formalism embedded within Iser's work through which the text is able to initiate communication with the reader and, in some way, control the meaning that emerges. Of course, this is exactly what most writers hope for when they produce a text. They write to communicate something and they seek to ensure that the meaning they invest within their text will be recovered by the reader. Much of the argument in 'Irresponsible Pictures' and 'Still Life' looked at the ways in which *mangaka* seek to ensure that the story they want to tell, and the reading experience they want to offer, is delivered to their readers to some degree at least. And yet, as the debates over ships and canons in this chapter indicate, this delivery cannot ever be fully guaranteed. For Iser, an unread text is necessarily unfinished; it is permeated by all manner of gaps and holes which move the reader to fill them. Fish goes further than this, explaining that there is no objectivity even to the materials 'supplied' by the writer.

[I]f the 'textual signs' do not announce their shape but appear in a variety of shapes according to the differing expectations and assumptions of different readers, and if gaps are not built into the text, but appear (or do not appear) as a consequence of particular interpretive strategies, then there is no distinction between what a text gives and what the reader supplies; he supplies *everything*; the stars in a literary texts are not fixed; they are just as variable as the lines that join them.⁷⁸

Indeed, the assumption that there is a distinction between what is (objectively) in the text and what the reader must supply (in order to fill the gaps in this text) may only yield accounts which produce the phenomena they purport to describe. Instead, Fish argues that there can be no textual category of 'given' which exists before the processes of reading and interpretation begin.

However, Fish does tend to caricature Iser's argument somewhat. Iser posits a text supplied by a writer, which is then read by a reader, but he does not invest this text with an unflinching objectivity or claim that the features and structures contained within it will inevitably predetermine how it will be read. Indeed, he explicitly argues that the new product fashioned from the (material) text in and

through the practices of reading is *not* contained within the text itself: ‘This control cannot be understood as a tangible entity occurring independently of the process of communication. *Although exercised by the text, it is not in the text.*’⁷⁹

In this regard, Iser’s argument is close to the claims Eric Livingston makes about the alchemy of reading⁸⁰. Texts are only able to ‘control’ the meaning they contain because they have been read; the action of reading is somewhat elusive because after a text has been read the meaning produced by that reading appears to readers as a formal property of the text itself. The objectivity Fish finds in Iser’s text, therefore, is not *a priori* but *a posteriori*; meaning, and the control of that meaning, seem to inhere in texts because of the alchemic action of reading. Texts do not feature a pre-given reality (to be recovered by a sufficiently competent reader) but achieve a somewhat mysterious transformation of the pre-given material that is read; the text does not denote a world, but merely a world enacted in and through the practices of readers⁸¹. Meaning is never a (pre-)definable entity belonging to a text; it is an event—a dynamic happening⁸².

This means that there can be no absolute opposition, or hierarchical relationship, between authorial and interpreted meaning. Indeed, for Fish, the author is no less a product of the practices of reading and interpretation than the meaning with which they are said to have imbued the text⁸³. Within the *Bleach* fandom, the notion of authorial intention is often used to buttress claims about the canonicity of particular readings of the text (that is, claims to objectivity in the text itself). For example, some fans resist any suggestion that the character Ishida might be gay on the grounds that this reading is not supported by what they know of Kubo Tite’s personal character and his sexual preferences.

Kubo once said that he identified with Ishida more than anyone in *Bleach*. Kubo has claimed to be heterosexual (and had people going ??? at inferences that he is XD). Kubo has said that he doesn't like BL manga (damn but he loves to throw in yuri references all over his own manga, doesn't he?) I take these things into consideration when looking at Ishida's character.⁸⁴

In response, other readers debated the source of this information, but not the effect that such information—if it were actually, and verifiably, true—would have on the (canonical) text, and how this might affect the claims made by shippers. Discussions like this retrospectively sediment the author, and his intentions, into the text and seek to fix the ways in which it can be read. Only an ‘authorised’ reading could possibly be canonical; anything else would simply be fanon, or worse: a willful misreading.

Yet, canon only exists as a consequence of the practices of reading within particular fan communities. Canon is perhaps the key concept used in the practices—and policing—of reading within online fan communities. All readings can only ever be fanonical; they are always products of reading rather than objective facts of the text. Indeed, the ‘facts’ of the text—the textual canon—only ever develop retrospectively, as a product of the practices of reading and the debates over this which take place within the fandom. This is why it is so difficult to find absolute agreement about (and, indeed, to definitively locate) ‘canon’, no matter how much it might appear to belong to, and reside in, the (physical) text itself. Similarly, the ‘author’ emerges from the processes of reading and interpretation as a figure who is able to intervene in debates and fix the canon, which is understood to belong to that author. In this way, the so-called ‘birth of the reader’ may not have brought about the ‘death of the author’, as Roland Barthes has controversially claimed⁸⁵; it may well have given the author new life—a reincarnation or perhaps an after-life—in which he or she can take ownership of the text because of the practices of readers. A similar argument might also be made about the role given to the author because of certain activities of professional literary critics.

The text, and its author, may emerge as a consequence of the practices of reading, but the fans are far from confident of their power over the text. They do not view canon as an entity within their control.

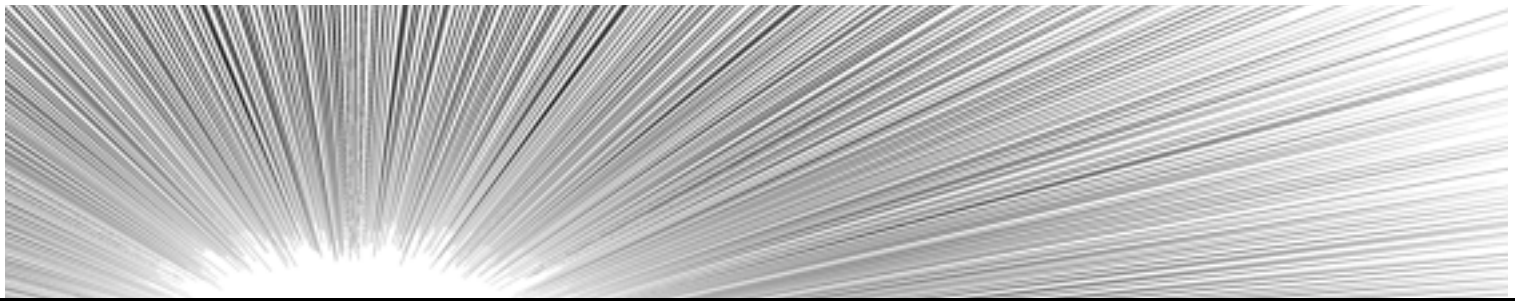
But anyway, people, you know, most of what we're saying is fanon. Okay, it is based on canon, but hey, if Tite Kubo suddenly wants to destroy *Bleach* world(s), or make it swallowed by Hueco Mundo, well, he'll do it.⁸⁶

Fans are acutely aware that they are always working with 'borrowed materials'⁸⁷. Stanley Fish's arguments about the pre-eminence of interpretation seem to begin with nothing; there is no pre-existing material to be interpreted; the processes of interpretation are everything. Yet fans, and other readers, do begin with some physically present material—an array of ink on pages (or pixels on a screen for those reading digital materials)—which they must assemble and in/from which they must produce meaning. Henry Jenkins explains that fans feel that their relationship with the text is always tentative, they exist 'on the margins' of the text and read in the face of the creator's efforts to regulate the meanings of his or her own work⁸⁸. Fans, like Kaoro_Tsumi, feel themselves to be at the mercy of their author, who they understand to have ultimate control over their series.

Of course, the *mangaka* does produce the series; along with his assistants, Kubo Tite arranges the splashes of ink into what readers can recognise as words and pictures, panels and gutters on the pages of *Bleach* which are then sent out into the world. And he does have a story to tell. But he cannot guarantee that 'his' story—or even a semblance of it—will be 'found' on those pages by those who come to read it. *Mangaka* can utilise a range of formal and narratological techniques through which they can attempt to control and shape the practices and experience of reading their series, but they cannot unfailingly imbue their pages with inherent and unchallengeable meaning. Similarly, the *mangaka* can attempt to invest a text with particular kinds of intensity only to find that his or her readers find something else entirely (as in those shippers who find 'squee' where the *mangaka* has tried to convey the awesome and the epic). In this way, the *mangaka's* relationship to the (meaningful) text is no less tentative than that of the fans who read the series. A reading that might initially seem to be an unassailable 'fact' of the text can often be rationalised and (re)interpreted through the activities of (particular groups within) the fandom. Ichigo's resolve to protect Orihime, and resulting power-up, in the chapters from the early months of 2009, might have caused IchiRuki fans some initial worry, but on closer reading they came to appreciate that there was no danger of IchiHime 'becoming canon'. Indeed, together they discovered that a 'proper' reading would have suggested that the

text of these chapters supports their own ship (IchiRuki) instead. In this way, the text is far from the immovable object it might appear to be.

