Andrea Kuhar

Professor Gagich

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“Manga: Horimiya and To the Abandoned Scared Beasts”

All over the world, you will see a little book that has an interesting cover to what is considered the “front”. However, in Japanese culture, what American’s consider the “front” of a book is actually the back of the comic book. This is the same for the “back” which is actually the front for all manga created. In Japan, a text is read from right to left unlike America and many other countries who read left to right. Each panel created is read right to left however the text is read left to right for American translated copies of all manga. With the term “manga”, it refers to both comics and cartooning in Japan (Wikipedia).

Within the United States, many believe that comics are for kids and is appropriate for all ages to read. This is true for manga as well. With the manga that publishes in Japan and the U.S. “the kiddie stuff tends not to be as simple-minded as the American versions… it will sometimes depict death --- while the U.S. (on children’s TV) seems determined to run away from such realities of life” (Rei). Manga also focuses more on the daily lives of its characters than U.S. comics doing the opposite (Rei). With Japanese manga, the style of it is unique only to Japan while it is also easy to distinguish it from any other style, such as the comics from America.

With each manga published, they tell a story about something specific that can be a wide range of things. All of that is based on the writer and artist’s preferences. An example of a manga is one called “Horimiya”, which was created by Daisuke Hagiwara, who is the artist and HERO who creates the story and is an implied author (Horimiya; MyAnimeList). This manga is about a high school girl who hides a different side of who she is as a person. Another student in her class also hides the other side of who he is as well. They cross paths and find out about each other’s different side and share an adventure in their daily lives as different people during their high school years (Horimiya; MyAnimeList). With all of that, this makes the manga into one that shows many genres: Comedy, Romance, School Life, Shounen, Slice of Life. Another example is “To the Abandoned Scared Beasts”, which was created by Maybe, who is the artist and writer along with an implied author. The manga is about a past civil war between the North and South where the people of the North create super-soldiers who are monsters called Incarnates. These beasts are in need of help to become peaceful and live in the society or be hunted down and killed (Katsute Kami Datta Kemono-tachi e; MyAnimeList). The description of the manga leads it to be categorized as an action, fantasy, Shounen, supernatural manga in terms of genre. The artist and writer of manga work together to bring the manga to life using different techniques and create a story. With these manga, and manga in general, the purpose of the text can usually provide entertainment to those who read manga while also having a deeper message within it.

Throughout the world, manga can be easily accessed in three ways: physical copy through a manga magazine, manga volumes, and digital copies. Manga is usually published first in a manga magazine in which they “usually have many series running concurrently with approximately 20-40 pages allocated to each series per issue” (Wikipedia). An example is the manga series, Horimiya, which is published by a company called GFantasy (Horimiya; MyAnimeList). “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts” is published by the company “Bessatsu Shounen Magazine” (Katsute Kami Datta Kemono-tachi e; MyAnimeList) Once a series has been running for a while, chapters of the manga are put together and printed into a book form (Wikipedia). Sometimes they are either softcover or hardcover books. Manga can also be accessed online through digital copies that are available on different sites. This can be difficult as they are translated by people before the official translation comes out. With the publication of manga, dates can vary between the original Japanese one to the physical copies that are in Japanese then translated to English. It can take years for manga to be completely translated in English and published in the U.S.

When looking for a manga to read, there are many genres to choose from which determines the audience. Some of the genres for manga are Fantasy, Shounen or Shōnen (manga aimed at teenage male demographic from ages 12-18 (Shōnen Manga; Wikipedia)), Comedy, Romance, School, Slice of Life, Gore, Horror, etc. Manga can range in different categories of genre. With this, the audience can range between teenagers, young adults, and older adults.

With the creation of manga, it relies on the modes of communication, which are stated in Chapter 1 of “*Writer/Design: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects”*. With the modes, there are five of them listed: Linguistic, Visual, Aural, Spatial, and Gestural (Arola, Ball, and Sheppard 4). Because of this, artists and writers of manga must also rely on certain design choices to help create a story. Within Chapter 2, the design choices stated are Emphasis, Contrast, Alignment, Proximity, and Organization (Arola, Ball, and Sheppard 31). Each one must be considered when designing any manga, whether it is “Horimiya” or “To the Abandoned Scared Beasts”.

