A Comparison of the American Comic X-Men and the Japanese Manga My Hero Academia

David Krysmánek

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Akademický rok: 2023/2024

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE
(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení: **David Krysmánek**
Osobní číslo: **H21781**
Studijní program **B0231P090005 Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**
Forma studia: **Prezenční**
Téma práce: **Srovnání amerického komiksu *X-Men* a japonské mangy *My Hero Academia***

Zásady pro vypracování

Shromáždění sekundárních materiálů k historickému kontextu románů
Nastudování vybraných primárních děl
Formulace cílů práce na základě informací získaných ze sekundárních zdrojů
Analýza zvolených primárních děl
Vyvození a formulace závěrů

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Brienza, Casey. *Manga in America: Transnational Book Publishing and the Domestication of Japanese Comics.* London: Bloomsbury, 2016.
Duncan, Randy, and Matthew J. Smith. *The Power of Comics: History, Form, and Culture.* London: Continuum, 2009.
Gabilliet, Jean-Paul. *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books.* Translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013.
Rhoades, Shirrel. *A Complete History of American Comic Books.* New York: Peter Lang, 2008.
Rosenbaum, Roman. *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History.* Abington: Routledge, 2013.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **doc. Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.**
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **1. února 2024**
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **6. května 2024**

L.S.

_____   _____
Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.   **doc. Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.**
děkan   ředitel ústavu

Ve Zlíně dne 28. února 2024

PROHLÁŠENÍ AUTORA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Beru na vědomí, že

- odevzdáním bakalářské práce souhlasím se zveřejněním své práce podle zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby [1];
- beru na vědomí, že bakalářská práce bude uložena v elektronické podobě v univerzitním informačním systému dostupná k nahlédnutí;
- na moji bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, zejm. § 35 odst. 3 [2];
- podle § 60 [3] odst. 1 autorského zákona má UTB ve Zlíně právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla v rozsahu § 12 odst. 4 autorského zákona;
- podle § 60 [3] odst. 2 a 3 mohu užít své dílo – bakalářskou práci – nebo poskytnout licenci k jejímu využití jen s předchozím písemným souhlasem Univerzity Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně, která je oprávněna v takovém případě ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které byly Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně na vytvoření díla vynaloženy (až do jejich skutečné výše);
- pokud bylo k vypracování bakalářské práce využito softwaru poskytnutého Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně nebo jinými subjekty pouze ke studijním a výzkumným účelům (tj. k nekomerčnímu využití), nelze výsledky bakalářské práce využít ke komerčním účelům.

Prohlašuji, že
- elektronická a tištěná verze bakalářské práce jsou totožné;
- na bakalářské práci jsem pracoval(a) samostatně a použitou literaturu jsem citoval(a). V případě publikace výsledků budu uveden(a) jako spoluautor.

Ve Zlíně 05.05. 2024

....

ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce zkoumá celou historii komiksu a věnuje se srovnávací analýze dvou významných sérií: „The Uncanny X-Men" ze Spojených států a „My Hero Academia" z Japonska. Práce se vrací až k počátkům komiksů od starověkých civilizací a prehistorických uměleckých forem až po moderní dobu. Analýza vyprávění ukazuje, že ačkoli obě série sdílejí stejnou vyprávěcí strukturu, která je typická pro superhrdinský žánr, rozcházejí se spíše v tématickém zaměření a vývoji postav. „The Uncanny X-Men" klade důraz na společenské důsledky mutantů a dynamiku osobních vztahů. Naproti tomu „My Hero Academia" se více zaměřuje na podstatu hrdinství a odpovědnost, kterou s sebou nese. Vizuálně si „The Uncanny X-Men" zachovává tradiční komiksové rozvržení, zatímco „My Hero Academia" vykazuje inovativnější design panelů a dynamické prostorové uspořádání, které odráží jeho modernější přístup k vyprávění. Práce také rozebírá historický kontext Amerického I Japonského komiksu a odhaluje, jak technologický pokrok a kulturní posuny ovlivnily produkci a spotřebu komiksů.

Klíčová slova: komiks, manga, analýza literárních děl, srovnání, Japonsko, Americký komiks

ABSTRACT

The bachelor's thesis explores the whole comic book history history and goes into a comparative analysis of two prominent series, "The Uncanny X-Men" from the United States and "My Hero Academia" from Japan. The study goes all the way back into the origins of comic bocks from the ancient civilizations and prehistoric artforms to the modern times. The narrative analysis reveals that while both series share the same narrative structure that is typical of superhero genre, they split more in the thematic focus and character development. "The Uncanny X-Men" emphasizes the societal implications of mutants and the dynamics of personal relationships. In contrast, "My Hero Academia" focuses more on the essence of heroism and the responsibilities it carries. Visually "The Uncanny X-Men" retains the traditional comic layout whereas "My Hero Academia" shows more innovative panel designs and dynamic spatial arrangements that reflects its more modern storytelling approach. The thesis also discusses the historical context of both American and Japanese comics, revealing how technological advancements and cultural shifts have influenced comic book production and consumption.

Keywords: Comic, Manga, Analysis of literature, Comparison, Japan, American comics

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor of this thesis Docent Roman Trušník, for his invaluable guidance, patience, and expert advice throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis. His insights and encouragement were crucial to the completion of this work.

I am also very thankful to my family and friends for their support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. Their constant encouragement has been a source of strength and motivation. I am truly grateful for having such a supportive circle, who stood by me during the challenges and celebrated the achievements alongside me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on a comparative analysis of two iconic comic book series, "My Hero Academia" by Kohei Horikoshi from Japan and "The Uncanny X-Men" by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby from United States of America. Thesis will explore their narrative content and artistic expression within the broader historical evolution of the comic book medium. This examination is particularly focused on two main aspects: the story, which encompasses the themes, character development, and plot structures, and the discourse, which involves the visual and stylistic choices including panel layout, art style, and overall design.

Theis will begin with establishing a historical context. The first chapter provides a detailed historical context of the comic book industry. This includes the origins and evolution of comic books, their technological advancements and socio-cultural shifts that influenced comic book production and storytelling in both the American and Japan. This background will help in understanding the environment from which "My Hero Academia" and "The Uncanny X-Men" emerged.

The next chapters are dedicated to an analysis of the series' narratives and artistic discourse. The narrative analysis will assess how each comic portrays its characters, constructs its world, and addresses themes relevant to its audience, such as heroism, society, and morality. The discussion of discourse will explore the visual representation in each series, examining how the artists convey themes and narratives through their distinctive artistic choices. This includes an analysis of how panel structure, art style, and visual storytelling techniques serve to engage the reader and further the narrative's impact.

Through this comparative framework, the thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of comic books as a dynamic form of storytelling that combines textual and visual elements to explore the complex themes a comic book can give.

2   HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To understand the history of comic books one must trace its origins back to the ancient age of civilizations. The comic books can be considered as a culmination of very old traditions from many cultures across the centuries that slowly developed to the comics we know.