The apparent stability of the text—the similarities between the story a *mangaka* intended to tell and the stories that emerge in the many readings of a series—is more than coincidental, however. Reading is a cultural practice, which is acquired through both schooling and experience (both of which can be formal or informal). Specific practices of reading are produced within, and become features of, particular interpretive communities and these practices influence and shape the text that can emerge. Both creators and readers often share a particular set of reading practices, and both work in their own way (one by disseminating the elements on the page, the other by assembling them) to produce a text that seems unproblematically meaningful when read. A ‘competent’ and ‘experienced’ *mangaka*, then, should be able to produce pages that—when encountered by a ‘competent’ and ‘experienced’ manga reader—will result in something akin to the story they intended to tell. This ‘competent’ and ‘experienced’ reader will not release the meaning instilled in the text, but *produce* it because they are able to draw upon culturally normative reading practices. Despite this, the cultural norms of reading (and the formal structures of texts which play to them) never entirely determine the readings that can emerge. This much is evident from plurality of readings produced by fan communities, and the debates over ‘canonical’ claims made about those readings. The text emerges from a curious alchemy, in which reading transforms the ‘raw’ materials provided by creators to produce something meaningful that then seems to have always belonged to those materials. The text is neither entirely objective nor is it completely subjective; neither the creator nor the fans seem to have final control over it. Rather, the text itself seems to exceed both its creation and its reception—it is not reducible to either—while remaining resolutely caught up in the practices of both. It eludes us even as it appears to us as straightforwardly, and tangibly, *there* for any reasonably competent reader to access.



Epilogue

In this thesis, I set out to explore the processes of reading manga as a geographic practice, through which manga texts can be realised as texts at all. I have described the practices of reading manga an alchemic process¹ in which the ink on the pages is recognised as words and pictures and transmuted to produce a story. Rather than abandoning the concept of manga as ‘irresponsible pictures’, I have argued that this translation is useful because it emphasises the complex and contingent braided networks which emerge as readers assemble the various elements they encounter on the page. This notion is more useful in understanding the geography of spatio-topological relations that emerges as a result of reader’s practices than theorisations of manga as ‘temporal maps’². Concentrating on the ways in which readers work with and assemble the irresponsible pictures they encounter in manga is also useful because it highlights the synaesthetic experience that can emerge from assembling the elements arrayed on the page, alongside specific techniques used in *shōnen* manga and which can be more important to readers than the plot. In this way, I have explored the performativity of reading manga and the resulting open-endedness of manga texts. As a result, there is never a singular manga text, but a myriad of different readings which can emerge. Each of these readings is ‘valid’ and can, demonstrably, be found in the text. It is for this reason that I have described *shōnen* manga as *monstrous* text; they are shape-shifting combinations of seemingly impossible elements.

By exploring the practices peculiar to realising the ‘kinetic art’³ of manga this thesis bridges between ideas from comics scholarship, literary studies and cultural studies. It also contributes to the growing literature in cultural geography on reading and the performativity of texts⁴. It is useful to approach the alchemy of reading *shōnen* manga as a *geographic practice* because it has real implications for

work on the geographies *in* and *of* manga. I have argued elsewhere that it is important to study videogames as a geographic practice in a similar way because it enriches the study of the geographies of their production and reception (the geographies of videogames) as well as the study of their representational content (geographies in videogames)⁵. I want to make a similar argument here with regards to positioning the study of manga as a practice at the centre of the geographic study of manga.

It is common for scholars studying particular media forms (including manga) to comment on the representational content as if it is straightforwardly there, always-already in the text for the reader to discover. If, as I have argued here, manga texts contain *nothing* and only become meaningful through the practices to which readers subject the material text (the ink on pages), then it becomes important to study the representational content of texts as it is realised through the specific practices readers employ. Scholars should not assume that readers will share their reading practices and find the meanings in texts that they do; by exploring the meanings that emerge through the practices of particular readers, or groups of readers, we can produce more useful accounts of the effects and consequences of textual representations in manga. In this way, those studying the geographies *in* manga should seriously consider the effects of the geographic practices of reading manga. Approaching manga as a geographic practice is also useful in understanding the geographies *of* manga. By attending to the diverse ways of engaging with manga, scholars can more productively chart the geographies of adaptation and reception as manga become an increasingly globalised industry. There is a need to study the multifarious processes and practices through which manga are translated, adapted and distributed (both official and unofficial), and the ways in which the 'Japaneseness' of the text is understood, asserted and taken up in particular practices. A further consequence of my research is that it blurs the boundaries between the production and reception of a text. The contingent story that we understand as a manga text emerges from the efforts of both its creators and its readers. It is, therefore, difficult to easily distinguish between production and reception.

Recently, geographers begun to study the geography inherent to comics form⁶. My project is useful because it extends this work on North American comics to look at the specifics of manga form, which retains distinctive characteristics even if it is influenced by, and influences, other forms of graphic narrative. The thesis also seeks to develop a theoretical discussion in relation to manga without recourse with to the vocabulary of film. It is very common for scholars to borrow the language of more established medium, at least within scholarly communities, by linking it to the conventions of a more established form. Early photographic work was compared to painterly composition⁷, and early cinema was compared to the theatre and the literary forms of the novel and poetry⁸. Film is now a well establish medium within contemporary scholarship and ‘new media’, such as videogames⁹. In a similar manner, Jason Dittmer has borrowed the language of film to discuss the action of ‘montage’ in producing emergent causality in comics¹⁰. Comparisons of this type can be appealing as they allow scholars to make use of well-established theoretical vocabularies, but they necessarily downplay the material specificity of individual media, as well as the differences between individual instances of those media. As such, it is important to develop a vocabulary for discussing the geographic practices of reading manga and other forms of graphic narrative. This task is also important for those interested in studying comics within literary or cultural studies, because it attends specifically to the geographic concepts which are often used so casually within comics theory. Explicitly drawing out the geographic practice of manga (and other forms of graphic narrative), and linking this to work within geography as a discipline, is useful because it allows ‘us’ to produce a more robust theory.

More broadly, this research could be taken up by those within geography, and in the social sciences and humanities more generally, who are interested in the use of ‘visual’ materials in research, and also in its presentation¹¹. By studying how stories are told through a combination of words and pictures in manga, this thesis contributes to ongoing debates within cultural geography about issues of representation, and particularly the role of ‘the visual’ in relation to other forms of representation. It may be useful to those experimenting with forms of presentation

and communication in their research to explore how information can be conveyed in manga (and graphic narrative more generally), and how this affects the communication process. It may be that the manga form is especially suited to communicating certain kinds of ideas, or useful in communicating with certain user groups or participants.



Notes

Notes to Preamble

¹ See, for example: Clive Barnett, “A Choice of Nightmares”; Sheila Hones, “Text as it Happens”; James Kneale, “From Beyond”; Douglas C. P. Pocock, “Geography and Literature”; Jose Luis Romanillos, “Outside, it is Snowing”; Joanne P. Sharp, “Locating Imaginary Homelands”.

² For example: Innes M. Keighren, *Bringing Geography to the Book*; David N. Livingstone “Science, Religion and the Geography of Reading” and “Science, Text, and Space”; Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers, *Geographies of the Book*.

³ For example: Stuart C. Aitken and Leo Zonn, *Place, Power, Situation and Spectacle*; David B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City*; Deborah P. Dixon and Tim Cresswell, *Engaging Film*; Marcus A. Doel and David B. Clark, “Engineering Space and Time: Moving Pictures and Motionless Trips” and “Afterimages”; Sean Carter and Derek P. McCormack, “Film, geopolitics and the affective logics of intervention”.

⁴ For example: Ben Anderson, “Recorded Music and Practices of Remembering”; John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks*; Chris Gibson, “We Sing Our Home, We Dance Our Land”; Keith H. Halfacree and Rob M. Kitchin, “Madchester Rave On”; Lily Kong, “Popular Music in Singapore”; John Horton, “The Best Thing Ever”; Edward Jackiewicz, “Harmony in my Head”; Paul Simpson, “Chronic Everyday Life” and “Falling on Deaf Ears”.

⁵ For example: James Ash, “Emerging Spatialities of the Screen”, “Architectures of Affect” and “Teleplastic Technologies”; Claudia Breger, “Digital Digs”; Jennifer Johns, “Video Games Production Networks”; Sybille Lammes, “Playing the World”; Micheal W. Longan, “Playing With Landscape”; Marcus Power, “Digitized Virtuosity”; Stuart Reeves, Barry Brown and Eric Laurier, “Experts at Play”; Leigh Schwartz, “Othering across Time and Place in the Suikoden Video Game Series”; Ian G. R. Shaw and Barney Warf, “Worlds of Affect”; Nigel Thrift, “Remembering the Technological Unconscious”.

⁶ For example: Christina Dando, “Kaledioscope Eyes”; Jason Dittmer, “Comic Book Visualities”; Marcus A. Doel and David B. Clarke. *The Artistry of Cities*; Nicholas Labarre, “How ‘Ya Gonna Keep ‘em Down at the Farm”.

⁷ For example: Jason Dittmer, “Captain America’s Empire”, “America is Safe While its Boys and Girls Believe in its Creeds!”, “The Tyranny of the Serial”; Jason Dittmer and Soren Larsen. “Captain Canuck, Audience Response and the Project of Canadian Nationalism”; Oliver Dunnett, “Identity and Geopolitics in

Hergé's Adventures of Tin Tin"; Juliet J. Fall, "Embodied Geographies, Naturalised Bodies, and Uncritical Geopolitics in *La Frontiere Invisible*".

⁸ For example: Jeff Boggs, "Cultural Industries and the Creative Economy"; Glen Norcliffe and Olivero Rendace, "New Geographies of Comic Book Production in North America".

