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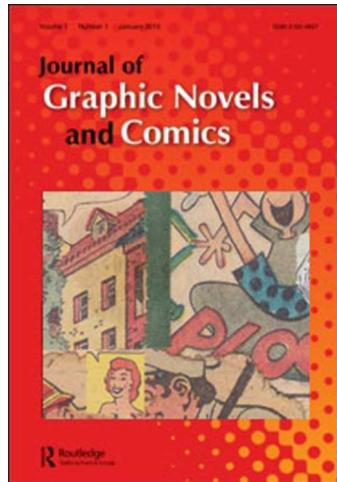
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Close-ups: an emotive language in manga

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Close-ups: an emotive language in manga

Manga is typically recognised in the Western world by the distinct visual styles of its characters and the vast array of symbolic signs that indicate various emotions and physical reactions. However, research into the use of visual techniques in the development of emotional life in manga is far from sufficient. This paper aims to explore the adoption of the cinematic technique – close-ups in manga – as a narrative tool to communicate a character’s emotions and build tension between panels. It draws examples from two manga and conversations with 16 young British readers to examine the impact of close shots on reader engagement.

Keywords: emotion; manga; close-up; reader; cinema

Introduction

A Japanese drama called *Nakuna Hara-chan* (Japanese: 泣くな、はらちゃん; Translation: Don’t cry, Hara) tells a story about the protagonist Echizen’s encounter with the manga characters that she created on her notebook. When the fictional character, Hara-chan, comes out of the notebook into Echizen’s own world, comedic effects centre around his innocence about his creator’s world, and the excessive emotions that overflow from him. A particularly representative set of scenes highlight the crying Hara-chan with two unrealistically large streams of tears running down his face. While ridiculous in real life, this image illustrates a common practice in the manga world – an emphasis on the development of emotions through visual cues.

Brenner (2007) argues that a character’s emotional life is key to manga, and that its qualities are made manifest both in a character’s appearance and the abundant use of close shots that allow readers to take time to feel a character’s emotions. The emphasis on emotions as part of the development of characterisation can be traced back to the strong lyric tradition in Japanese art, literature, and music (Clarke 2004). In contrast to

1
2
3 the epic tradition of Western narrative that tends towards a ‘goal-oriented culture’,
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5 McCloud (1994, 81) argues that manga emphasise ‘being there over getting there’. In
6
7 their study on reasons behind the wide acceptance of manga within Indonesian reading
8
9 communities, Ahmad and others (2012) identified the expressive renderings of emotions
10
11 as a decisive factor in attracting readers. Despite the fact that the depiction of emotions
12
13 seems to have a crucial influence on readers’ engagement with manga, few studies have
14
15 tried to investigate the employment of this narrative technique in manga in detail.
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19
20 Among the studies that have made an attempt to explore the role of emotions in
21
22 manga, Li (2016) and Antononoka (2016) both looked at the emotional elements in the
23
24 development of a character that struggles to overcome a past tragedy. While Li argues
25
26 that emotions allude to an embryonic idea that is in the process of becoming logic,
27
28 Antononoka demonstrated ways the layout and composition of images could deliver and
29
30 reinforce emotional messages. In his later work, Li (2017) also emphasised the effects
31
32 of backgrounds in contextualizing a character’s emotions in manga. Other studies that
33
34 focus on the symbolic expressions of emotions are Cohn and Ehly’s (2016) work that
35
36 looks into a wide array of emotional symbols applied to the appearance of manga
37
38 characters, and Abbott and Forceveille’s (2011) study that investigates the super-
39
40 deformed figures that express emotional outbursts through the ‘loss of hands’. However,
41
42 little research has looked into the effects of close-up techniques in manga on readers’
43
44 emotional engagement with the story.
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49
50 As part of a larger study that explored young British readers’ engagement with
51
52 manga in literary, aesthetic, social and cultural dimensions (Tsai 2016), this paper sets
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54 out to bridge the gap resulting from insufficient attention being paid to the narrative
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56 techniques that have significant impacts on the emotional life of manga and reader
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58 engagement with the story. In particular, the paper investigates the deployment of close-
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3 ups in two manga and how readers respond to this technique. The paper will begin with
4
5 a discussion of the role literary emotions play in a reading experience, drawing on
6
7 examples from comics including manga. Thereafter, the paper will concentrate on the
8
9 use of close-up techniques in manga to develop emotions and mood and the cinematic
10
11 theories behind this technique. Following this, an analysis of two selected manga and
12
13 readers' responses will explore the detail of this prevalent phenomenon and its engaging
14
15 effects in a reading process. Finally, the paper will conclude that close-ups are an
16
17 emotive language that manga artists use to communicate with readers.
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23 **Literary emotions and visual communication**

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25 Literature is a subtle and yet powerful medium for communicating human thoughts and
26
27 emotions. While cultural variations exist in the way emotions are expressed, shared core
28
29 emotions enable us to identify, interpret and further empathise with other people's
30
31 feelings both through everyday interactions and artefacts produced by people. For
32
33 example, readers are likely to experience empathy through an imaginative bond with
34
35 characters, particularly when facing contagious emotions, such as happiness or sadness.
36
37 This imaginative bond makes the positioning of emotion a literary tool that blurs the
38
39 boundary between the fictional world and reality, further encouraging the reader to
40
41 consider different ways of viewing their own world (Li 2016). In his study of the
42
43 expressions of emotion and affect in manga, Li (2016) argues that the exploration of
44
45 character psychology not only encourages character identification, but also allows the
46
47 character (and the reader) to make sense of the represented reality by responding to it
48
49 through the lenses of emotions. In this way, a character's emotional state allows the
50
51 reader to see an idea that is in the process of becoming logic.
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3 Emotion, rather than being perceived as something opposite to logic and reason, or
4 even something separate from it, is utilized as a form of thought derived from a
5 logic that has yet to be clearly defined, connecting to the idea of affect as an
6 alternative type of intelligence (429).
7
8
9