2.1 Definition of a comic

In the beginning there was a problem with a consensus on what comic is or what it should represent. Many languages expressed only individual aspects of the medium. For example, we have English terms *funnies* and *comic strip that* highlighted the amusing parts in the newspaper layouts.

The next example is the French term *bande dessinée* that is used for illustrated stories and speech bubbles.[1] The problem as the author Gabilliet indicates is the ambiguousness of the comics where there is no proper translation of comic books that can accurately define the core of comics. There was also an issue with definition the overall public agreed on where comic is a sequence of panels that include pictures and text within the bubbles, because it doesn't include comics that have either one panel or panels without any text bubbles. On the other hand, if we included these two parts then we would get definition of an illustrated book where pictures were added to the book that didn't need them in the first place. [2]

One of the first breakthroughs came in the year 1453 where according to historian David Kunzle the Comic books history become connected with the era of movable-type printing press. The technological advancement was one of the last pieces needed to create criteria and overall definition of what comic is. Those criteria were: *the sequentiality of images, the preponderance of an image over text, the reproductive nature of medium and the topical and moral character of the story.*[3] That means in order for something to be recognized as a comic at least two requirements must be met; the visual part of the book and the textual part of the book must be recognized as a key components that complement each other and the other part is the sequentiality of pictures and text. This synergy can give the comics the needed aspect to differentiate itself from other books.[4]

---

[1] Gabilliet, Jean-Paul Beaty, a Nguyen, *Of Comics and Men, trans. Bart Beaty, Nick Nguyen* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 12
[2] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 13
[3] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 15
[4] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 15

2.2 Timeline of American Comics

Early Beginnings

According to Duncan and Smith, the Early beginnings that can be considered comics were prehistoric cave paintings in France and Spain that date back to the 10,000-25,000 years ago where the paintings depicted images in sequences where we could see how the images were used as a narration. This could be considered as form of storytelling through the use of images. One of the more and well-known practices of sequential image narration can be Egyptian tomb paintings. As we can see humans long before the modern ages had some experience with this type of storytelling even though the modern comic books vastly differ from the ancient and prehistoric ages.[5]

In the 15th Century the invention of the movable-type printing press was one of the most important advancements in comic history because it brought the creation of Broadsheets. These Broadsheets were created from large single sheet of paper that included both the text and the images which were unusually similar to the modern comic strips we know today. In their age they became very popular source of entertainment. [6]

19th Century servers as one of the first significant steps in modern comic book history. One of the people that reached the milestone of comic development was the Yellow Kid made by Richard Felton Outcault in the late 19. century.[7] This single panel comic is often cited as one the point origin of modern comic books and its often called the Yellow Kid Thesis. The thesis is often opposed from broader historical and cultural perspective because for one it focuses on single culture and second there were other authors with similar beginnings. One of them is Rodolphe Topher, a 19. Century, European artist who is also credited with creating works that included comic strips like "Historie de M. Vieux Bois." It is also one of the authors who laid the groundwork for sequential images and text in storytelling.

The American comic book industry developed from two primary sources. One of them were the comic strips and the other were pulp magazines. Both of these mediums offered affordable entertainment and yet they were somewhat limited in terms of genre diversity. Unlike modern superhero comics, the comic strips and pulp magazines were focused on ordinary individuals, though there were notable exceptions like The Shadow and the Spider

---

[5] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics* (London: Continuum, 2009), 21
[6] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics,* 32.
[7] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics*, 25.

who would become the inspirations for the future of superhero comic books. Despite these limitations, their commercial success laid the foundation for the evolution into contemporary superhero comic books.[8]

The first comic book called *The Funnies*, which resembled the style of modern comics was produced in 1929 in Eastern Colour Printing Company in New York. it was the first comic book that laid the actual foundation for what would become the modern comic books later on.[9] From the late 1930 to 1950s also saw the emergence of the well-known superheroes like Superman and Batman and the public begun to distinguish comic books from the newspaper comic strips.[10] Due to global events such as the Great Depression and particularly World War II, superheroes surged in popularity, becoming symbols of patriotism and justice. Because of the rising superhero popularity, the pulp magazine industry started to decline.[11]

After the war, the interest in comic books was still high but the superhero popularity started to wane. Instead, new genres were being explored like, romance, western, or crime in a rapid succession to fill the void. When the sales of one comic book started to fall the next one immediately replaced it. This caused the eventual return to the superhero comic books by the early 1960s.[12] Additionally, the sustained popularity of comics was aided by generational shift. Parents familiar with the medium ensured its presence around their children.[13]

In the late 1950s to early 1960s. The new era emerged, called the Silver Age that saw resurgence of next generation of superheroes like The Flash, Green Lantern or Hawkman. With another boom of superheroes, science fiction genre also became more prevalent in their comics.[14] By the 1960, the perception towards comic books shifted, resulting in change of cultural hierarchy. Comics began to be read and more favorably viewed by students and intellectuals, shedding their previous negative association with crime[15] Because of the positive association the government used comic books, specifically the superhero ones as a propaganda vehicle that depicted superheroes helping and supporting American war efforts. This trend also continued in the Cold War where superheroes battled the communist ideology

---

[8] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics*, 225.
[9] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics,* 38, 39.
[10] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 225, 40.
[11] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics*, 251, 242, 28.
[12] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics*, 55.
[13] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 309.
[14] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics*, 80, 79, 171.
[15] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 18, 19.

and supported the American democracy.[16] the rise of televisions in 1950s and the creation of Comics Code Authority in 1954 also shaped the future of comic book industry. The Code prohibited explicit content which led to sanitization of superheroes and caused decline of genres dependent on the explicit content like horror or crime and the television also provided comic books with fresh inspiration, leading to adaptations of popular TV series and movies.[17]

In the Modern era, both new and classic genres, such as war stories and science fiction, gained prominence which was influence by the shift in interest and censorship. New genres became prominent like war stories or the science fiction. The reason why war stories genre rose to popularity amidst the censorship, was their ability to depict violent stories without its association with crime and delinquent tendencies.[18] As a reaction to the censorship and defiance against the mainstream convections and the Comic Code, independent companies tried to create comics that were against the restrictions and the mainstream editorial policies and censorship. These comic books were known as the underground comix.[19] Post-war baby boom also boosted the number of people that read the comic books, but because of the decline of periodical press and the competition from television the popularity of comic books in everyday life decreased by the late 1970s.[20] In the same year the comic books tried to address the politic situations that were present at the time, namely the Vietnam War, reflecting the change of ideologies. One of the affected superheroes was for example Iron Man from Marvel, who underwent this change because of fan's responses.[21] At the end of the century in 1990 the form of comic book became diversified. The general bookstores started to offer graphics novels, collections of newspaper comic strips and other original forms. [22]

2.3 Timeline of Japanese comics

Japanese comics or so-called manga in their language holds a very unique position in a cultural sense as well as in artistic sense. In this part I will write about the cultural and historical context of Japan's side of comics that traces its development from traditional art forms and its development into the modern manga style we know today.