⁹ Although there has been a geography paper written in manga form (Sen Aimuru, "The Comic Book Diary of Kamayan"). There has also been some geographic interest in anime (Japanese animation), which is often adapted from, or into, manga (Giorgio Hadi Curti, "Animatedly Animated", "The Ghost in the City and a Landscape of Life").

¹⁰ The distinction made here mirrors the distinction Marcus A. Doel and David B. Clarke make about the ways in which geographers can engage with film. "Afterimages"

¹¹ For example: Hirofumi Katsuno and Jeffrey Maret. "Localising the *Pokémon* TV Series for the American Market"; Amy Shirong Lu, "The Many Faces of Internationalization in Japanese Anime"

¹² For example: Mio Bryce and colleagues, "Manga and Anime"; Mary Grigsby. "*Sailormoon*"; Mark McLelland, "Local Meanings in Global Space"; Susan Napier, "The World of Anime Fandom in America".

¹³ For example: Mio Bryce and colleagues, "The Cultural Biographies of Manga"; Sandra Buckley, "The Foreign Devil Returns"; Eldad Nakar, "Nosing Around".

¹⁴ Kawashima, Terry. "Seeing Faces, Making Races".

¹⁵ For example: Hiromi Mizuno, "When Pacifist Japan Fights"; Thomas Looser, "From Edo-gawa to Miyazaki"; Marco Pellitteri. "Nippon ex Machina"; Matthew Penney, "Far From Oblivion".

¹⁶ For example: Kozo Mayumi and colleagues, "The Ecological and Consumption Themes of the Films of Hayao Miyazaki"; Christine Hoff Kraemer. "Between the Worlds"; Susan Napier, "Panic Sites".

¹⁷ Scott McCloud, *Reinventing Comics*.

¹⁸ Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*.

¹⁹ See Anderson and Harrison, *Taking Place*.

²⁰ Anime News Network. "Naruto is 5th Shueisha Manga with 100 Million+ Copies in Print (Update 2)".

²¹ ICv2. "Top 25 Manga Properties Fall 2008".

²² ICv2. "Top 25 Manga Properties 2009".

²³ ICv2. "Top 25 Manga Properties Q3 2010".

²⁴ ICv2. "Naruto Nabs Quill Award: First Manga to Win".

²⁵ Anime News Network. "Viz Media's Shōnen Jump Welcomes Bleach Manga Creator Tite Kubo".

²⁶ Anime News Network. "Viz to Release *Bleach The Movie 2: The Diamond Dust Rebellion* on DVD".

²⁷ ICv2. "Top 25 Manga Properties Q3 2010".

²⁸ ICv2. "Interview with Viz's Gonzalo Ferreyra, Part 1".

²⁹ Anime News Network. "*Fullmetal Alchemist* Manga: Over 50 Million Served".

³⁰ Anime News Network. "Japanese Comic Ranking, December 28–January 10".

³¹ ICv2. "Top 25 Manga Properties Q3 2010".

Notes to Chapter 1: Monstrous Texts

- ¹ Marina Warner. *No Go the Bogeyman*. Page 258.
- ² Marina Warner. *Six Myths of Our Time*.
- ³ Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*.
- ⁴ Colin N. Milburn. "Monsters in Eden". Page 603.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Carroll. *The Philosophy of Horror*. Page 19.
- ⁷ Jacques Derrida. "Passages". Page 386.
- ⁸ Warner. *Six Myths of Our Time*.
- ⁹ John Michael Greer. *Monsters*. Pages 3–4.
- ¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze. *Negotiations*.
- ¹¹ J-D. Dewsbury. "Performativity and the Event".
- ¹² Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual*. Page 233.
- ¹³ Jane Bennett. *The Enchantment of Modern Life*.
- ¹⁴ Derrida. "Passages".
- ¹⁵ Rita Felski. *The Uses of Literature*.
- ¹⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer. Quoted in *ibid.* Page 25.
- ¹⁷ Derrida. "Passages". Page 387.
- ¹⁸ Bennett. *The Enchantment of Modern Life*. Page 4.
- ¹⁹ Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual*.
- ²⁰ Derrida. "Passages". Page 387.
- ²¹ Stanley Fish. *Is There a Text in This Class?* Page 43.
- ²² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Touching Feeling*. Page 126.
- ²³ *Ibid.* Page 130.
- ²⁴ Bennett. *The Enchantment of Modern Life*. Page 4.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.* Page 4.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.* Page 12.
- ²⁷ Sedgwick. *Touching Feeling*. Pages 150–151.
- ²⁸ Felski. *The Uses of Literature*. Page 17.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* Page 10.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* Page 57.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* Page 53.
- ³² *Ibid.* Page 56.
- ³³ Marco Abel. *Violent Affect*. Page xvi. Abel's 'masocriticism' differs from Paul Mann's in various ways. See page 24.
- ³⁴ Henry Jenkins. *Textual Poachers*.
- ³⁵ Many manga fans (of all ages, both within Japan and internationally) enjoy constructing elaborate costumes and dressing up as characters from the series they follow. This is called cos-play. The practice is not unique to manga fans; this kind of 'dressing up' is also found in other fan communities. Star Trek fans, for example, often dress as characters from the series at conventions and even in their everyday lives. See, Roger Nygard. *Trekkies*.
- ³⁶ Joli Jenson. "Fandom as Pathology".
- ³⁷ Henry Jenkins. "Gender and Fan Studies (Round Five, Part One)".
- ³⁸ Jenkins. *Textual Poachers*. Page 17.

- ³⁹ Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*.
- ⁴⁰ Henry Jenkins. *Textual Poachers*. Page 18.
- ⁴¹ Mafalda Stasi. "The Toy Soldiers From Leeds"
- ⁴² Rhiannon Bury. "Textual Poaching or Gamekeeping"
- ⁴³ This is by no means the case in all literary and cultural scholarship. See, for example, Bob Gelder's work on popular fiction (*Popular Fiction The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field*) and Sara Cohen's work on popular music (*Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture*).
- ⁴⁴ I gave the title of my project as 'The Sleep of Reason: On Practices of Reading Manga' when I asked *One Manga* users to contribute to a discussion about some changes made to some pages of *Naruto* after their initial publication. I explain more about this exercise later in this chapter.
- ⁴⁵ Francisco de Goya. "Publicity Notice from the *Diario de Madrid*, 6 Feb 1799". Page 288.
- ⁴⁶ Warner. *No Go the Bogeyman*.
- ⁴⁷ Felski. *The Uses of Literature*. Page 22.
- ⁴⁸ Jonathan Gray. "New Audiences, New Textualities".
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Wolfgang Iser. *Prospecting*. Eric Livingston also terms his, ethnomethodological, account of reading an 'anthropology' for much the same reason. *An Anthropology of Reading*.
- ⁵¹ Pugh, Sheenagh. *The Democratic Genre*. Page 26.
- ⁵² This is largely the approach Jenkins takes in *Textual Poachers*.
- ⁵³ This is a stance shared by other fan fiction scholars. See, for example, the essays by Abigail Derencho ("Archontic Literature") and Mafalda Stasi ("The Toy Soldiers From Leeds").
- ⁵⁴ This heading is borrowed from Bennett. *The Enchantment of Modern Life*. Page 13.
- ⁵⁵ Eric Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.
- ⁵⁶ Fish. *Is There a Text in This Class?* Page 43.
- ⁵⁷ Wolfgang Iser. *The Act of Reading*. Page 22.
- ⁵⁸ Wolfgang Iser. *Prospecting*. Page 258.
- ⁵⁹ Abel. *Violent Affect*. Page x.
- ⁶⁰ Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison. "The Promise of Non-Representational Theories".
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.* Page 16.
- ⁶² JD Dewsbury, Paul Harrison, Mitch Rose and John Wylie. "Enacting Geographies".
- ⁶³ Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift. "Introduction". Pages 22–23.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Page 23.
- ⁶⁵ Franco Moretti. Quoted in *ibid.* Page 24.
- ⁶⁶ Ben Anderson. "Time-Stilled Space-Slowed".
- ⁶⁷ David Bissell. "Obdurate Pains, Transient Intensities".
- ⁶⁸ Ben Anderson. "Practices of Judgement and Domestic Geographies of Affect".
- ⁶⁹ James Ash. "Architectures of Affect".
- ⁷⁰ David Bissell. "Passenger Mobilities".
- ⁷¹ Pete Adey. "Airports, Mobility, and the Calculative Architecture of Affective Control".

⁷² Clive Barnett. "Political Affects in Public Space".

⁷³ See, Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual*.

⁷⁴ Abel. *Violent Affect*. Page 6.

^a Aarnoud Rommens. "Manga Storytelling/Showing".

^b Jacqueline Brendt. "Considering Manga Discourse". On the structure of the

Notes to 'Manga'

manga industry in Japan, see also, Sharon Kinsella. *Adult Manga, Culture & Power in Contemporary Japanese Society*.

^c In their parodic guide to drawing manga, Koji Aihara and Kentaro Takekuma, explain the stylistic and other differences between the main weekly *shōnen* magazines: *Shōnen Jump* (週刊少年ジャンプ), *Shōnen Sunday* (週刊少年サンデー), and *Shōnen Magazine* (週刊少年マガジン). While this is intended to be humorous, they do draw upon very real differences between the magazines. *Even a Monkey Can Draw Manga* Vol 1.

^d Henry Jenkins. "Pop Cosmopolitanism: ". Page 127.

^a Charles Ess and the AoIR ethics working committee. "Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research".