10
11 It is believed that visual stimuli could have an immediate and strong visceral
12 effect in communicating emotions (Nikolajeva 2014). When we see a person's facial
13 expressions or bodily postures, our brains recognise them as external tokens of
14 emotions, and respond to them immediately. Similarly, Keen (2011) suggests that
15 illustrations of emotions in graphic narratives can capitalise on the visual codes of
16 emotions and evoke feelings in readers even before they read accompanying texts.
17
18 Although the process of understanding emotions in reality depends on both visual and
19 linguistic communication in a specific context, images can greatly enhance the
20 efficiency and effectiveness in the communication of emotions and elicitation of
21 empathy. For example, the internal world of a manga character's psychology is often
22 made manifest not only through their facial expression, but also the design of panel
23 flow, layout, and impressionistic backgrounds (Antononoka 2016; Li 2016).
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38 Taking advantage of a shared understanding of visual codes with the audience,
39 artists communicate emotions through a careful choice of lines, shade, colours, shapes,
40 space, angles, distance, frames, and symbols. Keen (2011) uses the phrase, 'strategic
41 narrative empathy', to describe visual coding for human emotions in comics and graphic
42 narratives. She argues that characters' faces and postures can elicit readers' feelings
43 because they are presented in ways that are deliberately designed by the artist to try to
44 manipulate the reader's emotional responses. Eisner (2008) describes facial expression
45 as a window to a character's mind and an adverb to their posture or gesture. The role of
46 facial expression is to register emotion and convey a message about motivation and
47 bodily movement. This narrative tool has been utilised in manga where characters' inner
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3 conflicts are often featured. For example, Antononoka (2016) contends that visualised
4 interiority makes characters, even villains, ‘anchors for empathy’. It is notable that
5
6 manga, as a sequential art, has had a history of presenting the potent feelings of human
7
8 beings through the adoption of the cinematic technique – close-up. In the next section,
9
10 we will discuss the origin and the phenomenon of the use of this cinematic technique in
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14
15 manga.

16 17 18 **The phenomenon of close-ups in manga**

19
20
21 Inspired by American films, the legendary manga artist, Osamu Tezuka, started to use a
22
23 great number of close-ups and unconventional perspectives to capture characters’
24
25 psychological states and their movements. A quote from his autobiography says, ‘Why
26
27 are American movies so different from Japanese ones? How can I draw comics that
28
29 make people laugh, cry and be moved, like that movie?’ (Gravett 2004, 26). With this
30
31 intensified endeavour to engage his readers with every sentiment, Tezuka lavished
32
33 details on characters’ movements and psychological development. Unlike his American
34
35 counterparts, who were given limited space in daily newspapers (four to five frames)
36
37 and comic books (up to twenty pages monthly), Tezuka was free to decompress his
38
39 stories using many panels and pages to capture characters’ movements and facial
40
41 expressions faithfully. As a result, his stories would easily end up containing hundreds
42
43 to thousands of pages (Schodt 1996). Tezuka’s cinematic approach to manga brought a
44
45 revolutionary change to the creation of manga. Through Tezuka, these Western-learnt
46
47 cinematic skills were indigenised and became a quintessential feature of manga.
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52
53 By presenting a character’s facial expressions or imminent actions at a particular
54
55 moment through close shots, manga artists add visual impact to the content within the
56
57 frame, thereby intensifying the portrayed feelings, mood or tension. Kress and Van
58
59 Leeuwen (1996) contend that close shots imply a close personal distance between the
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2
3 one gazing and the one being gazed at because non-intimates cannot come this close to
4
5 each other in reality. They argue that a character that is presented at a short distance
6
7 from the viewer could effectively draw the viewer to identify with them. This emotional
8
9 process is complicated by the combination of narrative and cinematic editing in manga.
10
11 The reader may choose to form an alliance with the character that they share the most
12
13 personal values with. However, images that are presented through a subjective
14
15 perspective (through a character's point of view) could effectively draw the reader to
16
17 share another character's experience of the world presented, resulting in vicarious
18
19 experiences. At the same time, a third character that is presented through close-ups (the
20
21 object under the reader's gaze) invites empathy from the reader by disclosing his/her
22
23 intimate feelings. In this situation, the reader is invited to respond to the viewed
24
25 character emotionally despite the fact that they may not agree with the character's moral
26
27 standards. This phenomenon explains Antononoka's (2016) argument, as mentioned
28
29 earlier, that the visual emphasis of a character's inner state makes them an anchor for
30
31 empathy, even if they are villains.
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38 The depiction of inner thoughts and emotion is key to the development of a story
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40 that emphasises the process with which a character resolves their inner or external
41
42 conflicts. This is achieved in *shōjo* manga (girl's manga) through a particular emphasis
43
44 on large, glistening eyes that disclose the 'unspoken affairs of hearts' (Gravett 2004,
45
46 77). Osamu Tezuka, the 'God of Manga' (Ito 2008), was believed to be the pioneer of
47
48 this technique. With influence from the visual styles of Disney characters, Tezuka
49
50 increased the size of characters' eyes to experiment with the representation of inner
51
52 thoughts, feelings and reminiscence in *shōjo* manga (Prough, 2011). Although it seems
53
54 that a patriarchal ideology has influenced the depiction of girls in *shōjo* manga with
55
56 large eyes, big pupils, and long eyelashes that make them appear cute, attractive and
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1
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3 innocent, this style has been passed down and explored further by female manga artists
4 after the Second World War. In her interviews with several female artists, Prough (ibid.)
5
6 found that the larger the eyes, the wider the range of emotional states artists could draw.
7
8
9
10 As a result, galaxy eyes have become a trademark of *shōjo* manga that expresses the
11
12 most delicate emotions and inner thoughts of characters.
13