Ancient Beginnings

---

[16] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics*, 260, 251, 62.
[17] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics,* 51, 52.
[18] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 72.
[19] Duncan and Smith, *The power of comics,* 62-63.
[20] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 51, 233.
[21] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 97.
[22] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 122.

One of the earliest roots in the Japan's history of manga can be traced to medieval picture scrolls and caricatures that were found in the ancient temples.[23] They usually depicted animals and people in a humorous manner and often parodied the lifestyle of the Japanese upper class. These forms of art are considered to be dated back as far as the 12. Century and emphasize long-lived connection with the Japanese humor and satire. One of the prominent examples are the caricatures in Horyuji Temple or the pictures scrolls created by Bishop Toba, depicting the social commentary through visual art.[24]

Edo Period (1603-1868) saw to one of the significant influences on manga development. The so-called ukiyo-e or in other words, woodblock prints depicted the modern-day aspects of Edo's urban culture the so called "floating world" of Edo. The artists Hokusai and Hiroshige were one of the major influences on the development of the manga.[25] Hokusai Manga sir These two authors had humor and wit present in their works and were one of the few people that laid the groundwork for the manga's narrative structure.[26] Especially the Hokusai Manga series that started in the early 19. Century was often referred to as one of the foundational precursors of modern manga.

Meiji era was a turning point for the manga. With the Meiji Restoration in 1868 Japan underwent changes from the feudal society into the modern-day state. This period was characterized by significant changes in politics, culture, and social values. Japan tried to modernize and industrialize the society, embracing the western values and ideas while also maintaining their own identity.[27] With the changes and the westernization of the country, the manga started to change as well. The term manga that we know today was becoming more and more common in the early Showa period (1926-1989) when it started to be used as a translation for comic strips or cartoons. It can be considered as a significant cultural and artistic evolution. The establishment of a constitution in 1889 and diet in 1980 by the Meiji government motivated by the Freedom and People's rights movement and its tradition of fūshiga (caricatures) in the 1880s started to highlight the connection between manga and politics. [28] This connection only deepened as the time went by.

[23] Kinko Ito, „A History of *Manga* in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society", *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38, n. 3 (January 2005): 3, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.2005.00123.x.
[24] Kinko, *History of Manga in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society,* 4.
[25] Kinko, *History of Manga in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society,* 5.
[26] Ito, A History of *Manga* in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society, 5.
[27] Rosenbaum, *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*, 67,199.
[28] Rosenbaum, *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*, 272

In the Meiji/Taisho period, manga started to become not only as a medium to entertain but also a mirror to the changes in society that happened in that period. In the late 19. And early 20. Century meaning the Meiji and Taisho periods laid solid groundwork for what was considered a Meiji/Taisho Gothic genre in manga. This genre combined historical figures and settings with fantastical features, which appealed to the vast audience and reflected the socio-political changes at that time. [29] The manga series "Nightmare Inspector" is one of the examples of the genre. It set its narrative in the late Taisho Period that evoked the atmospheric changes in the city landscape and the societal undercurrents of that era.[30]

In this era manga also began to emerge as a form of journalism called "Manga Journalism" where authors satirized the Meiji politics and society. This type of journalism became prevalent in newspaper and magazines and reacted to the unstable times of rapid modernization and clash between the traditional Japanese values and the West.[31]

The High Treason Incident sparked the end of the Meiji period where the plot to assassinate the emperor was discovered, the Japanese press shifted into the darker age. The manga changed focus from political and social satire into the focus on human condition and with the creation of new genre that satirized human beings. This shift is further highlighted by the emergence of the "ero guro nonsense" artistic movement in 1920s that focused on introspective satire exploring the human condition.[32]

Few years after the High Treason incident the Taisho period became more and more peaceful with the emergence of new Humanistic, aesthetic, and proletarian literatures which reflected the era's dynamic and intellectual activities. The manga similarly to Meiji era started to critique the societal and political changes regarding rapid urbanization and democratization of Japan.[33] The influence of the west became more prominent and started to significantly influence the development of manga.[34]

2.4 Technological Advancements in 19th century

Technological advancement in America in the 19. Century was not only known for its first prototypes of what would become the modern comic books. It is also a century were printing technology achieved a significant milestone in its quantity of production. With the possibility

---

[29] Rosenbaum, *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*, 168–69.
[30] Rosenbaum, *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History* 169.
[31] Ito, „A History of *Manga* in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society", 7.
[32] Rosenbaum, *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History,* 252
[33] Ito, A History of *Manga* in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society, 8
[34] Ito, A History of *Manga* in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society, 6-7,8

of producing texts and images in masses, it allowed the mass production of newspapers where the first comic strip "The Yellow Kid" was created.[35] This also allowed comics to reach a wider audience and thus gain more popularity in a process.

The printing technology during the Meiji era in Japan also saw to significant advancements. Introduction to new techniques and technologies like lithography and then later zincography allowed for faster and cheaper production of images therefore the manga was more accessible to general public.[36] Thanks to this advancement of technology alongside the expansion of railway network and postal services, the distribution of manga was possible to cover more ground in a short period of time enabling it to reach broader audience across Japan.[37]

---

[35] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 24, 12.
[36] Ito, A History of *Manga* in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society, 8
[37] Ito, A History of *Manga* in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society, 8

3   OBJECTS OF ANALYSIS

In this chapter, we will do a comparative analysis of the two comic book series and that is *My Hero Academia* and *The Uncanny X-Men*. We will be taking arguments and claims from authors specializing in their fields and use them in in our examination. My study will focus on comparison of two main aspects from the selected comic books. First, we will examine narrative of the comic books such as story, plot, and characters to highlight differences or similarities between the two works. The Second part will explore the discourse where we will be specifically looking at the use of paneling and other visual elements of the comic books and how they possibly evolved.

3.1.1   X-Men

X-Men created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, is an American comic book series that portrays mutants that are ostracized by society due to their extraordinary abilities. These mutants are led by Professor Charles Xavier who as a mutant telepath fight with other X-Men to protect the world that fears them and hates them. The X-Men battle against prejudice discrimination and other evil forces. They are published by the company Marvel Entertainment, LLC which is a subsidiary of a company The Walt Disney Company.[38] The X-man series debuted in 1963 by then publishing company under the name of Marvel Comics. Since its debut in 1963 the original series then would get taken over by the many other writers and pencilers like Roy Thomas or Gary Friedrich and then by well-known writer Chris Claremont with his first written issue "The Uncanny X-Men" issue 94. The renaming of the original X-men into name Uncanny X-Men appeared first in the issue of "The Uncanny X-Men", but it would not be officially called as such until the issue 142 of" The Uncanny X-Men."

3.1.2   My Hero Academia

My Hero Academia, which was created by the author Kohei Horikoshi, is a Japanese manga series famous for its portrayal of a world where individuals possess superhuman powers known as quirks. The protagonist of this series is known as Midoriya Izuku, a boy without superpowers who still aspires to become a hero in a society where being a superhero in a society where being a superhero is a renowned profession. When he inherits the power of the world's greatest hero, All Might, Izuku enrolls in the U.A. High School. A prestigious

---

[38] "Uncanny X-Men (1963) #1 | Comic Issues | Marvel," n.d.,
https://www.marvel.com/comics/issue/12413/uncanny_x-men_1963.

academy for aspiring heroes, where he encounters a diverse cast of characters and faces challenges that test his resolve and determination. With its characters and action, the series also explores themes such as heroism, friendship, and perseverance.