Notes to 'Shippers in the Mist'

^b Clare Madge. "Developing a Geographers' Agenda for Online Research Ethics".

^c Thomsen, Steven R., Joseph D. Straubhaar and Drew M. Bolyard. "Ethnomethodology and the Study of Online Communities".

^d Lolaraincoat. "Re: My Abstract".

^e Regan_v. "Re: My Abstract".

^f Spiletta42. "Re: My Abstract".

Notes to Chapter 2: (Fullmetal) Alchemy

¹ 「お兄さん」 / *onii-san* or 「お兄ちゃん」 / *onii-chan*, depending upon the level of familiarity shared.

² Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.

³ Harold Garfinkel. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*.

⁴ Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*. Page 32.

⁵ Paul Magee. Quoted in Shane Smith. "Academaesthetics". Page 48.

⁶ Such as the *Oxford Reading Tree* or Heinemann's *Storyworld*.

⁷ Jacqueline Brendt. "Considering Manga Discourse".

- ⁸ Frederik L. Shodt. *Dreamland Japan*. Page 26.
- ⁹ N. C. Christopher Couch. “‘The Yellow Kid’ and the Comics Page”.
- ¹⁰ See, for example, Cleanth Brooks. *The Well Wrought Urn*.
- ¹¹ These range from fairly traditional adaptations, such as Joel Stewart’s winsome illustrated adaptation to Christopher Myers’s reimagining of the story as taking place on a basketball court.
- ¹² Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler. *The Gruffalo*.
- ¹³ Dr Seuss. *Hop on Pop*.
- ¹⁴ Dr Seuss. *The Cat in the Hat*.
- ¹⁵ Dr Seuss. *The Lorax*.
- ¹⁶ Dr Seuss. *Hop on Pop*. Back Cover.
- ¹⁷ Eric Livingston. “The Textuality of Pleasure”.
- ¹⁸ It is in this sense that he terms Stelarc’s body art as an alchemic ‘minor science’. Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual*. Page 112.
- ¹⁹ Cited in Thierry Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Page 9.
- ²⁰ Livingston. “The Textuality of Pleasure”.
- ²¹ Neil Gaiman. *Fragile Things*. Page 26.
- ²² Some comics do not contain any words at all. Masashi Tanaka’s *Gon* series, for example, contains no dialogue or onomatopoeic words, and relates the adventures of his tiny dinosaur protagonist through a sequence of pictures alone.
- ²³ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. *Laocoon*.
- ²⁴ David Carrier. *The Aesthetics of Comics*. Pages 68–69.
- ²⁵ Jared Gardiner argues that comics are unable, and perhaps unwilling, to choose between more than just word and picture. They also insist on mixing past and future, and presence and absence. “Archives, Collectors and the New Media Work of Comics”.
- ²⁶ W. J. T. Mitchell. *Picture Theory*. Page 91.
- ²⁷ Gillian Rose. *Visual Methodologies*..
- ²⁸ See, for example, Pia Christensen and Alan Prout. “Working With Ethical Symmetry in Social Research With Children”.
- ²⁹ Alison Clark and Peter Moss advocate a ‘Mosaic’ approach to research with young children in particular, which combines a range of data-gathering techniques that should allow children to express their opinions more effectively than more traditional, talk-based, social sciences methods alone. *Listening to Young Children*.
- ³⁰ Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*. Page 80.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* Page 81.
- ³² John Wylie. “Smoothlands”.
- ³³ ‘GRM RM RMB’ is not really a word in the traditional sense; it is a phonetic approximation of the sound made rather than a completely arbitrary rendition of the idea of that sound. The word ‘rumble’ itself is onomatopoeic, whereas the word ‘thunder’ is not.
- ³⁴ Will Eisner. *Comics and Sequential Art*.
- ³⁵ William Moebius. “Introduction to Picturebook Codes”. Page 141.
- ³⁶ The various literatures refer to a rupture in representation variously as an opposition of pictures and words, images and texts, and/or the visual and the verbal. None of the terms on either side of the divide is entirely analogous to any of the others; pictures, images and the visual (for example) connote very different

meanings in different contexts. This thesis cannot escape the terminological ambiguity of its sources, and I make no deliberate attempt to do so.

³⁷ Mitchell. *Picture Theory*. Page 95.

³⁸ Mitchell devotes a whole chapter of *Picture Theory* to ekphrasis, and the different ways in which the seemingly impossible practice of rendering the visual verbally is both welcomed and feared. Here ekphrasis refers to the verbal representation of visual materials.

³⁹ Carrier understands the rapprochement of word and picture as essentially narratological; words and images are united in the service of the story, which he conceives of only in narrative terms. This serves to reduce the category of 'story' and the experience of reading a comic, in all manner of unhelpful ways. *The Aesthetics of Comics*. Another chapter in this thesis, Still Life, explores the importance of intensity in producing the 'visceral experiences' of reading manga.

⁴⁰ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. I will come back to Groensteen's system of comics in more detail towards the end of the chapter.

⁴¹ Groensteen acquires this terms via the Greek word *arthron*, which translates as 'articulation'.

⁴² Frank L. Cioffi. "Disturbing Comics".

⁴³ Mitchell. *Picture Theory*.

⁴⁴ Perry Nodelman. *Words About Pictures*.

⁴⁵ Christina Desai. "Weaving Words and Pictures". Page 409.

⁴⁶ Not that there would be anything 'wrong' with *El Chino* if it were a 'generic' sports story.

⁴⁷ Moebius. "Introduction to Picturebook Codes". Page 146.

⁴⁸ Couch. "'The Yellow Kid' and the Comics Page".

⁴⁹ Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen's translation of *The System of Comics* refers to the arrangement of comic pages —the *spatiotopie* in Groensteen's original French—as 'spatio-topical' throughout. Spatio-topological is closer to Groensteen's meaning though, in that he wishes to stress the spatial positioning of panels on the physical space of the pages such that they enable the production of topological relations between panels within any of the (non-contiguous) panels within the 'multiframe' of the comic as a whole. As such the spatio-topia does not map a topography, but a topology; what really matters is that the panels are (or can be) related, not their situation as such. The spatio-topia should be arranged so as to encourage the emergence of the right kinds of relations.

⁵⁰ Scott Bukatman. "Comics and the Critique of Chronophotography". Page 88.

⁵¹ Different modes of editing can be used to produce degrees of continuity in the viewing experience.

⁵² Marcus A. Doel and David B. Clarke. "Afterimages". Page 897.

⁵³ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*.

⁵⁴ I will problematise this straightforward distinction more in the next chapter, Irresponsible Pictures.

⁵⁵ Historically, in film, the cut was a literal description of what happened in the process of editing. With the advent of powerful editing software, such as *Final Cut Studio* and *Adobe Premier*, 'the cut' has become largely metaphorical, and refers simply to this separative function.

⁵⁶ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*.

- ⁵⁷ Doel and Clarke. “Afterimages”. Page 905.
- ⁵⁸ Scott McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 66.
- ⁵⁹ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*.
- ⁶⁰ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 65.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.* Page 77.
- ⁶² *Ibid.* Page 68.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.* Page 69.
- ⁶⁴ Scott McCloud. *Reinventing Comics*.
- ⁶⁵ Cases fantôme. Groensteen borrows the term from Benoît Peeters. *Case, planche, récit*.
- ⁶⁶ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Page 45. See also, pages 112–115.
- ⁶⁷ Doel and Clarke. “Afterimages”. Page 905.
- ⁶⁸ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 85.
- ⁶⁹ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Page 101.
- ⁷⁰ Gilles Deleuze. *Cinema 2*. See also, *Cinema 1*.
- ⁷¹ Comics panels can be *descriptibles* and *interpretables* in addition to being utterables (*The System of Comics*. page 107), but their status as utterables will suffice for my purposes here.
- ⁷² As, for example, Neil Cohn insists in “Undefining comics”.
- ⁷³ Deleuze. *Cinema 2*. Page 28.
- ⁷⁴ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Page 4.
- ⁷⁵ Claire Colebrook has analysed the spatiality of Deleuze’s work on the cinema. See, for example, *Deleuze*.
- ⁷⁶ Groensteen seems to elide proximate with linear in his analysis. It is perfectly possible, however, for two panels to be next to one another (proximate) but form a nonlinear relationship. The panels in *Fullmetal Alchemist* are arranged in tiers. The ‘vectorised’ progression of the panels produces a ‘z path’ through these tiers where readers return to the right-hand side of the page each time they read a new tier. This means that the relationship between horizontally proximate panels may (tend to) be linear, but the relationship between vertically contiguous panels is not necessarily so.
- ⁷⁷ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Pages 70–72.
- ⁷⁸ McCloud devotes the entire first chapter of *Making Comics* to advising aspiring comics artists on how to breakdown their stories and arrange them in panels. Pages 8–53.
- ⁷⁹ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Page 146.
- ⁸⁰ Carrier. *The Aesthetics of Comics*.
- ⁸¹ For Groensteen a book is simply a paged multiframe. *The System of Comics*. Page 30.
- ⁸² *Ibid.* Page 111.
- ⁸³ Jaques Derrida. *Positions*. Page 26.
- ⁸⁴ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Pages 10–11.
- ⁸⁵ For Deleuze’s interpretation of Kant, see *Kant’s Ccritical Philosophy*.
- ⁸⁶ Gilles Deleuze. *The Logic of Sense*.
- ⁸⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues II*. Page 55.
- ⁸⁸ Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Notes to 'Reading the wrong way'

^a This text appears on the inside back cover of all the *Shōnen Jump* series published by VIZ Media.