14
15 The pervasive use of close-ups in manga to depict psychological states and
16
17 moods is observed in McCloud's (1994) study on relations between panels. Comparing
18
19 manga and Western comics, McCloud noticed that manga artists used a higher
20
21 proportion of panels to depict the transition of time (*moment-to-moment transition*) and
22
23 aspects of a place, idea or mood (*aspect-to-aspect transition*) than transitions of actions,
24
25 subjects, and scenes. In particular, McCloud observed that *aspect-to-aspect transition* is
26
27 a type of panel transition that is rarely seen in the West. This observation underlines the
28
29 reliance on close shots in manga to depict the nuances of emotions, mood, and actions.
30
31
32 Similarly, Li (2016) observed that manga artists place emphasis on *nagare* – the
33
34 frequent display of a single incident across multiple panels to depict a character's
35
36 emotion and affective responses. In this way, these expressions are not only measured
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38 temporally, but also spatially.
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42
43 Taking a different approach to examining how information is highlighted in
44
45 panels, Cohn (2011) inspected variations of entities (characters or objects) included in
46
47 300 panels in each of twelve American and twelve Japanese comic books. He
48
49 categorised the panels as *macro* (containing more than one entity), *mono* (showing a
50
51 single entity), and *micro* (including less than a single entity). One of his key findings
52
53 was that *macro* panels were used twice as frequently as *mono* and *micro* panels in the
54
55 American comics, while manga use far more *mono* and *micro* panels than *macro* panels.
56
57 That is, American comics present full scenes more often than partial scenes that feature
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3 one single entity or part of it. By contrast, manga focuses on detailing a single entity or
4 aspects of the entity. With this finding, Cohn affirmed McCloud's (1994) view that
5
6 *aspect-to-aspect transition* is used more often in manga than Western comics to feature
7
8 a sense of place or mood. This emphasis results in a slower narrative in manga, where
9
10 information is spread out over several panels to build characters, establish a setting,
11
12 highlight a moment, or enhance the suspense (Cools 2011; Brenner 2007). In this way,
13
14 readers are placed at a close distance to the depicted object or character, and invited to
15
16 'experience' the moment of the story as if they were involved in the illustrated event or
17
18 place.
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23
24 Juxtaposed close shots tend to communicate extremely fragmented information
25
26 that can only be made complete with meanings assigned to the abstract, imaginative
27
28 space between panels. The interplay between the concrete and the abstract space that are
29
30 separated by frames is fundamental to a reader's emotional and cognitive engagement
31
32 with manga. In the next section, we will continue to explore the functions of close-ups
33
34 in manga by drawing upon cinematic theories and considering the dynamics of *off-*
35
36 *screen space*, which can enhance the effects of close-ups greatly.
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41 **Cinematic functions of close-ups**