4 NARRATIVE PART

Narrative part of this thesis will focus on the narration of the series "My Hero Academia" by and " The Uncanny X-Men". The focus will be made on the varied narrative techniques that show the distinctions between Japanese manga and American comic books way of storytelling. The analysis will focus on several core elements that define their storytelling: the structure of their plots, the treatment of time within their narratives, and the strategic use of specific narrative techniques.

5 STORY

Like in any other types of literature the formation of a story is the same. In order to create it, story elements called events are needed to be tied together in order to form a story. This story also needs to be constructed in a way the reader can understand it, that is what is called a plot created by the discourse. The story will always be chronological It will have a point A, a beginning and a point B, the end but with the existence of plot it is possible to change how is the chronology of a story portrayed and presented to the reader.[39]

There are several options on how to begin with the plot, it can either start chronologically at the beginning of the story, it can start in the middle of the story (in medies res), or it can also go in the past throughout the story. The stories have several aspects that show us how the stories behave. One of them is transposability where the story can be recreated in any kind of medium, in our case comics books, and retain the core story value. Of course, the discourse would be different, but the story would stay the same.[40] Our comic for example differs right from the beginning of their story. X-Men begin with Professor Xavier the possibly first mutant already training his students, also mutants, at his university called X-Men, where they begin with the with the first mission to protect military base from being taken over by their enemy Magneto with. In the X-Men universe the mutants are pariahs, and the society is unaware of them and are scared of their abilities. The start of the plot can be considered in medias res since it starts somewhere in the middle of the story. [41](Uncanny X-Men #1 8,9,11) The issues at the beginning take an episodic approach where one issue is reserved for one part of the plot occasionally there are plots that span over more than one issue for example the sentinel's storyline that spanned over #14-16 issues. The popularization of multi-issue arcs happened when the Chris Clement took over the X-Men as a writer and published now famous storyline like Dark Phoenix Saga that spanned over #129-138 issues. On the other hand, My Hero Academia starts at the very beginning of the Story reciting the moment the first human acquired special powers called Quirks. From that point that point in time a lot of other people started getting superpowers and with it the society also started to change. Instead of becoming outcasts of the society like the X-Men, people with superpowers gained public recognition and the support of the government and with it they gained an official job position as heroes as is shown in chapter 4 on page 6 and

---

[39] Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, 9. print, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007).
[40] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, 20.
[41] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 20*

8. In X-Men the main focus of the story is the group of X-Men under the mentorship of Charles Xavier but in the Japanese manga the story follows a highschooler named Midoriya Izuku, a person without superpowers that tries to become a hero. Even though the manga gives enough time to side characters of the story, the main focus is always to the protagonist Midoriya Izuku. The plot takes a more chronological approach whereas in the beginning of the X-Men the plot is more episodic in nature and thus independent from each other at least at the start of the series, however in My Hero Academia, the manga the story takes place across several volumes and several story arcs that are interconnected right from the start. Another main aspect of the series is its interconnectedness. In a several issues of Uncanny X-Men, a cameo from another works can find the way into the narrative whether it is fantastic four in issue 13 or the avengers in issue 9.

Another aspect of the story is transformation. Where the story elements are changed and manipulated for the narratives end goal. It can be change in the characters behavior. It can be change in the law of objects in the story. That brings us to the self-regulation. This is an aspect that governs the laws of the story, and it is its own counterbalance to the transformation aspect.[42] Any changes that happen in the story that are shown and explained must follow its own logic created in the story in order to keep itself coherent. Most well-known transformation is in the Dark Phoenix Saga of X-Men where after a deadly encounter Jean Grey starts to manifest as a Phoenix. This power was significantly increased by the cosmic Phoenix Force. This is an important transformation because it is significant to her character progression where she eventually succumbed to corruption as Dark Phoenix and then sacrificed herself in order to protect her friends. As a self-regulation to stabilize the logic of the X-Men universe and to ensure Jean didn't become too powerful, it was established that the new power Jean held was very hard to control and with it also came a new rule of Cosmic Balance where the power of the Phoenix was not just an anomaly but part of a cosmic cycle. The transformation and also the main difference between X-men in My hero academia that is most significant for the protagonist is the acquirement of quirk called "One For All". It is a quirk that can be passed on other people, getting stronger with each passing on human. In order for Izuku to hold that power he must undergo a rigorous physical training to be able to use even a fraction of that power without getting himself killed. As is shown My Hero Academia chapter 2 page 11 and 18 This transformation is important

---

[42] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 21*

for the protagonist because this power is the last obstacle, he needed to overcome which was having a quirk.

The self-regulation is one of the key points of the narrative because "One For All" contains immense power that Izuku cannot wield at 100 % without being injured and it is this self-Regulation that Izuku is slowly overcoming throughout the story. Another self-Regulation similar to X-Men is the society. In X-Men the society views mutants as mostly danger to society and fears them whereas in My hero academia the pressure comes from the heroes being servants of the public like the police and the trust it carries. In my hero academia the government already put laws in place preventing the use of quirk powers from anyone except the heroes.

5.1.1 Verisimilitude

Another aspect of a story lies is in its plausibility or in other words a verisimilitude. For the purposes of comparing superhero comic books the criteria for verisimilitude will be expanded so the stories of fiction can be also included. Every person has some expectations on how the world works, whether it's based around culture or public opinion. These expectations are reflected on how the story is perceived. It is not usual to expect a child having problems with alcohol or senior having problems in school and if these problems are happening in the story they need to be explained. [43]The explanation itself must be logical so the story makes sense. Of course, the explanation must be also self-regulated for story to stay coherent. one can notice this in its characters age. In the X-Men most of the main characters are young adults or adults that study in a university and are 20 years of age or more, but in My Hero Academia, the main characters are high school students that aren't even 18 years old. People in the west would consider the main characters of the X-men to be more plausible since their age is much higher with it more experience as people. The verisimilitude of main characters in My Hero Academia would be lesser because in the western part of the society, they would be considered a child. That would be the case because in the west we got more superheroes that are adults like Thor, Captain America, or Iron Man, but in case of Japan the opposite can be true because of the trend of most of the main characters in manga being in high school setting like for example in Mob Psycho, Blue Exorcist where the protagonists are also in high school. That means it comes down to the readers and what type of culture they grew up on.