^b Andrew Farago. "Interview with Jason Thompson".

^c The North American manga publisher Tokyopop saves even more money by leaving the sound effects untranslated in their titles. See, Dani Fletcher. "Tokyopop unflopped".

Notes to Chapter 3: Irresponsible Pictures

¹ Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 5. Page 162.

² Scott McCloud. *Making Comics*. Pages 8–53.

³ *Ibid.* Page 11.

⁴ *Ibid.* Page 14.

⁵ Groensteen. *The Theory of Comics*. Page 142.

⁶ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 67. The terms 'time' and 'space' are used fairly loosely by comics theorists.

⁷ McCloud. *Reinventing Comics*.

⁸ Groensteen. *The Theory of Comics*.

⁹ In this chapter I am interested in the relationships between the physical 'space' on the material pages of a *shōnen* manga and the 'time' that elapses in the story as it is produced in the reader's imagination as a result of the 'alchemic' practices of reading (unless indicated otherwise). It is not my intention to attempt any more general theorisation of space and time.

¹⁰ Doel and Clarke. "Afterimages".

¹¹ Bukatman, "Comics and the Critique of Chronophotography".

¹² McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 94.

¹³ Malcolm Turvey. *Doubting Vision*. Page 96.

¹⁴ Clare Pitkethly has written about the relationship between speech and writing in comics. "Derrida, Deleuze and a Duck".

¹⁵ Here, McCloud echoes Gotthold Lessing's insistence on the temporality of the verbal, as opposed to the spatiality of the visual. *Laocoon*.

¹⁶ Eisner. *Comics and Sequential Art*. Page 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Page 103.

¹⁸ Turvey. *Doubting Vision*.

¹⁹ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Pages 70–81.

²⁰ Mark Bernard and James Bucky Carter. "Alan Moore and the Graphic Novel". Paragraph 2.

²¹ Bernard and Carter. "Alan Moore and the Graphic Novel". Paragraph 14.

²² *Ibid.* Paragraph 18. Here Bernard and Carter are using Will Eisner's definition of comics as sequential art.

- ²³ William Connolly. *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. Print. Page 145.
- ²⁴ Bernard and Carter. "Alan Moore and the Graphic Novel". Paragraph 7.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.* Paragraph 7.
- ²⁶ Pitkethly. "Derrida, Deleuze and a Duck". Page 288.
- ²⁷ Bernard and Carter. "Alan Moore and the Graphic Novel". Paragraph 20.
- ²⁸ McCloud. *Making Comics*.
- ²⁹ This is a term derived from the theatre, where the front of the stage is often conceived as an imaginary 'wall' between the audience and the players on stage. Addressing the audience directly is often referred to as 'breaking the fourth wall' because it disrupts the boundary between a fictional world and its audience.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* Page 46.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* Page 51.
- ³² *Ibid.* Page 221.
- ³³ Martin Jay provides both a explanation and a sustained critique of this argument. *Downcast Eyes*.
- ³⁴ Rosalind Krauss. Quoted in Jay. *Downcast Eyes*. Page 248.
- ³⁵ Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 5. Page 162.
- ³⁶ McCloud. *Making Comics*. Pages 34–35. Emphasis in the original.
- ³⁷ Pitkethly. "Derrida, Deleuze and a Duck". Page 284
- ³⁸ *Ibid.* Page 292.
- ³⁹ Jacques Derrida. Quoted in *ibid.* Page 292.
- ⁴⁰ Doel and Clarke. "Afterimages". Page 905.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.* Page 890.
- ⁴² *Ibid.* Page 905.
- ⁴³ Kate Allen and John E Ingulsrud. *Reading Japan Cool*.
- ⁴⁴ Groensteen. *The System of Comics*.
- ⁴⁵ Baetens and Lefèvre. Quoted in *ibid.* Page 146.
- ⁴⁶ Connolly. *Neuropolitics*. Page 24.
- ⁴⁷ Clive Barnett. "Political Affects in Public Space: Normative Blind-Spots in Nonrepresentational Ontologies". Page 193.
- ⁴⁸ Nigel Thrift. "Remembering the Technological Unconscious by Foregrounding Knowledges of Position".
- ⁴⁹ Nigel Thrift. *Nonrepresentational Theory*.
- ⁵⁰ Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.
- ⁵¹ Alec McHoul. *Telling How Texts Talk*. Page 24.
- ⁵² *Ibid.* Page 30.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.* Page 29.
- ⁵⁴ Connolly. *Neuropolitics*. Page 24.
- ⁵⁵ Doel and Clarke. "Afterimages". Page 899.
- ⁵⁶ Elizabeth Grosz. *Becomings*. Pages 17–18.
- ⁵⁷ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Pages 96–97.
- ⁵⁸ Deleuze. *Cinema I*. Page 1.
- ⁵⁹ Henri Bergson. *Duration and Simultaneity*.
- ⁶⁰ Henri Bergson. *Matter and Memory*. See also, *Time and Free Will*.
- ⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze. *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books, 1991. Print. Page 59.
- ⁶² Deleuze. *Cinema I*. Pages 1–12, in particular.

⁶³ Deleuze. *Cinema I*. Pages 10–11.

⁶⁴ Doel and Clarke. “Afterimages”. Pages 900–901. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁵ Pitkethly. “Derrida, Deleuze and a Duck”. Page 285.

⁶⁶ Angela Ndaljian. “The Frenzy of the Visible in Comic Book Worlds”. See also, David Bissell on the ways in which stillness is not opposed to but caught up within movement. For example, “Comforting Bodies”.

⁶⁷ This is how Melissa Clarke describes the experience of space-time in viewing the film, *Memento*. “The Space-Time Image”. Page 178.

⁶⁸ Brian Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual* Page 58.

⁶⁹ *Kanji* are the Chinese characters used within contemporary systems of Japanese writing.

⁷⁰ Frederick L. Schodt. *Manga Manga!*

⁷¹ Paul Gravett. *Manga*. Page 9.

Notes to ‘Implied panels’

^a Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Page 68.

^b *Ibid.* Page 79.

Notes to ‘Multiplying the moment’

^a Groensteen. *The System of Comics*. Pages 85–91.

^b Pitkethly. “Derrida, Deleuze and a Duck”. Page 289.

Notes to ‘Scattering the scene’

^a Rommens. “Manga storytelling/showing”.

^b McCloud. *Making Comics*.

^c *Ibid.* Page 220.

^d Doel and Clarke. “Afterimages”. Page 905.

Notes to ‘Memory’

^a Henri Bergson. Quoted in Connolly. *Neuropolitcs*. Pages 27–28.

^b *Ibid.*

^c Michael Z. Newman. “From Beats to Arcs”.

Notes to Chapter 4: Still Life

¹ For example, Hirofumi Katsuno and Jeffrey Maret provide an account of the kinds of changes made, and the rationale behind them, in localising the *Pokémon* anime (animated television series) for the American market. "Localising the Pokémon TV Series for the American Market". *Naruto* is subject to similar processes, although fewer changes are made because it is marketed towards an older age group within the North American market than *Pokémon*.

² Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 5. Page 84.

³ The title has left Kishimoto's name written with the surname first, as it would be in Japanese.

⁴ 666～サタン～ / *Roku Roku Roku Satan*, which was serialised in *Monthly Shōnen Gangan* from 2001 to 2008. VIZ Media released its English-language volumes under the title *O-Parts Hunter* rather than *666 Satan* to ensure a better reception within the North American market.

⁵ Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 22. Page 166.

⁶ Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 1. Page 128.

⁷ See Felski. *The Uses of Literature*. Page 20.

⁸ Many manga fans borrow a more familiar cinematic language to describe the *mise-en-page* in manga. As well as 'well thought out camera angles', Callibretto drew attention to the ways in which Kishimoto tries 'to frame the panel as if it's a movie shot' by making use of various techniques, including: 'extreme perspective, close up, fish eye lens effect, low and high angle shot'. Kishimoto himself uses this cinematic language to describe his own work. See, *Naruto* Vol 14, page 118 and *Naruto* Vol 18:, page 12.

⁹ Masashi Kishimoto. *Naruto* Vol 14. Page 62.

¹⁰ Felski. *The Uses of Literature*.

¹¹ Derek McCormack. "Engineering Affective Atmospheres on the Moving Geographies of the 1897 Andrée Expedition". Page 413.

¹² David Bissell. "Passenger Mobilities". Page 273.

¹³ Sianne Ngai. *Ugly Feelings*. Pages 29–30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Pages 20–22.

¹⁵ Alec McHoul. *Telling How Texts Talk*. Page 24.

¹⁶ Quoted in Sianne Ngai. "Merely Interesting". Page 780.

¹⁷ Ngai. "Merely Interesting". Page 780.

¹⁸ Simon O'Sullivan. "The Aesthetics of Affect".

¹⁹ Massumi. *Parables for the Virtual*. Page 28.

²⁰ Ngai. *Ugly Feelings*. Page 27.

²¹ O'Sullivan. "The Aesthetics of Affect". Page 126.

²² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?*

²³ Clare Hemmings. "Invoking Affect".

²⁴ Steven Shaviro. "The Cinematic Body REDUX".