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43
44 Balázs (2010; 2004) treats close-up as a lyric language that communicates the
45
46 naturalism of love or hate, and conveys emotions more efficiently than words due to the
47
48 simultaneity of facial expressions to the expressed emotion. With a focus on the
49
50 depictions of facial expressions, Balázs (2004) suggests that there are at least two
51
52 functions of close-ups. One is to reveal what is happening under the surface of
53
54 appearance, and the other is to express the poetic sensibility of the director who
55
56 manipulates close-ups together with other cinematic techniques to realise the first
57
58 function of close-ups. According to Balázs, close-ups take the heart, not the eyes, to
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1
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3 appreciate them. They put spectators in a new dimension that is beyond the physical – it
4
5 is no longer a figure of flesh and bone that we see, but an expression of emotions,
6
7 moods, intentions and thoughts. Balázs (2010, 3) says, “In close-ups every wrinkle
8
9 becomes a crucial element of character and every twitch of a muscle testifies to a pathos
10
11 that signals great inner events”. Similarly, Lefebvre-Linetzky (2016, 218) uses
12
13 “emotional nakedness” to describe the power of close-ups in penetrating the physical
14
15 surface and enabling the spectator to apprehend the pain and joy of a character and to
16
17 see “a moment of truth”. According to Lefebvre-Linetzky, close-ups were widely used
18
19 during the silent era of films because faces were the dialogues. This technique has also
20
21 become a useful narrative tool in manga, where words are often used succinctly with
22
23 details lavished in images.
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28
29 In fact, close-ups are not only beyond physical perception, they also transcend
30
31 physical distance. In reality, we do not normally have the opportunity to take time to
32
33 observe a person’s face in such close, detailed, and intense ways as we can with close-
34
35 ups when watching a film (Balázs 2010). Close-ups not only break personal spaces, but
36
37 also optical laws where objects at a far distance are perceived to move slower than those
38
39 in a close distance. According to Balázs (*ibid.*), close-ups guide spectators to examine
40
41 every presented detail, and the large quantity of details take a longer time to absorb. As
42
43 a result, close-ups appear to be slower in time than medium shots, and medium shots are
44
45 slower than long shots. This is based on a psychological fact rather than an optical one.
46
47 The psychological fact is significant because the slowness allows the development of a
48
49 story mood and a character’s emotions, thereby providing time for readers to immerse
50
51 themselves in the fictional world.
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56 The penetration of close-ups into a character’s inner state often induces a sense
57
58 of intimacy. Persson (1998) contends that such intimacy comes in two forms. The first
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3 is psychological, due to the experience of reading someone's mind, and the second is
4
5 optical, due to the close distance presented by the camera. The latter allows the director
6
7 to manipulate the discourse space, thereby giving emotional proximity – the spectator
8
9 feels close to characters or perceives characters to be close to each other, while the real
10
11 distance is usually bigger when a long shot reveals so (Pérez Ríu 2015). In contrast, the
12
13 former allows the spectator to invade a character's inner space without being noticed
14
15 and without the fear of being condemned, which according to Pérez Ríu (*ibid.*) is
16
17 *voyeuristic intimacy*. This safe space allows readers to rejoice or mourn with the
18
19 character without the return of a similar disclosure of one's own inner world, and to
20
21 enjoy the threat from a villainous character's vicious stare without the worry of personal
22
23 safety.
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28 As an “art of emphasis” (Balázs 2010, p39), close-ups can be used to achieve
29
30 efficiency purposes by guiding the audience's gaze to the most significant details and
31
32 moments or by showing only the start and finish of an action, while maintaining a sense
33
34 of continuity. This technique of emphasis allows the director to control the tempo of the
35
36 story by editing a chain of shots and counter shots that reverberate or clash with one
37
38 another to dramatize the continuity of the story flow (Lefebvre-Linetzky 2016, p28).
39
40 The sense of continuity between shots as well as between the cropped details and the
41
42 contexts to which they belong relies on the spectator to fill in the invisible, omitted
43
44 details drawing upon their own life experiences. In sequential art, such as manga, this is
45
46 crucial to apprehending meanings that are conveyed through juxtaposed images.
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50 According to McCloud (1994), the ability of the reader to fill in the gap of the invisible
51
52 using their imagination is called ‘closure’. This ability is analogous to a cinematic
53
54 experience where spectators play an active role in realising meanings that dwell in the
55
56 off-screen space.
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3 In cinematic discussions, off-screen space refers to the space outside the borders
4 of a screen that allows only a part of reality to be seen. As a result, off-screen space is
5 sometimes described as 'blind space' (Curry 2010), 'bracketed' (Carroll 1996) or
6 'masked' (Bazin 1967). The on-screen and off-screen space, although appearing to be
7 two separate domains, are closely related and constantly interact with each other.
8
9 According to Burch (1973), there are three ways to define off-screen space: by physical
10 borders of the screen frame, by a character's gaze towards someone/something that is
11 not on the screen, and by leaving out parts of a character's body from the screen. As off-
12 screen space is purely imaginary, the filmmaker can use it to sustain tension. For
13 example, positioning a serial killer outside the screen space, but showing the killer's
14 hand holding a knife on the screen can leave the audience to speculate to whom this arm
15 belongs. The filmmaker may also choose to leave out the killer completely and let the
16 victim on the screen *gaze* towards the edge of the screen or at the spectator. The
17 victim's facial expressions and gaze will bring the audience's attention to the
18 unperceivable killer in the off-screen space, which according to Davis (2014), requires
19 the audience to make a qualitative leap to perceive a 'possible world'. In this way, the
20 interplay between on-screen and off-screen space engages the audience with their
21 imagination. When a close-up technique is employed, the audience is not only guided to
22 see beyond the surface of appearance, but also beyond the visible range on the screen.
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46 Similarly, the panel structure in manga functions like film screens. Readers have
47 the ability to construct a narrative based on a sequence of images that are 'cropped' out
48 of the represented reality. When seeing a character holding up an axe in one panel, and a
49 screaming sound in the other, the reader is prompted to imagine what happens between
50 the two juxtaposed panels, that is, the *off-panel space*. McCloud (1994) argues that the
51 ability of 'closure' makes the reader an accomplice who aids the crime in their own way
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3 during the process of meaning-making. The panel structure of comics makes the
4
5 narrative inherently fragmented and readers are invited to take an active role in bridging
6
7 the meanings. Further, the lavish use of close-ups and extreme close-ups in manga can
8
9 intensify the sense of fragmentation, as this technique allows only individualised
10
11 aspects to be presented. While extreme close-ups are not normally adopted in cinematic
12
13 traditions, except for avant-garde, this technique pervades manga and serves the purpose
14
15 of focussing the reader's attention on one aspect at a time, inviting the reader to reflect
16
17 on what remains abstract outside the panel. In this way, the imaginary domain outside a
18
19 panel can greatly intensify the visible emotion or mood within the frame, and leave
20
21 readers in suspense due to their insufficient knowledge of the overall situation at a
22
23 particular moment of the story.
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28
29 The above literature has demonstrated the power of close-ups in creating
30
31 emotional proximity, a sense of intimacy or threat, and a rhythm of the story in films.
32
33 Similarly, when this cinematic technique is applied to manga, it enhances the reading
34
35 experience of a sequence of images that although remain still on the paper are brought
36
37 to life in the reader's imagination. Close-ups, as a narrative tool, invite readers into a
38
39 character's emotional life and inner thoughts, which is crucial to an engaging reading
40
41 experience of manga. The following sections will look closely at the use of this
42
43 technique in two manga and the emotional responses it elicited from a selected group of
44
45 readers.
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50 51 **Methodology**