When looking at the design choices made for both “Horimiya” and “To the Abandoned Scared Beasts”, both have similar aspects in terms of the modes discussed in Chapter 1 and 2 of *“Writer/Design: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects”*. The Modes of Communication and Design Choices each intertwine with one another along with relying on each other to create a manga. According to Arola, Ball, and Sheppard, emphasis means “stressing a word or a group of words to give it more importance” (31). With this, authors and artists of manga give “certain elements greater importance, significance or stress than other elements in the text” (Arola, Ball, and Sheppard 31). Within any manga, certain emotions are stressed, to give emphasis to what is happening in the scene, outside of what is said by the characters. An example of this is in “Horimiya”, in which two characters (Hori and Yuki) greet each other in the morning. In the second scene, the character on the right (Yuki) asks the character on the left (Hori) to copy her notes for English class. In a different font, the character, Yuki, says “WAAHH!” as she comes near Hori. The character Hori has a shocked face and in the same font as before with Yuki states “HUH!?” then goes into her dialogue (HERO and Hagiwara, 4). Things outside from the text are happening in the background of this manga and any other as well. This helps readers see the emotions happening within the situation in the panels. The same can also be said for the manga “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts”. On pages 7-11 of the manga, a teenage girl enters a bar saloon, looking for someone (Maybe, 7-8). The teenage girl spot’s the man who she is looking for and declares that she is has found her target and will pay for what he did to her father (Maybe, 9). She then pulls out what seems to be a rifle and begins shooting him then falls back from the after effect of the rifle (Maybe, 10-11). Within these few pages, all emphasis is given to showing the effects of shooting gun and the after effect when the teenage girl fires the rifle by using words (in Japanese) and such. Both these ways are used to give emphasis of the scenes in “Horimiya” and “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts”.

Along with emphasis within the two manga’s, contrast is used in to help distinguish between lines but also within the manga as a whole. This is because, when published in any form, manga is in the colors’ white, gray and black. This includes the shading of certain area’s and line thickness, which helps the manga and emphasizing certain scenes while contrasting them from each other. According to Arola, Ball, and Sheppard, contrast is defined as “the difference between elements, where the combination of those elements makes one element stand out from another” (33) while it can be determined by “comparing elements in a text” (31). Contrast can also deal with the color, size, placement, shape, and content (Arola, Ball, and Sheppard, 31) in which it becomes a big factor to help manga artist contrast certain text and other elements in manga. If the same two scenes are used, you can see how the two different artists contrast each little thing to give the scenes life. On page 11 (Vol.1) of “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts”, the thickness of the word in Japanese is a huge contrast to the rest of the panel, helping the word be emphasized for the scene. In the manga “Horimiya”, there is a lot of contrast between three colors’ as well, the same as what is done in “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts”. This helps manga readers fully see the scene that is not in full color while giving light to all the small details within the story. Another example of contrast used in the two-given text and other’s is the colors used on the Manga cover for each volume created and published.

Aside from contrast, the alignment of manga is crucial to how the story is presented. As stated earlier, manga is read as a text/image from right to left along with each panel being read from right to left with the text read left to right for American copies of manga. As stated by Arola, Ball, and Sheppard in Chapter 2 of *Writer/Design: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects,* the word alignment means “how things line up” (35) in which manga heavily relies on the alignment of the panels for the story to flow smoothly. This is especially true for when something within a panel is given emphasis in which there is different contrast in size that “demonstrates coherence through a single alignment” (Arola, Ball, and Sheppard, 35). If the previous example “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts” was looked at once more, it is easy to see how alignment is used carefully in both manga, along with any manga that is looked at.

Within any manga, all panels are close to each other due to page sizes but also the design of the traditional manga as well. As defined by Arola, Ball, and Sheppard in Chapter 2 of *Writer/Design: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects,* Proximity means “closeness in space” in which with manga being a visual text that refers to “the use of images and other characteristics that reads can see” (Arola, Ball, and Sheppard, 6). Proximity and visual mode play hand in hand when it comes to how manga is colored, the lay out of it, designed stylistically, size of characters (and other things), and the perspective within the manga to attract attention from either a potential or current reader (Arola, Ball, and Sheppard, 6). This is highly true for the two manga, “Horimiya” and “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts”.

When a manga artist creates a page filled with 3-4 panels, they must consider the organization of each panel in contrast to everything said before. With each design choice, how it is organized into a coherent story is all depended up each choice described by Arola, Ball and Sheppard in Chapter 2 of *Writer/Design: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* working together. I believe this all starts with how the manga is organized. In Chapter 2 of *Writer/Design: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects,* Arola, Ball, and Sheppard state that organization is “the way in which elements are arranged to form a coherent unit for functioning whole” (2). With manga, this includes the arrangement of people, buildings, background, and other elements that much be considered before other design choices. For any manga, including the two texts mentioned earlier, all the Modes of Communication and Design Choices stated within *Writer/Design: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* highly depend on how a manga artist organizes the story itself, leading to everything else.

Throughout the years, manga has become popular thanks to the ideas from the writers and artists of them. Manga may be considered something that a kid would read, however, with the ratings and out-there genre’s, all ages are able to enjoy a good story. Along with artists and writers, manga wouldn’t be possible without the different Modes of Communication and Design Choices created. The manga “Horimiya” and “To the Abandoned Sacred Beasts” are just two examples of how much artists and writers rely on different design choices to help create their wild and unique ideas into a coherent story. Manga is not just a cartoon or comic, it is an experience for readers each time one is held in your hands and read, bringing your mind into an alternative universe. Manga is that important to a lot of readers in this way with its uniqueness within the style of it.

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