- ²⁵ Koji Aihara and Kentaro Takekuma. *Even a Monkey Can Draw Manga* Vol 1.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.* Page 59.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* Page 60.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.* Page 62.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* Page 59.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* Page 143.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.
- ³² McCloud. *Making Comics*. Page 221.
- ³³ *Ibid.* Page 217.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* See also, McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Pages 72–81.
- ³⁵ McCloud. *Making Comics*. Page 216.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.* Page 217.
- ³⁷ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 79. See also, page 103.
- ³⁸ Tite Kubo. *Bleach SOULs*. Page 242.
- ³⁹ McCloud. *Making Comics*. Page 217. Original emphasis.
- ⁴⁰ McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 89.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.* Page 122.
- ⁴² Vivian Sobchack. *Carnal Thoughts*.
- ⁴³ Vilayanur S Ramachadran and Edward Hubbard. “The Phenomenology of Synaesthesia”. Page 49.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Gian Beeli, Michaela Esslen and Lutz Jäncke. “Synaesthesia”.
- ⁴⁶ Sobchack. *Carnal Thoughts*. Page 60. Original Emphasis.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Page 82.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Page 56.
- ⁴⁹ Carrier. *The Aesthetics of Comics*.
- ⁵⁰ Eiser. *Comics and Sequential Art*. Page 26.
- ⁵¹ Rie Hasada. “Sound Symbolic Emotion Words in Japanese”.
- ⁵² Laura U Marks. *Touch*. Page 3.
- ⁵³ Laura U Marks. *The Skin of Film*.
- ⁵⁴ Marks. *Touch*.
- ⁵⁵ Deleuze. *Cinema 2*.
- ⁵⁶ McCloud. *Making Comics*. Page 221.
- ⁵⁷ Vivian Sobchack. *The Address of the Eye*. Page 93. See also: Marks. *Touch*.
- ⁵⁸ Mark B N Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*. Page 11.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Page 229.
- ⁶⁰ Kubo. *Bleach SOULs*. Page 242. Emphasis added.
- ⁶¹ Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media*.
- ⁶² Barnett. “Political Affects in Public Space”.
- ⁶³ James Ash. “Architectures of Affect”.
- ⁶⁴ Stanley Fish. *Is There a Text in This Class?*
- ⁶⁵ Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.
- ⁶⁶ Gaiman. *Fragile Things*.
- ⁶⁷ Felski. *The Uses of Literature*. Page 3.
- ⁶⁸ Steve Pile. “Emotions and Affect in Recent Human Geography”. Pages 16–17.
- ⁶⁹ O’Sullivan. “The Aesthetics of Affect”. Page 126.

Notes to 'Motion lines'

^a McCloud. *Understanding Comics*. Page 110.

^b *Ibid.* Page 111. Original emphasis.

^c *Ibid.* Page 114.

^d Aihara and Takekuma. *Even a Monkey Can Draw Manga*. Page 143.

Notes to Chapter 5: Ships and Canons

¹ Jenkins. *Textual Poachers*.

² Karogas. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

³ Criminal. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

⁴ Shawnmac. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

⁵ Simlistic. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion". OMFG is online shorthand for 'Oh My Fucking God'. <3 is a textual emoticon, which resembles a heart on its side.

⁶ Blackleg. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

⁷ Aerpoblast. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

⁸ Aihara and Takekuma. *Even a Monkey Can Draw Manga*. Page 60.

⁹ Similarly, *Naruto* fans often call the same device 'plot no jutsu', a term which echoes the ways in which ninja moves are named in the series.

¹⁰ JC Wicked. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

¹¹ Qane. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

¹² Imppala. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

¹³ See, for example, Syed. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion". *One Piece* is a manga series by Eiichiro Oda, which is also serialised in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*. *Bleach* and *One Piece* are the second and third most popular series on *One Manga* (rankings determined by the number of times each series is viewed on the website) and, while many fans follow both series, there is some rivalry between the hardcore fanbases (the 'fanboys') of the series.

¹⁴ Blackleg. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

¹⁵ Sosuke Aizen. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion". Original ellipsis. =P is a textual emoticon which resembles a face with the tongue sticking out, which is used to indicate that the writer is being cheeky or playful.

¹⁶ Hawkes7. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

¹⁷ "FireFist" Ace. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

¹⁸ Aerpoblast. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

¹⁹ Apathymoon. "Please.. Please.. HELP!!". WTF is common online shorthand for 'What The Fuck'.

²⁰ Iheartsushi. "Re: Please.. Please.. HELP!!". ZOMG is a variant of the online shorthand OMG (Oh My God). The Z originated as a typo. ZOMG is often used to imply sarcasm. 'Iluv2' is shorthand for 'I love you too'.

²¹ Spartydragon. "Re: Please.. Please.. HELP!!".

- ²² Avalonestel. "Re: Please.. Please.. HELP!!".
- ²³ Amciel. "Re: Please.. Please.. HELP!!".
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Debbiechan. "What Do YOU Feel About Shipping?".
- ²⁶ Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.
- ²⁷ Ultimate-x. "Re: Bleach Chapter 353 Discussion". 'lol' is online shorthand for 'laugh out loud'.
- ²⁸ Although, it is worth recalling Joli Jenson's defence of fannish activities against academic and broader cultural assumptions which pathologise and otherwise demean the practices of fans. "Fandom as Pathology".
- ²⁹ Jenkins. *Textual Poachers*. Page 18.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ Sheenagh Pugh. *The Democratic Genre*. Page 26.
- ³² Mafalda Stasi. "The Toy Soldiers From Leeds". Page 120.
- ³³ *Ibid.* Page 121.
- ³⁴ J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.
- ³⁵ Catherine Tosenberger, "'Oh My God, the Fanfiction!'".
- ³⁶ *Ibid.* Page 201.
- ³⁷ Bury. "Textual Poaching or Gamekeeping?"
- ³⁸ X_darkhope-x. "Manifesto for Ishida and Orihime".
- ³⁹ Devine Crescent Moon. "Re: Ichigo and Rukia? Or Ichigo and Orihime?".
- ⁴⁰ Keidra Chaney and Raizel Leibler. "Canon vs. Fanon".
- ⁴¹ 'Spoilers' are information about a chapter that emerge on the internet before the scanlations themselves come out. They are usually a mixture of transcripts/ summaries of the chapter and images of the Japanese pages.
- ⁴² Miss Berlitz. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17". Editions of Japanese *Weekly Shōnen Jump* come out on a Monday but 'reliable' spoilers don't usually emerge until the Wednesday, at which point many fans read them and often 'freak-out'.
- ⁴³ Karasu. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁴⁴ Debbiechan. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17". Original emphasis.
- ⁴⁵ Artemesa. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁴⁶ Vkikay. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁴⁷ Balladbird. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁴⁸ AkatsukiDaybreak. "Re: Relationships (Part 8)".
- ⁴⁹ Honeyhammer. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁵⁰ Icarus. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁵¹ AnimeAngel4eva. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁵² Paint_it_black. "Re: ~WE ARE CANON~ The Ulquiorra x Orihime FC Version 17".
- ⁵³ Celemnna. "Nnoitra Jiruga x Neliel Tu Oderscvhank (Bleach)".
- ⁵⁴ Halclouds. "Fascination"

- ⁵⁵ Hardysmidgen. “Re: Still There: Uryû has a Thang for Hime”. Het pairings are those concerning heterosexual relationships; Yuri is a genre of manga that deals with lesbian relationships; BL is short for ‘boys love’, or yaoi, which is a genre of manga concerned with homosexual relationships between teenage boys.
- ⁵⁶ Lolaraincoat. “Re: The Trouble with ‘Fanon’”.
- ⁵⁷ Deborah Kaplan. “Construction of Fan Fiction Character Through Narrative”.
- ⁵⁸ Fabu. “More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About Canon and Fanon”.
- ⁵⁹ Jenkins. *Textual Poachers*.
- ⁶⁰ Idlerat. “The Trouble with ‘Fanon’”.
- ⁶¹ Abigail Derecho. “Archontic Literature”.
- ⁶² McHoul. *Telling How Texts Talk*.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.* Page 25.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Page 31.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Page 24.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Page 30.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Page 29.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Page 24.
- ⁶⁹ No_remorse. “What is ‘Canon’ Anyway?”.
- ⁷⁰ Alec McHoul. *Semiotic Investigations*.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.* Page 161.
- ⁷² *Ibid.* Page 163.
- ⁷³ See, for example, Cleanth Brooks. *The Well Wrought Urn*. Of course, with his (more than a little elitist) preference for poetry, Brooks would have been unlikely to accept manga or other forms of graphic narrative as literary entities at all.
- ⁷⁴ Fish. *Is there a text in this class?* Page vii. Emphasis in the original.
- ⁷⁵ Fish. “Why No One’s Afraid of Wolfgang Iser”. Page 4.
- ⁷⁶ Wolfgang Iser. *Prospecting*.
- ⁷⁷ Stanley Fish. “Why No One’s Afraid of Wolfgang Iser”. Interestingly, Fish makes the same comment about the effect of his early writings in the preface to *Is there a text in this class?*
- ⁷⁸ Stanley Fish. “Why No One’s Afraid of Wolfgang Iser”. Page 7. Emphasis in the original.
- ⁷⁹ Wolfgang Iser. *Prospecting*. Page 33. My emphasis. See also, page 249.
- ⁸⁰ Eric Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.
- ⁸¹ Wolfgang Iser. *Prospecting*. Page 258.
- ⁸² Wolfgang Iser. *The Act of Reading*. Page 22.
- ⁸³ Stanley Fish. *Is there a text in this class?*
- ⁸⁴ Debbiechan. “Re: Still There: Uryû has a Thang for Hime”. The XD textual emoticon is intended to imply a wide grin. BL is an abbreviation of ‘boys love’, which are manga stories about homosexual romance. Yuri are manga that focus on lesbian relationships.
- ⁸⁵ Roland Barthes. *Image-Music-Text*.
- ⁸⁶ Kaoro_Tsumi. “Re: Ichigo and Rukia? Or Ichigo and Orihime?”.
- ⁸⁷ Jenkins. *Textual poachers*. Page 51.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Page 24.