52
53 This work is based on a study of young British readers' engagement with manga (Tsai,
54
55 2016). As the study set out to explore reasons that attract young British readers to
56
57 manga and their engagement with the text in their lives, a focus group was considered
58
59 the most suitable method for data collection. Focus groups allow the capture of insights
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2
3 gained from a dynamic group discussion where participants inspire and encourage each
4
5 other to share their views on a chosen topic and probe each other for further details
6
7 (Liamputtong 2011). Sixteen keen manga readers from two schools in London were
8
9 invited to participate in the study. The 16 participants included 8 boys and 8 girls from
10
11 Years 7 to 10. This age group was considered the most avid readers of manga according
12
13 to the librarians in both schools. The participants were put into two male groups and
14
15 two female groups. Each group participated in three group discussions, which was
16
17 followed by a one-on-one interview with each participant. A thematic analysis was
18
19 carried out on the data to identify key themes thereafter.
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24 The chosen corpuses included one *shōnen* manga (*Naruto* volume 6) and one
25
26 *shōjo* manga (*Vampire Knight* volume 4), which were the two main demographic
27
28 categories aiming at teenage readers. The choice of titles was based on their popularity
29
30 in English speaking countries, and the choice of volumes was based on how well they
31
32 represented the range of artistic and literary techniques adopted in *shōnen* and *shōjo*
33
34 manga. Each of the participants was given the two manga to read before joining the
35
36 group discussions. During the focus groups, the participants were invited to reflect on
37
38 their reading experience, and to interpret the use of certain visual techniques, such as
39
40 cinematic editing. In addition to face-to-face meetings, the participants were also asked
41
42 to keep reading journals as part of their participation in this study.
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47 The following discussion will be based on the responses from selected
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49 participants who are named using pseudonyms. The excerpts have been labelled with
50
51 their sources including ‘individual interview’, AG (School A, girl group), AB (School
52
53 A, boy group), BG (School B, girl group), BB (School B, boy group). The numbers that
54
55 follow after the group names indicate each of the three group discussions that students
56
57 participated in.
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The two manga and close-ups

Naruto is a long-run serial manga written by Masashi Kishimoto (2011). It has been serialised in the manga magazine, *Shonen Jump*, for 15 years, producing 700 episodes in 72 volumes. Volume 6 (hereafter *N6*) features the story of a ninja *Chûnin* (middle) Selection Exam¹ where the main characters are Naruto, Sasuke, and Sakura. As they carry out the task required to pass the exam, the villain Orochimaru defeats Naruto and Sasuke, leaving Sakura to fight other enemies alone.

Vampire Knight is written by Matsuri Hino (2010), and has been serialised in the manga magazine, *Shojo Beat*, for 9 years, with a total of 93 episodes in 19 volumes. Volume 4 (hereafter *VK4*) features the conflicts between Zero, an ex-human vampire, and Shizuka, a pureblood vampire that took Zero's human life and killed his parents. As Zero's blood lust drives him towards madness, Yuki, the heroine, agrees to offer Shizuka her own blood in exchange for a solution to save Zero.

The pervasive employment of close-ups is noticeable in both manga. Among the 883 panels in *N6*, 373 panels are close shots that present the upper body of a character from chest and above (medium close-up), the face (close-up), or a partial face with eyes (extreme close-up) as the central focus. Similarly, among the 805 panels in *VK4* (excluding bonus stories), 381 panels are close shots that show characters in the abovementioned ways (Figure 1 & Table 1). This calculation has excluded close shots that focus on other parts of the body and those that zoom into partial areas of an environment or object, so as to highlight the emphasis on the depiction of the character's facial expressions.

[Figure 1 near here]

¹ In the ninjia world, a *genin* (low ninjia) needs to take the *Chûnin* Selection Exam to be promoted to a middle-rank ninjia

1
2
3 Figure 1. Percentage of close-ups in the corpuses
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5
6 Table 1. Number of close-ups in the corpuses
7

8 [Table 1 near here]
9

10 11 **The affective reading of manga** 12

13
14 While people from different cultures may express their emotions in different ways, there
15 is a shared emotional repertoire that allows people to recognise and interpret basic
16 emotions, thereby communicating with each other (Evans 2003). The rich depiction of
17 emotions in manga was identified by the participants as one of the key features that
18 attracted them to this oriental text. They were quick to pick up and respond to the
19 emotional cues delivered through close shots. For example, two manga readers
20 suggested that the visual impact of close shots contributed to a vicarious experience
21 when reading manga:
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33
34 When we are really close to them, it feels like we are actually near them.

35 (Zoe, AG group interview 1)
36
37

38 For example, say, I slaughtered my clan and then la la la... and you see sadness in
39 his face, like shocked [...] That was telling you that 'Oh, the story can hit you.'
40 And then you'll be more gripped to the story. I like a lot of moments like that.
41
42

43 (Travis, BB Group interview 3)
44
45

46 Zoe's experience concurs with Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) and Persson's
47 (1998) argument that close shots allow the viewer into an intimate proximity with the
48 character based on our life experience of personal space. Travis' experience showed that
49 words and images enhanced each other, thereby stitching the reader into the emotional
50 moments that the character was going through. Travis' particular interest in the visual
51 depiction of emotion in manga is reflected in the drawing in his reading journal:
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53
54
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57
58

59 [Figure 2 near here]
60

1
2
3 Figure 2. Travis's reading reflection of N6 (drawing)
4

5 Travis chose to present the feelings and personality of a villain character in
6
7 *Naruto* through the depiction of his eye. His annotation reads:
8
9

10 Evil eyes that only seek evil and has [sic] witnessed lots of pain and heartache.
11 Emotions speak volumes.
12
13

14
15 In his individual interview, Travis explained this drawing:
16
17

18 What I'm trying to show is that this person could look good, but he has been evil
19 [...] His eyes are now full of rage, anger, because of the things and life
20 experiences that he has had.
21
22

23 (Travis, Individual interview)
24
25

26 Travis chose to focus on the depiction of this character's face in a close-up scale
27 so as to express the character's internal quality and feelings through eyes that are the
28 windows to the soul. While this technique has often been used by artists to suggest a
29 character's psychological state, it can also be manipulated in a way that conceals such
30 information so as to build a character. For example, Zoe commented on the
31 characterisation of Sasuke in *N6*:
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33
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38
39