---

[43] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 50-53*

Next aspect of the events is the Plot time refers to duration of events that transpired in the story and Reading time that refers to the length of reading a story. Story can span from days to several years in their own world and it is up to the author how he wants to pace the plot of the story. The plot- time also establishes what is called a present moment. If the story has an overt narrator, then it contains two present moments, one where the narrator is omniscient and narrates the story and another one of the stories itself. In Uncanny X-Men, especially the early ones, there is an overt narrator that provides additional context and commentary to the story. It sets up present moment that is separate from the character's actions. This narrator also serves as a guide to readers that do not follow the comic book from the beginning.[44] In My Hero Academia has two presents that are told through the protagonist Midoriya Izuku. He occasionally reflects on his past events from the future where he already became a great hero. This phenomenon can also be considered to have two present moments, one in the current timeline of the story and another in the future where Midoriya narrates some events retrospectively for example in My Hero Academia Chapter 90 The plot-time of the series is also little bit different. The Uncanny X-Men can have expansive plot-time that cover many years considering the time travel and alternate timelines and other events like The Dark Phoenix Saga in The Uncanny X-Men issue 135, that extends the plot time to several months. on the other hand, My Hero Academia took a tighter approach where the plot time is condensed into usually several days like the Kamino Ward Arc of the series that focused on the fight between All Might and his nemesis "All For One".

5.1.2 Flashbacks and Flashforwards

As I mentioned before the plot of the story can begin in the beginning, in the middle or go into the past but some story elements can also refer to the past and to the future. In literature they are called prolapse and analepses, but we can call these moments flashbacks and flashforwards because even though the terminology are media specific to movies where flashbacks or flashforwards are represented as scenes on screen, scenes in comic book mediums are also represented visually through drawings on a page. Sequences that break the chronological order of discourse and story are called "anachronous" sequences. We have also several subcategories that identify what type of flashbacks and flashforwards exist.

First distinction between those two aspects is their Amplitude and Distance. The former is the length of the flashback or flashforward itself and the latter is the distance between

---

[44] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 62-63*

moment of the event the reader now reads and the time the flashback or flashforward is in. Next are the different means of connecting flashbacks and flashforwards to the present events and these are external, internal, and mixed. Flashback or flashforward that starts and ends before the present time in the story is called external anachrony, internal is one that starts after the present event and mixed is one that starts before the present event and ends after it. These anachronies are further divided into categories based on the influence on the story. We have Completetive anachronies that fill gaps in the story regardless of the time of the events, and Repetitive anachronies that revisit events that already happened. Both series use flashbacks to add depth to their characters and plot[45]. While Uncanny X-Men often uses a mix of external and repetitive anachronies or flashforwards due to the already complex storyline that isn't tied to one universe and reality, My Hero Academia uses flashbacks as way to show character growth and immediate plot development. One example is in The Dark Phoenix Saga from The Uncanny X-Men where it shown how through the use of external and repetitive anachronies, Jean Grey undergoes transformation into Phoenix and then Dark Phoenix by revisiting the past incidents that shaped her like her acquisition of the Phoenix power. Another great example how this is incorporated into story is the the arc Days of Future Past where the events of the dystopian future, where the mutants are hunted by sentinels, can be considered flashforwards to show consequences of not changing the present-day events in the storyline as is shown in issue 141 to 142. On the other hand, as I said before flashbacks in My Hero Academia are more personal and are more connected to the feelings and character progress for example In Chapter 39 of My Hero Academia, during the "Sports Festival arc", We can see flashback through Todoroki's eyes his traumatic childhood and his rigorous training under his father, Endeavor. This flashback is straightforward and external, focusing solely on revealing his motivations and the emotional scars that shape his behavior. Another example of how flashbacks are emotionally driven is at the beginning in chapter 2 where Midoriya reflects on being told he could not be a hero because of lack of his quirk when he tries to save his friend from an attack.

5.1.3 Discourse time and Story time chronology.

Author says that there is a possible difference of flows of a story time and the reading time. This difference offers five possibilities that can happen. Summary is one of the first possibilities and common possibilities in comic books. These happen often at the beginning

---

[45] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 63-65*

of the story, during exposition and worldbuilding. It is needed to immerse the reader inside the world and understand the context or verisimilitude like in My Hero Academia where in the first chapter the narrator Midoriya explains how and when quirks appeared in the world. The time to read out the events is much shorter than the actual time of events in the story. Ellipsis is what happens when the story time exists but there is zero discourse time. In both comic books the Ellipsis usually happens when the characters are training and studying. Next option is Scene that offers balance between reading time and story time. In the context of comic books this means that the action the characters make and the text that is present on a single panel take relatively the same amount of time.[46] Scenes are relatively similar to each other in both X-Men and My Hero Academia chapter 131 specifically in fights where the heroes battle with villains or in dialogue heavy moments.

Another possibility is called Strech and is created by making the reading time bigger than the story time. In the movies this can take form of a slow motion in comic books it usually happens in a fight. (include some examples of fights or other if found). Comic book Authors usually use this technique when the characters have internal thoughts or during fights where either character is describing details about the fight or the narrator steps in explain what is happening on the panel. Stretch can be found in panels that slow down the flow of time and it's up to the author what clues will be given to reader to identify them. It can show in the visual part of the comic book like moving clock, or it can be explicitly said by the characters or in most of the cases it is simply implied by the way the discourse is written. Strech is more common in My Hero academia in a specific fight scene. For example, in chapter 75 where Midoriya fights against a villain Muscular. The battle is drawn more to highlight the decisions and consequences of the fight alongside the emotional states they are in. Last possibility is Pause where the time of the narrative completely stops, and the reading time continues. This is typically used in very story-heavy situations that can change the flow of the story, progress character development or use that time for exposition.[47] In comic books this is usually expressed through narrator, character internal monologue and one panel. Sometimes the following panels are used to increase the emotional impact of the moment in Pause in a form of additional narration or flashbacks that are connected to that moment.

---

[46] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 68-72*
[47] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 74*

Uncanny X-Men issue 101 frequently uses the Pause technique, specifically in a moment with character development to show the psychological condition of a character for example the iconic transformation of Jean Grey into phoenix.

5.1.4   Narrative Macrostructure and Typologies

Now the focus will be drawn on what is called Narrative Macrostructure and typologies. The narration before was focused more on the individual places of the plot that make up the whole story. Here we will take a look at the bigger picture and look at the story as a whole with different lenses to look through. Some of these criteria the authors have proposed are more focused on the realism and the power of actions in a more realistic settings so for the purpose of comparing the narration of fictional superheroes and their fictional stories, some criteria will be slightly adjusted. The first one will be the oldest and that is the six distinct narrative plots by Aristotle as is said by Chatman. Even if the typology is one of the oldest ones it can still be used in this context since good and evil are one of the major themes in superhero stories.