Notes to 'Locating the *Bleach* canon'

^a Gérard Genette. *Paratexts*.

^b Itsyogohollow. "Re: Bleach: Chapter 350 Discussion".

^c Abe Noriyuki. *Bleach Movie 2: The DiamondDust Rebellion*.

^d By this they mean written by Tite Kubo, the *mangaka* who produces *Bleach*. Tamabonotchi. "Re: Absurd IchiHime Proof".

^e *Ibid*.

^f CrystalICE1. "Re: Absurd IchiHime Proof". BS is online shorthand for 'bullshit'.

^g Genette. *Paratexts*.

^h Kubo. *Bleach SOULs*.

ⁱ Tite Kubo. *All Colour But the Black*.

^j Ichiruki43bleachy. "Re: Reasons to believe in IchiRuki..

^k Genette. *Paratexts*.

^l Chaney, Keidra and Raizel Leibler. "Canon vs. Fanon".

^m See, Debbiechan. "Re: 343: The Gluttony". Debbiechan has also included a 'raw' (uncleaned and untranslated) Japanese scan image of the original text spoken on the page.

ⁿ See, for example, the discussion about 'nakama' in 'Feedback, suggestions and issues' section of the *Manga Share* forums.

^o The original honorifics are retained in books published by Del Rey Manga. These books contain a short section explaining the Japanese honorifics system, and the different social relationships indicated in it, which readers can refer to when they encounter them in the text. VIZ Media publish much more populist titles than Del Rey. This means that their editorial policy is designed to make the manga they publish accessible to the widest possible readership. As a result, VIZ translators are unlikely to leave any Japanese terms that have not already been absorbed into English (sushi, karaoke, etc) untranslated in the text.

^p Henry Jenkins. "Pop Cosmopolitanism". Page 127.

Notes to 'Words and pictures'

^a Stasi. "The Toy Soldiers From Leeds". Page 119.

^b Debbiechan. "Rescue Mission Will Triumph".

^c Celeмна. "Nnoitra Jiruga x Neliel Tu Oderscvhank (Bleach)".

^d *Ibid*.

^e Debbiechan. 'Still There: Uryû had a Thang for Hime'.

^f Debbiechan. "Lighten up Fandom".

^g The backgrounds in *Shôjo* manga series are often replaced by flowers or bubbles to reflect something of the emotional state of the characters. *Shôjo* stories are also sometimes printed using coloured ink to further emphasise this. For example, the American editions of *Shôjo Beat* (published by VIZ Media) magazine are printed in alternating magenta and cyan ink on white paper.

^h Halclouds. “Fascination”.

ⁱ Quincies are a near extinct group of rogue human hollow slayers, who wear a distinctive white outfit and fight with a bow.

^j Debbiechan. “Manifesto for Ishida and Orihime”.

^k Qc0JhlaxT. “Re: Ichigo and Rukia? Or Ichigo and Orihime?”

^l The essays by Misuki Takahashi (“Opening the Closed World of Shôjo Manga”) and Deborah Shamoon (“Situating the Shôjo in Shôjo Manga”) discuss the various iconographic techniques used in Shôjo manga to express emotional and psychological states.

^m Debbiechan. “Rescue Mission Will Triumph & Oh Yes, a Picture is Worth a Thousand Words”.

ⁿ Debbiechan. “Still There”.

Notes to Epilogue

¹ Following Livingston. *An Anthropology of Reading*.

² McCloud. *Reinventing Comics*.

³ Fish. *Is There a Text in This Class?*

⁴ J-D. Dewsbury. “Witnessing Space”; Hones, “Text as it Happens”; Romanillos, “Outside, it is Snowing”

⁵ James Ash and Lesley Anne Gallacher. “Cultural Geography and Videogames”.

⁶ Dittmer. “Comic Book Visualities”; Doel and Clarke. *The Artistry of Cities*”.

⁷ Barthes. *Image, Music, Text*.

⁸ Tom Gunning. “Weaving a Narrative”.

⁹ Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska. “Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces”; Ewan Kirkland. “Resident Evil’s Typewriter”.

¹⁰ Dittmer. “Comic Book Visualities”.

¹¹ For example: Mike Crang. “The Hair in the Gate”; Felix Driver. “On Geography as a Visual Discipline”; David Matless. “Gestures Around the Visual”; Irit Rogoff. *Terra Infirma*; Gillian Rose. “On the Need to Ash How, Exactly Is Geography ‘Visual?’”; James R. Ryan. “Who’s Afriad of Visual Culture?”.



Glossary

A

Aca-fan

An academic who identifies as a fan. The plural is aca-fen.

Adjuchas

A type of hollow in *Bleach*.

Al Elric

One of the two main protagonists in *Fullmetal Alchemy*.

Alexander

A character in *Fullmetal Alchemy*. Alexander is the dog that Shou Tucker uses to make his talking chimera.

Anime

Animation produced in Japan.

AnimeSuki

A website which allows users to download fan-subtitled anime. The website hosts a range of discussion forums.

Arrancar

A type of character in *Bleach*. Arrancar are hollows who have gained Soul Reaper powers.

Automail

Biomechanical armour in *Fullmetal Alchemist*.

B

Bande dessinée

The Franco-Belgian term for comics and other forms of graphic narrative. Sometimes shortened to BD.

Bankai

The more powerful release of a Soul Reaper's in *Bleach*.

Batfans

Alec McHoul's term for fans of the *Batman* comic books.

BL

An abbreviation of 'boys love'. This is a genre of *shōjo* manga which concentrates on homosexual relationships between boys. Also referred to as *yaoi*.

Bleachness

A *Livejournal* community of *Bleach* fans.

Bleed

When a panel in a manga appears to continue beyond the edge of the page, rather than being contained within a frame, it is said to 'bleed' off the page. Similarly panels can bleed into the gutters around them without reaching the edge of the page.

Byakuya Kuchiki

A character in *Bleach*. Byakuaya is a Soul Reaper and squad captain in the Soul Society.

C

Canon

Within fan lexicon, the 'canon' refers to the material that is (verifiably) in the source text itself.

Cero

A powerful attack used by hollows in *Bleach*.

Chad

A character in *Bleach*. Chad is a school-friend of Ichigo who gains supernatural powers and helps Ichigo throughout the series.

Cos-play

A merging of 'costume' and 'play'. Cos-players dress up as characters from the manga series they follow.

Crack ship

A ludicrous (relation)ship that has no evidentiary basis in the text itself. The term refers to the idea that a shipper would have to be on drugs to believe that the pairing could be real.

E

Ed Elric

One of the two main protagonists in *Fullmetal Alchemy*.

Espada

A type of hollow in *Bleach*. The Espada are the primary antagonists in the Hueco Mundo story arc of the series.

Eye(ball) sex

A term used by shippers to refer to romantically or sexually 'significant' looks exchanged between characters in a series.

F

Fanon

A portmanteau of fan canon. Fanon is openly acknowledged as a product of the collective interpretive practices of a community of fans.

Filler

Material that has been included in an anime adaptation but which is not found in the original manga.

Frame

The boundary drawn around a panel in a comic.

G

Genjutsu

Ninja illusion techniques in *Naruto*.

Gillian

A type of hollow in *Bleach*.

Gin Ichimaru

A character in *Bleach*. Gin was a Soul Reaper and squad captain in the Soul Society before he defected to join Aizen and became a villain in the series.

Graphic novel

A book-length work in comic format. The term is often used in the publishing industry to distinguish more 'serious' or 'literary' works from ephemeral comic books.

Grimmjow Jeagerjaques

A character in *Bleach*. Grimmjow is an Espada and villain in the series.

Gutter

The blank space between the panels in a comic.

H

Het couplings

Heterosexual pairings between characters in shipping.

Hokage

The title given to the Konoha village leader in *Naruto*.

Hollow

A fallen soul in *Bleach*. Hollows are villains in the series.

Honorifics

Suffixes in Japanese used to convey relative social position when addressing another.

Hornosaki

A term used by some *Bleach* readers to refer to Ichigo Kurosaki's most fully developed hollow form.

Hueco Mundo

A setting in *Bleach* where the hollows live.

I

Ichigo Kurosaki

The main protagonist in *Bleach*.

Ichihime

A pairing between Ichigo Kurosaki and Orihime Inoue in *Bleach*.

Ichiruki

A pairing between Ichigo Kurosaki and Rukia Kuchiki in *Bleach*.

Ino Yamanaka

A character in *Naruto*. One of the Konoha ninja.

Insetting

A technique used in comics where one or more panels are superimposed upon a larger inclusive panel. Also referred to as nesting.

Ishihime

A pairing between Uryû Ishida and Orihime Inoue in *Bleach*.