40 Sasuke, his hair covers his eyes, so he is like the [type of] guy that hides his
41 emotions.
42
43

44 (Zoe, AG Group interview 1)
45
46

47 The focus on the depiction of character's eyes in manga caught Abel's attention
48 too. In his personal interview, he explained why he was particularly interested in the
49 drawing style of *shōjo* manga:
50
51
52
53

54 They [manga characters] have description in the eyes.
55
56

57 (Abel, Individual interview)
58
59
60

1
2
3 Although Abel was quick to assert that he only read *shōnen* manga, during a
4 group interview with the other boys, the comment above shows that he was able to
5 appreciate the aesthetic aspects and purpose of this distinct technique in *shōjo* manga.
6
7

8
9
10 Another student, Elsa, explained why she could relate to manga better than
11 novels:
12

13
14
15 The thing about manga [is that] you can just see it visually and how it relates to
16 people. It's their feelings and emotions.
17

18
19 (Elsa, Individual interview)
20

21
22 Hogan (2011) claims that readers readily respond to literary emotions because
23 the depiction of emotions provides an eliciting condition, which prompts readers to
24 recall past experiences (memories of similar emotions or situations), to think and judge
25 (whether the character is convincing or worthy), and then to respond with or without
26 empathy. The visualisation of literary emotions seems to facilitate such a rapport
27 between Elsa and characters in manga.
28
29

30
31 Close-ups, particularly extremely close-ups, are effective narrative tools to invite
32 an immediate response to the character's emotions. For example, in one of the
33 confronting scenes in *VK4*, the artist adopts three extreme close shots to express the
34 inner states of the characters (Figure 3).
35

36
37 [Figure 3 near here]
38
39

40
41 Figure 3. *VK4*, p. 40 (Vampire Knight © Matsuri Hino 2004/HAKUSENSHA, Inc.
42 Image used courtesy of Hakusensha, Inc.)
43

44
45 In this confronting scene, Zero was trying to exact revenge for the death of his
46 parents. However, when he tried to pull the trigger, the blood bond² between him and
47
48

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57
58
59
60 ² Shizuka bit Zero after killing his parents, thus leaving a shared blood bond between them.

1
2
3 Shizuka took control of him and paralysed his finger. Olaf and Elsa interpreted this
4
5 page:

6
7
8 He looks kind of nervous-ish [sic] because of the way he is holding the gun, and
9 that really tells you what he is going through at the moment.

10
11
12 (Olaf, BB Group interview 2)

13
14
15 He's scared [...] He doesn't know what's going on. He's like, 'What?! What's
16 going on?' And he recognises that his finger is not moving.

17
18
19 (Elsa, BG Group interview 2)

20
21 Both of the readers took up the emotional cue of close ups in this page and
22 focused their reading on Zero's internal state, which was presented visually as a 'silent
23 soliloquy' (Balázs 2004) in the first two panels. Note that the storyline would not have
24 been altered if the two extreme close-ups were not included in this page. In fact, they
25 are images cropped out from the medium shot shown in the third panel. It is clear that
26 the artist's intention is to accentuate the psychological state that Zero is experiencing at
27 the specific moment. In this way, the first two panels function as the 'preview' of the
28 third panel to guide the reader's gaze to the character's emotional transitions. The
29 meanings of these panels are confirmed by Shizuka's verbal challenge in the dynamic
30 speech bubbles that have broken through the border of the bottom panel – 'Are you
31 surprised that you can't do it?'. Furthermore, the close-up of Shizuka's expressionless
32 face implicates an indifferent attitude in contrast to the shock in Zero's face, thus adding
33 tension into the conflict between the two characters. By singling out individual details,
34 the artist intends to achieve at least three purposes. Firstly, the reader will not lose
35 insights into a character's psychological development when the event unfolds.
36 Secondly, close-ups add visual impact to what is framed, and hence enhance the
37 significance of it. Thirdly, close-ups limit the visible range, which can effectively keep
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3 the reader in suspense temporarily until a further shot reveals the whole situation. In this
4
5 way, they limit the reader's knowledge to a micro level so as to bring what remains
6
7 unseen (off-panel space) to the foreground of the reader's reading experience and add
8
9 tension to the story. This example illustrates the engaging power of close-ups as an art
10
11 of emphasis (Balázs 2010), a language of lyricism (Balázs 2004), and a narrative tool to
12
13 dramatise the continuity (Lefebvre-Linetzky 2016).
14
15

16
17 A fighting scene in *N6* is arranged such that tension can be built through a
18
19 dynamic interaction between presented entities in close shots and the cropped-out
20
21 entities in the imaginary space outside the frames (Figure 4).
22

23
24 [Figure 4 near here]
25

26
27 Figure 4. *N6*, pp. 174-175 (NARUTO © 1999 by Masashi Kishimoto/SHUEISHA Inc.
28
29 Image used courtesy of Shueisha Inc.)
30

31 Wesley interpreted these two pages:
32

33
34 This part was talking about when she does 'Substitute', for example, to cheat
35
36 him... [panel 1], and then he [the artist] shows the way he's turning around [panel
37
38 2]. But then it zooms in onto his face to show how scared he was [panel 3-4]. Then
39
40 it shows Sakura on top of him, like, to [let us] know why he's scared [panel 5] [...]
41
42 And then you know how scared he is, and what he's feeling, everything [panel 6].
43
44 And you know how she feels, and in the end, it shows from the side – how she got
45
46 him [panel 7].
47

(Wesley, AB Group interview 1)

48 On this double spread³, panels 2, 3, 4, and 6 zoom in on Zaku's (the male
49
50 character) facial expressions whilst leaving out Sakura (the female character) – the
51
52 cause of Zaku's emotional state in the 'blind space' (Curry 2010); that is, the off-panel
53
54 space. This technique not only focused Wesley's attention on Zaku's emotion, but also
55
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57

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59
60 ³ Manga is read from right to left, top to bottom.