Aristotle identified Six distinct narrative plots focusing on the good and evil alignment of the protagonist, demonstrating different emotional impact on the readers. These categorizations are the first the good hero with no bad morals and the embodiment of good that fails at the task or is ultimately defeated. This narration evokes shock and disbeliefs because of this moment is highly unusual to happen. The second type is a narrative structure is where the protagonist of an evil nature fails at his mission and is defeated. By Aristotle this moment leads to readers feeling sense of justice and satisfaction because the evil failed and the good prevailed. Another structure is when a noble hero who is not unquestionably good but not bad either, ultimately fails due to a mistake he made in his journey evoking fear and pity in the readers. Third last is a plot where the Villainous protagonist succeeds in his plans. This moment would cause the readers to feel disgust because this is the type of plot that has low chances of happening. The opposite side of coin is the second last type where the Unquestionably morally good character wins with the readers feeling moral satisfaction. And the last one again with noble hero with more good morals than bad makes a mistake but redeems himself in the end with the readers being satisfied with the said redemption. And while these two comic books come from different years and countries the archetypes can still be applied to these narratives.[48] In a long running narratives like X-Men or My Hero

---

[48] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 84-85*

Academia there is always a series of chapters and issues or in other words an arc where the heroes win all the time, thus belonging to the category of Goodness always winning. But in order for the story to continue while staying fun, entertaining, and interesting, there must be a point where the main heroes either lose or not win. By reading the whole series one can notice the narrative plots rotating themselves in order for the story to not become stale. That is one of the reasons why a person can notice the change in narrative plots. The rotation of narrative plots can also enrich the overall story an author wants to tell. Whether it is the dark phoenix arc of The Uncanny X-Men that shows themes of corruption of power and ultimate sacrifice thus belonging in the category of noble hero redeeming themselves , or All Might from My Hero Academia Kamino Ward arc, depleting all of his power in order to defeat his nemesis All For One losing the power permanently in the process therefore losing the status of symbol of peace making criminals more bold and active in the city meaning the good guy loses the battle even if he won the fight. Both of the comic books are rotating these narrative plots in order for the story to stay fun, entertaining, and unexpected.

Since the Aristotle's six narrative plot types, other new and modern narrative analysis types have been discovered. These modern typologies focus on other factors like the powers of the protagonist compared to normal people and integrating them into society. This integration can then range from ultimate exclusion to flawless inclusion.

Northrop Frye adds two approaches by which we can analyze the narrative macrostructure. The focus will be placed on only one of them and that is more character centered approach where the criteria is not the good and evil alignment, like with the Aristotle's case, but the power of the protagonist in the relation of the audience. This creates a spectrum of narrative structures from "mythic", where characters possess all mighty and divine powers, less powerful than divine but still strong then structure is "romantic", less powerful than romantic but still more than human is "noble" and "ironic" who is less powerful than audience.[49]

Frye's criteria are more focused on the powers of characters that are realistic and conventional whether it is skill with a weapon or talent that not many people have. This means that the criteria will be adjusted to compare the powers of superheroes to other superheroes and use characters without superpowers as point of relation to normal people for the purpose of categorization of these powers. In comic books this categorization also becomes very flexible due to big number of chapters and the character development. The

---

[49] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 86*

character development of superheroes is largely related to the powers and how they develop them or lose them. For example, in X-Men the power the characters have is largely unchanged thus they remain in the romantic category. Cyclops has is laser vision, Wolverine has his adamantine claws and near invincibility. This remains mostly unchanged, but the way X-Men grow in strength is by training and finding new ways how to use the mutant abilities whether through technology or finding new ingenuine way of using that ability but this way they still remain in the romantic category. Of course, there are some exceptions in a form of gaining second mutation or by cosmic entities giving X-Men more powers thus changing the category into mythic. The most famous example being Jean Grey bonding with phoenix thus gaining mythic powers. In My Hero Academia the "Quirks" work similarly to the mutations X-Men posses with the exception of the protagonist Midoriya Izuku who inherits the superpower from All Might. Midoriya inherits the power of overwhelming strength called "One For All" thus becoming romantic character. He cannot control the power at the beginning without injuring his arms, but by training his body and his controls over it he slowly gets more powerful throughout the story thus gaining the category of a mythic character.

Ronald Crane similarly to Frye was also inspired by Aristotle and based on his work he proposed more character-centric distinctions, and these are plots of action, plots of character, and plots of thought. This type of categorization helps with the understanding of the plot from three different perspectives. The plot of action gives understanding of the protagonist situation. The second shows us the protagonist's change in his moral character and the last one helps us understand the change in thought and feelings.[50]

This is tied together with Norman Friedman's types of distinction that are added on top of Crane's categorization and these are plot of "admiration" connected with plot of action that shows the "change for the better by the protagonist's nobility of character". Another one is maturity plot where the protagonist misinterprets his own goal but changes for the better in the process. Last is "education" plot where the characters thought is improved but it will not have any effect on the outcome of the narrative. If he did, then the plot would have changed into "maturity" plot.[51] By these criteria the main characters of both comic books no matter the arc has Maturity plots because of the target audience being kids, teenagers, and your adults. One of the purposes of comic books is to show the growth of the characters

---

[50] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 87*
[51] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 87-88*

throughout the narrative. Whether it is Cyclops and his personal challenges related to leadership of the X-Men or Todoroki coming to terms with his past and using the full extent of his powers during the Sports Festival Arc in My Hero Academia, until the end there will always be room for growth. Although there is one difference and that is the character of All Might that everyone admires and reveres and thus is the main point of the admiration plot. It is also the main point where this admiration plot gains a bigger importance after All Might finishes the fight "All For One" inspiring everyone before losing his powers.

5.2 Characters

In this chapter we will focus more on how characters themselves like their traits, characteristics, and the influence they have on the overall narrative structure.

Aristotle distinguishes two aspects of a character based on their ability to influence the story. One is an "agent", and the other one is "character". Agents are individuals within the comic books that perform action essential to the narrative structure. They are the dynamic entities through which plot advances. Unlike agents, characters are, from the Aristotle's point of view nuanced with traits that are optional and can be added to enrich the narrative, but they are not required to progress the narrative itself. The nature of agents is highlighted by their actions so when an agent performs an action the very action will give them at least one characteristic trait. Aristotle also attributed one additional trait that is very important to the agents because, audience and in our case, readers link these traits to the type of action the agent made.[52] The agents in both comics are very similar to each other. One similarity being the superpowers even the source of the powers is basically the same meaning they both are genetic mutations each with different naming. You could consider selflessness as another trait of the agents because of their goal of protecting other people but the goals of these agents can be slightly different. In X-Men the initial ideology to protect humans from mutant threat was founded by Professor Charles Xavier who believed in protecting and coexisting with humans despite the negative reception and rejection the mutants got from them. This social issue is reflected on the motivations of individuals. Since there is nothing that hold X-Men responsible they could pretty much ignore human's problems and only protect their peers from dangerous threats. It is thanks to Charles Xavier that the group exists in the first place and thanks to his altruistic traits that X-Men protect humans as well. It is this trait that pushes the narrative of the X-Men when it comes to the fights with Magneto or other

---

[52] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 108-109*

enemies, but another case can be made for My Hero Academia. In their universe the quirks became quickly accepted into the society unlike in the X-Men, making it possible to have heroes as official protectors integrated into the government and having granted similar to the police. One of the reasons for this integration was the initial and violent chaos as a consequence of people gaining superpowers. In response to the initial chaos the appearance of quirks made the government established new rules to regulate the usage of quirks and where only the licensed individuals could use them. The government then established official profession that of a "Hero" that had the option of using superpowers for the good of the society. And with that Heroes started to appear in the society not as individuals with powers but as a certified trained professional, whose roles were defined by laws and societal expectations. This cultural shift of course changed the motivations of being a hero. Unlike X-Men, "Heroes" were not ostracized from the society, quite the opposite, they were very popular and very rich most of the time. Because of that, agents in My Hero Academia can have possibly different traits and motivations as to why they would like to be a hero, whether it is fame, money, or status. For example, a side character named Katsuki Bakugo, friend of Midoriya wants to become a hero not only to save people, but because he wants to fight "Villains" and become one of the strongest heroes like All Might.