Itachi Uchiha

A character in *Naruto*. Itachi was a Konoha ninja who defected to the villainous Akatsuki after killing his entire extended family.

J

Jiraya

A character in *Naruto*. A Konoha ninja who trained Naruto.

Jutsu

The term used to describe the, often supernatural, abilities ninja can use in *Naruto*.

Josei manga

Manga series written primarily for an audience of young women.

K

Kakashi Hatake

A character in *Naruto*. A Konoha ninja who trained Naruto.

Kidômaru

A villainous character in *Naruto*.

Kodomo(muke) manga

Manga series written primarily for an audience of children.

L

Livejournal

A website for social networking and blogging. *Livejournal* is widely used by manga fans and particularly by those fans involved in shipping.

Localisation

Localisation of manga or anime goes beyond translation in that it involves adapting the images, sounds and even the story-lines of an imported series for a particular market.

M

Mangaka

A manga creator. Many *mangaka* run studios where they oversee and direct the work of a team of assistants. This is particularly the case for those working on a weekly series where deadlines make it difficult and even impossible to produce the series alone. Only the *mangaka* is named as the creator of a series.

Mayuri Kurotsuchi

A character in *Bleach*. Mayuri is a Soul Reaper and squad captain in the Soul Society. It is difficult to determine whether he is a 'good' or an 'evil' character.

Menos Grande

A type of hollow in *Bleach*.

Mise-en-page

A term for the page design and layout in comics.

Mise-en-scene

A cinematic term used to describe the spatial organisation of a film.

Montage

A cinematic term used to describe the temporal organisation of a film.

N

Neji Hyûga

A character in *Naruto*. One of the Konoha ninja.

Neliel Tu Odelschvanck (Nel)

A character in *Bleach*. Nel is a hollow who helps Ichigo.

Nina Tucker

A character in *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Nina is a little girl who is combined with the family dog and turned into a talking chimera by her father.

Ninjutsu

A general ninja technique in *Naruto*.

Nesting

A technique used in comics where one or more panels are superimposed upon a larger inclusive panel. Also referred to as inseting.

Nnoitra Jiruga

A character in *Bleach*. Nnoitra is an Espada and villain in the series.

Noba

An anime-only character in *Bleach*.

O

Omake

Similar to the 'special features' found on many DVD releases, *omake* are 'extras' that are often included in *tankôbon*. They can be placed in between the chapters or collected at the end of the volume and the content of *omake* varies considerably between series.

One Manga

A website that hosts scanlations of manga series and a range of forums in which to discuss those series.

One True Pairing (OTP)

A term used by shippers to refer to what they believe to be the only 'real' romantic relationship in a series.

Orihime Inoue

A primary character in *Bleach*. Orihime is a school-friend of Ichigo who gains supernatural powers and helps Ichigo throughout the series.

Orochimaru

A character in *Naruto*. Orochimaru was a Konoha ninja who defected and became a series villain.

OVA

Original Video Animation. A feature-length anime made for release in home video formats.

Owned

Owned is a slang term used in manga fan communities (and beyond). When a character achieves victory over another, they are said to have 'owned' that character. It is sometimes referred to as 'pwned' (a term associated with a kind of internet slang known as 'leetspeak').

P

Pairing

A term used in shipping for a relationship between characters in a series.

Panel

A single picture on a comics page.

Plotkai

A term used by *Bleach* fans to refer to the process by which a character gets an unexplained, and often illogical, power boost or new ability to allow them victory over a stronger opponent.

Plot no jutsu

A term used by *Naruto* fans to refer to the process by which a character gets an unexplained, and often illogical, power boost or new ability to allow them victory over a stronger opponent.

Power-up

When a character in a (*shōnen*) manga gains a substantial boost to his powers and new abilities, often without any additional training or explanation.

Q

Quincy

A type of character in *Bleach*. The Quincy are humans who can feel spirit pressure and fight against hollows.

R

Rangiku Matsumoto

A character in *Bleach*. Matsumoto is a Soul Reaper and squad vice-captain in the Soul Society.

Rasengan

A special ninja technique used by Naruto and his father in *Naruto*.

Raw

An uncleaned and untranslated manga scan circulated on the internet.

Renji Abarai

A character in *Bleach*. Renji is a Soul Reaper and squad vice-captain in the Soul Society.

Roy Mustang

A character in *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Mustang is a State Alchemist who helps the Elric brothers.

Rukia Kuchiki

A primary character in *Bleach*. Rukia is a Soul Reaper in the Soul Society.

S

Sasuke Uchiha

A primary character in *Naruto*. Sasuke was a member of Naruto's ninja squad who defected to seek revenge against his brother, Itachi.

Scanlation

A portmanteau of scan and translation. Scanlation is the term used for the practice of producing unofficial English-language versions of Japanese manga pages. Scanlation groups take 'raw' scans from the Japanese manga magazines (which are invariably of very poor quality), 'clean' the images up using image processing software, remove the Japanese text from the speech bubbles, and replace this with English text provided by the group translator. These scanlations are then made available to fans on the internet.

Screeentone

Screeentone refers to the patterns of black shapes—often dots or lines—which appear as various shades of grey when printed. The shade of grey rendered depends upon how densely packed these shapes are with denser patterns producing darker tones. Sheets of ready-made screeentone can be cut to fit and laid over a page of hand-drawn manga, or it can added digitally in image-processing software.

Seinen manga

Manga series written primarily for an audience of adult men.

Sharingan

A ninja ability that resides in the eye in *Naruto*.

Shipping

Shipping is an important element of many fan communities, where fans chose to focus on a romantic or sexual relationship between particular characters in the cultural text they follow (which could be a manga, a book or series of books, or a television programme, among many other things). Ships often form the basis of fan fiction writing. The terms ship and shipping are an abbreviation of relationship. The term 'pairing' is used instead of, or alongside, 'shipping' in many manga fan communities.

Shino Aburame

A character in *Naruto*. Shino is a Konoha ninja whose ability is derived from sharing his body with a colony of bugs.

Shōjo manga

Manga series written primarily for an audience of teenage girls.

Shōnen manga

Manga series written primarily for an audience of teenage boys.

Shou Tucker

A character in *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Shou Tucker is a State Alchemist who used his family to make talking chimera.

Shuriken

Four bladed ninja weapons. They are commonly used in *Naruto*.

Slash

Homosexual pairings between characters in shipping. The name comes from the 'slash' placed between the characters names in descriptions of the pairing.

Soul Reaper

A type of character in *Bleach*. Soul Reapers are powerful souls who fight against hollows.

Soul Society

A setting in *Bleach* where the Soul Reapers live.

Sôsuke Aizen

The primary antagonist in *Bleach*. Aizen was a Soul Reaper and captain in the Soul Society but defected to become a villain.

Speech bubble

A shape containing written dialogue in comics. Speech bubbles often have a tail to indicate the character who is speaking. Also referred to as a word balloon.

Speedlines

Lines in the background of a manga panel that are used to indicate subjective motion.

Spoiler

A spoiler is information about some aspect of a series that someone else has not read yet. Spoilers for scanlated versions of new chapters usually emerge soon after the Japanese edition of a series has been released.

Squee

An affect valued within shipping communities. Squee refers to the joy and excitement shippers feel when they find clear evidence for their ship in a text. The term comes from the high-pitched squealing noise shippers make when they experience squee.

State Alchemist

A type of character in *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Alchemists who work for the state in return for resources, status or influence.

T

Taijutsu

A type of physical ninja technique in *Naruto*.

Tankôbon

In Japan, most manga series are serialised in one of the various weekly or monthly manga anthology magazines. The magazines are cheaply produced and inexpensive to buy, so they are generally considered disposable. The chapters of an individual series are usually collected together, reprinted on higher quality paper, and bound as a series of *tankôbon* volumes, which fans of the series can collect. These are sometimes referred to in English as 'graphic novel editions'.

Tôshirô Hitsugaya

A character in *Bleach*. Hitsugaya is a Soul Reaper and squad captain in the Soul Society.

Tsunade

A character in *Naruto*. Tsunade is the Fifth Hokage.

U

UlquiHime

A pairing between Ulquiorra Schiffer and Orihime Inoue in *Bleach*.

Ulquiorra Schiffer

A character in *Bleach*. Ulquiorra is an Espada and villain in the series.

UnfloppeD manga

Japanese books are read from right to left, so when a manga series is localised the publisher must decide whether to leave the panels as they were in the original Japanese format and ask the readers to read 'backwards', or to mirror-image (or otherwise rearrange) the panels so that they can be read from left to right, as English-speakers would usually read a book. When the panels are left as they were in the Japanese edition, the publishers refer to the manga as an unfloppeD translation.

Uryû Ishida

A primary character in *Bleach*. Ishida is a school-friend of Ichigo and a Quincy who helps Ichigo throughout the series.

V

Vasto Lorde

A type of hollow in *Bleach*.

Visored

A type of character in *Bleach*. Visoreds are Soul reapers who have gained hollow powers.

W

Word balloon

A shape containing written dialogue in comics. Word balloons often have a tail to indicate the character who is speaking. Also referred to as speech bubbles.

Y

Yuri

A genre of manga which concentrates on homosexual relationships between girls. Also referred to as 'girls love'.

Z

Zangetsu

A character in *Bleach*. Zangetsu is the personification of Ichigo's .

A Soul Reaper's sword in *Bleach*.

Zetsu

A villainous character in *Naruto*.



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