1
2
3 blocked his access to the wider context thereby creating tension until the long shots in
4
5 panel 5 and 7 provided more information about the interaction between the two
6
7 characters. Li (2016) contends that emotions are a narrative tool that allows both the
8
9 character and the reader to explore the circumstances within which this character is
10
11 situated. In the example above, neither the words nor the close-up images in panels 3, 4
12
13 and 6 directly explain what is happening to Zaku. However, the shock in Zaku's face
14
15 sends out a clear message that he is in a threatening circumstance that can only be
16
17 visible in the reader's own imagination of the off-panel space. The uncertainty of
18
19 Zaku's actual situation (the degree of danger) accumulates and diminishes in the
20
21 alternating shot distances throughout the double spreads, thus creating a beautiful
22
23 rhythm of tension in the story.
24
25
26
27

28
29 The close depiction of the character's facial expression is visually powerful in
30
31 calling Wesley to respond to the implied emotions. Wesley's interpretation of the
32
33 shifting perspective in the same page shows that he was drawn to emphasise and
34
35 identify with Zaku's (the opponent) situation (presented through close shots) even
36
37 though the chosen perspective of panels 2, 3, 4, and 6 placed Wesley in Sakura's
38
39 position:
40
41
42

43 Um, the way in this one, it shows how we are on his side. We're in his shoes. [It]
44
45 show[s] how scared we are [panel 2-4]. And that [panel 5], it shows that we've got,
46
47 we've got him that way. We are kind of excited, but then next, you really know,
48
49 we're gonna get killed [...] You realise afterwards, like, the tension [...], like, 'Oh,
50
51 someone is on top of me' [panel 6]. But then you realise it wasn't you, because of
52
53 the way he [the manga artist] shows it.

54
55 (Wesley, AB Group interview 1)

56 The frequency of the word 'we' in this quote shows Wesley's absorption into the
57
58 two characters and a shifting pattern of identification with them. Wesley's response
59
60

1
2
3 shows that he identified himself firstly with Zaku (*'We're in his shoes.'*) (panels 2 to 4),
4
5 then with Sakura (*'We've got him.'*) (panel 5), then back to Zaku (*'We're gonna get*
6
7 *killed...someone is on top of me.'*) (panel 6), and finally he shifted back to his own
8
9 disposition and detached himself from both characters (*'You realise it wasn't you.'*)
10
11 (panel 7). The four close shots drew Wesley to empathise and identify with Zaku, while
12
13 the alternation of perspectives and distance (panels 5 and 7) shifted his identification
14
15 between characters and finally detached him from being a vicarious participant to
16
17 become more of an outside observer of the battle, when panel 7 zooms out to present an
18
19 omniscient perspective. As Pérez Ríu, (2015, 184) points out, "the dynamic
20
21 confrontation of shot and counter shot allows for the expression of the dramatic
22
23 relationships between characters". The example discussed above not only engaged the
24
25 reader with the intense interaction between the characters, but also placed them in
26
27 positions that align their views with the character's viewpoint, hence rendering dual
28
29 identification with the character who sees and the one being seen. According to Phillips
30
31 (2003), the alignment with a character's viewpoint in a film can generate a close bond
32
33 and identification, as the spectator grows to depend on the character for their 'take'. At
34
35 the same time, the character under scrutiny speaks directly to the spectator about their
36
37 story and feelings to attract allegiance. In this way, the spectator is placed in a double
38
39 structure of viewer/viewed (Browne 2004) and is likely to develop dual identification
40
41 with both the one viewing and the one being viewed. Similarly, the 'dual perspective'
42
43 viewing experience is evident in Wesley's reading of this double spread – the close
44
45 shots of Zaku's facial expression drew an empathetic response from him, which
46
47 counterpointed the focalisation through Sakura. The shifting identification with
48
49 characters showed that close-ups enhanced Wesley's emotional bond with Zaku and
50
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1
2
3 subdued his bond with Sakura despite the fact that he was seeing through Sakura's point
4
5 of view.
6

7
8 The selected examples of close-ups in the two manga show that the employment
9
10 of this technique allows artists to particularise and intensify what may otherwise remain
11
12 more diffuse. This narrative tool sheds light on the psychological development of a
13
14 character and the emerging logic of the character's life situation. It invites the reader to
15
16 respond to the underlying emotions, while keeping readers in temporary suspense, due
17
18 to the limited information available about the overall situation, until reversion to long
19
20 shots brings what was previously invisible and abstract into view.
21
22

23 24 25 **Conclusion**

26
27 This article has demonstrated the affordances of close-ups as a narrative tool in manga.
28
29 Close-ups engage readers with a character's psychological development and the tension
30
31 that is built upon a character's emotional and cognitive responses to their situation.
32
33 Manga artists employ close-ups extensively to preview, review, or break down
34
35 emotional moments in a story, so as to slow down the narrative and encourage readers
36
37 to reflect on the inner emotional drama of a character. Responses from the participants
38
39 of this study showed dynamic interactions between these readers and the manga
40
41 characters, as the virtual camera invited the readers into the world in the panels as
42
43 vicarious participants. Through close-ups, the readers experienced emotional proximity,
44
45 which renders a sense of intimacy and identification with the fictional characters. This
46
47 is crucial to their immersive experience during the reading process. This article has
48
49 focused on close-up framing and its potential to induce an emotional reading experience
50
51 of manga. Future studies may look into the use of other cinematic techniques in manga,
52
53 such as point-of-view editing and angles, and their impact on the emotional life of
54
55 manga and reading engagement.
56
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	Chest-above	Face	Eyes	Total
<i>N6</i>	111	208	54	373
<i>VK4</i>	115	199	67	381