In cinematic storytelling, space isn't a passive parameter but an active one and one that helps communicating the narrative. Movies utilize these aspects to construct a scene in a specific way, so the audience feels what the author wants them to feel. In our case the comic book authors can also use spatial elements because comic books contain static panels that can convey this information same as movie with the exception of the movable parts of the movies. This technique also includes characters and the way they are presented in the panels change the way we look at them. We have four of these parameters and one of them is Scale and Proximity. Similarly to movies, the scale in comic books refers to the size of characters and objects relative to each other and their surroundings. Proximity is shown through the closeness of the camera to the subject. It can turn a small object into the focal point of a panel. For instance, a close-up of a character's hand might reveal a crucial plot item or an emotional detail.

Contour, Texture, and Density next parameter similarly to movies, focuses on the outline and surface texture of objects and how they contribute to the realism and abstraction in the comic books. Any detail that is expressed in the panels can be understood as an important piece of information crucial to the narrative. Of course, similarly to movies, panels are in two-dimensional space so the artists must draw object in a specific way in order to project

the third dimension. Third parameter is called Position. This parameter is basically our eye into the movie. We can see each scene from different point of view and use the position parameter to reinforce that point of view and in turn bring out different feelings on the scene and the characters. The same can do the authors of comic books. They can draw the position of a panels differently and we would develop different feelings about it as well.[53] Another parameter is Degree. Lightning and color in movies also play role on defining the scene the plot finds itself in. Having characters in dimly lit areas can cause unease and tension whereas brightly lit characters are more positive and happier. In the case of American comic books. The authors can use colors and color grading to indicate their intentions but in the case of Japanese Manga Authors and their black and white format they usually use different shades of black and grey colors to express the lightning in their comic books.[54] The last one is Clarity which is related to the focus of the characters. Camera techniques are usually required in order to bring the type of clarity authors want but since the comic books are in a drawn in a static panel the other techniques are more than sufficient for the authors purposes.[55]

The usage of these aspects is nicely shown in the X-Men Issue 12 page 13 where we can see a panel with "Juggernaut" coming close to the university. In order to make the character as scary as possible the author choose to make him bigger than the usual characters, so the size is huge. He also made sure to draw less details on him to make him feel more inhumane and monstrous thus the details and contour is limited. The author also chooses a lower position to exaggerate the characters height. When it comes to colors the "Juggernaut" is also fully red with dark shading in the middle. This way the characters looks and feels like inhuman one-way tank that is going in one direction, stopping at nothing until he reaches his goal. My Hero Academia does it in a very similar way despite the lack of different coloring. In chapter 88 page 1 we can see all might standing menacingly. In this panel the character is very detailed, and our position is in almost same height. The shading is very prominent in that panel expressing the sheer danger and determination without even needing to make the position lower.

---

[53] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 97*
[54] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 97-98*
[55] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film, 98*

6 VISUAL STORYTELLING (DISCOURSE)

6.1.1 Colors

We begin highlighting with the most striking distinction between the two series and that is the colorization of both comic books. On one hand We have X-Men. A comic book series that debuted in 1963 and is now known as Uncanny X-Men. From its initial release the comic book featured color illustrations. This choice was directly influenced by the technological advancements in America at the time, particularly in the printing industry. As discussed in the chapter on historical context, these advancements enabled printing presses to produce color comic books immediately, explaining the vibrant presentation of X-Men from the get-go.[56]

On the other hand, we have My Hero Academia. As we can see the pages are in black and white. This stylistic choice is primarily attributed to production costs or stylistic choice. From the historical point of view, producing colored manga in Japan was deemed expensive and inefficient. In addition, culture played a role as well. Traditionally manga was not intended for collection, people would purchase manga, read it, and then sell it. Manga would be able to have some pages colored only if it became exceptionally popular.[57]

6.1.2 Decompression and Masking

Distinctive feature commonly found in manga is technique called "Decompression" that is complemented by another technique known as "Masking." This approach is attributed to the influential work of Osamu Tezuka, who pioneered and popularized these aspects in manga storytelling. Another Author states that with the import of Japanese manga to American market in 1990s and 2000s, the way American comic book authors changed the style of storytelling as well. American comic books, started to stretch the narration by adding more panels that contained no text at all which was the opposite of what they had been doing until now. [58]

The cinematic aspect of manga involves the strategic use of panels, resembling static movie storyboards that contain no dialogue or text, allowing visuals alone to convey the story. In these panels, a character or object may be depicted in motion, creating silent movie

---

[56] Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men*, 24, 12.
[57] Robert Petersen, *Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels: A History of Graphic Narratives*, 139.
[58] Neil Cohn, R.O.P. Taylor, and Kaitlin Pederson, "A Picture Is Worth More Words Over Time: Multimodality and Narrative Structure Across Eight Decades of American Superhero Comics," *Multimodal Communication* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 24, https://doi.org/10.1515/mc-2017-0003.

effect that tries to draw the reader into more visually immersive experience. Early beginnings of "The Uncanny X-Men" has not shown to use these specific panels but in later parts of the comic book they are scarcely used in the narrative like for example issue 186 page 2 with the panels setting up atmosphere for the beginning of the story. My Hero Academia uses these panels fairly often as is shown in chapter 249 page 4 and page 10 or in consequent chapter 251 page 4. As you can see these panels can be used for dramatic pauses to set atmosphere or during fights to show specific details and emotions as well.[59]

Tezuka's second major contribution is the use of masking, involves unique contrast in the illustration style of characters versus their backgrounds. Characters are often drawn in a simplified, straightforward manner, which allows them to stand out against the intricately detailed backgrounds. This technique tries to enrich the overall visual narrative by adding depth and texture or comical relief to the scene.[60] This type of masking can be seen perfectly well in the second page of the first chapter in My Hero Academia in the first chapter where we can see the characters standing out against the drawn buildings. On the opposite X-Men take a more opposite approach where the characters are always drawn in more detailed way but the background around it is simplified to focus more on the characters especially during fight like in issue 11 page 11 or when there is a lot of characters in the panel for example in issue 11 page 10.

6.1.3   Layering

Another prevalent technique in manga creation is known "layering." While this method is commonly associated with animation in Japan, you can also find its application in manga as well. This technique tries to engage readers in specific moments or scenes. Through layering, manga panels can incorporate various elements, adding depth and complexity to the narrative. The primary goal of layering is to enrich the reader's experience. Allowing for more immersive and dynamic interaction with the story. Although the way how layering is applied warries from one comic book to another, the same principle is applied across the medium.