For Peer Review Only

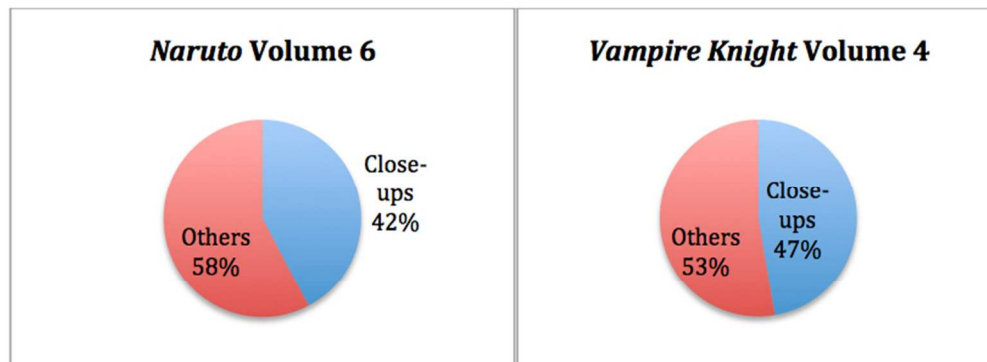


Figure 1. Percentage of close-ups in the corpses

289x108mm (72 x 72 DPI)

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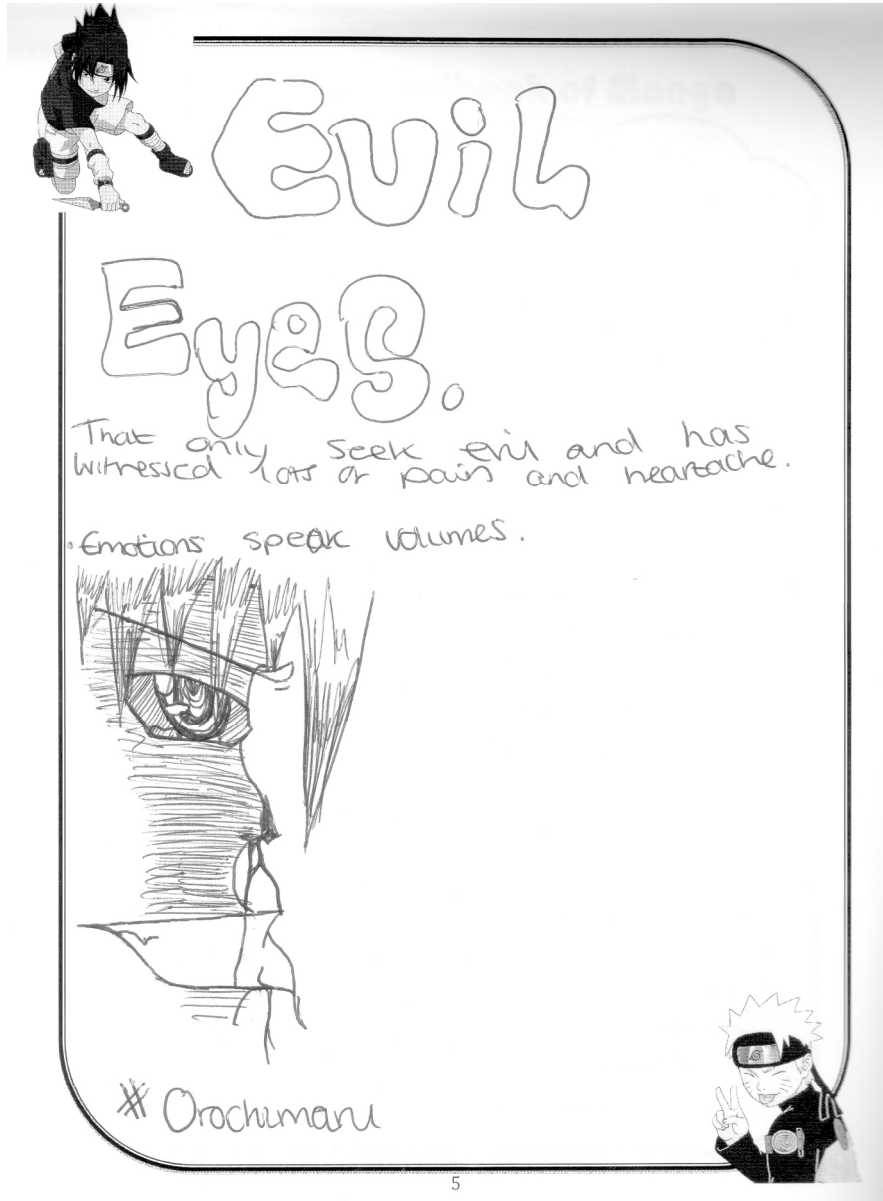


Figure 2. Travis's reading reflection of N6 (drawing)

806x1096mm (72 x 72 DPI)



45 Figure 3. VK4, p. 40 (Vampire Knight © Matsuri Hino 2004/HAKUSENSHA, Inc. Image used courtesy of
46 Hakusensha, Inc.)

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48 109x190mm (150 x 150 DPI)

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Figure 4. N6, pp. 174-175 (NARUTO © 1999 by Masashi Kishimoto/SHUEISHA Inc. Image used courtesy of Shueisha Inc.)

242x190mm (150 x 150 DPI)