Layering is particularly effective in conveying characters emotions and internal states without being bound by linear time constrains of the story. This enables authors to explore the complexities of their characters experiences and emotions and express them visually.

---

[59] Cohn, Taylor, and Pederson, "A Picture Is Worth More Words Over Time: Multimodality and Narrative Structure Across Eight Decades of American Superhero Comics," 24.
[60] Petersen, "Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels: A History of Graphic Narratives," June 1, 2011, 175–76.

The author illustrates this technique on an example where manga character is reminiscing. In that instance the characters he is thinking about is drawn in the manga as an additional layer on top of existing panels, this way the author of the manga creates additional visual and emotional depth for readers to experience. In our case "The Uncanny X-Men" don't really make use of this technique but in the case of "My Hero Academia" there are some panels that make use of the layering for example in the chapter 251, page 2 where the car can be seen going across the boundary of the panel making the illusion that the car is three-dimensional. In the same chapter we can also see the sound effects being out of the bounds the panels making it seem like they are on top of them.[61]
(The Characteristics of Japanese Manga,4)

6.1.4   White panels

Usually, white space is an area that divides panels from each other, but it can be also incorporated into the narrative itself. A less common technique that manga creators have at their disposal, which is a little bit related to the previously discussed method of layering and flexible paneling, involves the strategic use of white space known as "mahaku" in the Japanese language. Historically, a group of authors began to experiment with white panels, initially expanding their size and as I mentioned above, integrating them into the narrative itself. This artistic choice is also discussed by the author of the article using the same example I used earlier. In this instance, a manga artist utilizes an empty white panel to separate panels that depict memories, effectively using this space to both divide and connect recollection scenes. This technique can be seen as an extension of layering, where the white space can serve as an additional layer that exists behind the main narrative panels. By doing so, the manga artist adds a visual depth to the storytelling, allowing the white space itself to convey meaning and emotion. In the Japanese history this approach was highly experimental and was created during an era where mood and emotion was more important than the story itself.[62] In "The Uncanny X-Men" there were not any cases of panels having this type of aspect sometimes this usage of white panels can be seen in "My Hero Academia" in chapter 2, page 13 with the main protagonist being behind the panels with no border.

---

[61] Natsume Fusanosuke, "The Characteristics of Japanese Manga," trans. Jon Holt and Teppei Fukuda, 2020, 167-168.
[62] Natsume Fusanosuke, "The Characteristics of Japanese Manga,"168-175.

6.1.5 Objective and Subjective panels

Author suggests that the one of the key differences between American comic books and manga is their presentation of the scenes. To understand this difference, its essential to first explain the categorization of panels, which authors organizes based on the information and the active entities conveyed to the reader. Active entities are characters or object that repeatedly appear in a panel and impact the storyline in some way, whereas non action entities serve as a background. The author's categorization includes Macro panels, showcasing multiple active entities then there are Mono panels, displaying a single active entity, micro which refers to panels focusing on fewer than one active entity, indicating a close-up view, and amorphic panels, which depict no active entities.[63]

Now according to the author's research, American comic books, are drawn using macro paneling. This approach lays out most characters and their environment in a panel, relying on the reader's ability to discern the important details to the story. This is the objective method of paneling because it presents all information in straightforward manner. On the other hand, manga creators often emphasize specific story-critical elements by using micro and mono panels. This method is considered to be subjective because it highlights what is deemed most important to the narrative, therefore directing the reader's focus to essential information of the story.[64] We can see this in "The Uncanny X-Men" issue 11 page 10, there are panels with lot of active entities in one place implying the usage of macro paneling in one page. On the other hand, in "My Hero Academia" we can see the panels are more focused on individuals like in chapter 2 page 17 where the author cut panels into smaller pieces and had each of them focus on one character.

---

[63] Neil Cohn, Amaro Taylor-Weiner, a Suzanne Grossman, „Framing Attention in Japanese and American Comics: Cross-Cultural Differences in Attentional Structure", *Frontiers in Psychology* 3 (2012): 3, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00349.
[64] Cohn, Taylor-Weiner, a Grossman, „Framing Attention in Japanese and American Comics: Cross-Cultural Differences in Attentional Structure, "4.

7 CONCLUSION

When examining narrative structures of comic books, it becomes apparent that although similarities exist, each series has its own focus. X-Men primarily explores interpersonal relationships and the societal impact of mutants in a society. The characters are portrayed with a human touch, and their powers are relatively grounded, especially when compared to My Hero Academia. Furthermore, the X-Men universe is expansive, featuring numerous cameos from other series, which creates a sense of interconnected world. In contrast, My Hero Academia delves into the essence of heroism, the responsibilities it entails, and the dynamics of a world where heroes and villains are commonplace. This series concentrates on a specific part of the city and a select group of heroes, resulting in a more structured and cohesive narrative. It features a central protagonist and his classmates, following their challenges and developments closely.

Regarding the visual storytelling, there is a noticeable contrast in the artistic approaches of the two series. X-Men maintains a more traditional and rigid panel layout which adds to its classic comic book feel. On the other hand, My Hero Academia exhibits innovative panel designs that enhance the dynamic nature of its storytelling. This includes characters that break out of panels, varied panel shapes, and a general experimentation with the spatial arrangement of the art. These differences show the unique qualities of each series while highlighting their own thematic and artistic distinctions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Duncan, Randy, a Matthew J. Smith. *The power of comics: history, form, and culture*. New York: Continuum, 2009.

Gabilliet, Jean-Paul, Bart Beaty, a Nick Nguyen. *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010.

Ito, Kinko. „A History of Manga in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society". *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38, č. 3 (February 2005): 456–75. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.2005.00123.x.

Rosenbaum, Roman, ed. *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*. First issued in paperback. Routledge Contemporary Japan Series 44. London New York: Routledge, 2014.

Articles

Cohn, Neil, Ryan Taylor, and Kaitlin Pederson. "A Picture Is Worth More Words Over Time: Multimodality and Narrative Structure Across Eight Decades of American Superhero Comics." *Multimodal Communication* 6, no. 1 (January 24, 2017). https://doi.org/10.1515/mc-2017-0003.

Cohn, Neil, Amaro Taylor-Weiner, and Suzanne Grossman. "Framing Attention in Japanese and American Comics: Cross-Cultural Differences in Attentional Structure." *Frontiers in Psychology* 3 (2012). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00349.

Dittmer, Jason. "Comic Book Visualities: A Methodological Manifesto on Geography, Montage and Narration." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35, no. 2 (April 2010): 222–36. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2009.00376.x.

Holt, Jon, and Teppei Fukuda. "The Characteristics of Japanese Manga," 2020.

Johnson-Woods, Toni, ed. *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

Toku, Masami. "What Is Manga?: The Influence of Pop Culture in Adolescent Art." *Art Education* 54, no. 2 (March 2001): 11. https://doi.org/10.2307/3193941.

Vleghert, Janessa May. "Comparing Comics and Manga to Komiks: Cross-Cultural (Dis)Similarities In," n.d.