RESEARCH

Themes, Focalization and the Flow of Information: The Case of *Shingeki no Kyojin*

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This article discusses the interaction between themes, narrative structure and focalization points employed in *Shingeki no Kyojin* ('attack on Titan', Isayama 2009–ongoing), a manga featuring the desperate battle of humankind against the mysterious Titans. Following a narratological approach, the article explores how the themes underpinning the narrative, especially the 'control' theme, act as information filters on both narrative structure and background knowledge of *Shingeki no Kyojin*. The resulting interplay of these themes with a focalization point are explored in detail, and connected to ongoing discussions on focalization in comics and other media.

Introduction

Shingeki no Kyojin or 'Attack on Titan/The Attacking Titan' (Isayama 2009–ongoing) is a manga that features the fight of humankind against the 'Titans', human-looking creatures that vary in height and size, display little or no intelligence and eat humans for no apparent reason. The last survivors of the Titans' onslaught found safety in three cities surrounded by concentric walls: wall Maria (outermost), wall Rose and wall Sina (innermost). Each wall also marks social and economic distinctions. The city inside wall Sina is home to the nobles and the royal family.

The outer cities and districts host peasants, workers, and merchants. The story focuses on step-siblings Eren Yaeger and Mikasa Ackermann, and their friend Armin Arlert, who lose their families in a Titans attack. They seek revenge by enrolling

in the survey corps, a military force with the mission of reclaiming Titan-infested territories, but become involved in a complex web of conspiracies involving the survival of humankind.

Shingeki no Kyojin blends themes from *shōnen* and *seinen* meta-genres (Bryce & Davis 2010; Shodt 1996), but also from post-apocalyptic fiction, horror, and other genres. It also presents a peculiar approach to narrative structure, mostly focused on the characters' perspectives (Niederhoff 2015; Schmid 2010: 30–34). Therefore, readers mostly discover the truth about its world when the characters win battle(s) against the Titans and their masters.

This paper addresses this connection between narrative, focalization and themes, specifically focusing on how the so-called *control* theme drives the use of an internal focalization point. We have analysed in detail the 88 issues released so far and their underlying narrative structure. To frame our discussion, we first individuate the key themes intertwined with the control theme, and then analyse how they are brought together in the series' narrative structure.

Themes, Focalization and other Elements of Narrative Structure

We start by making precise the theoretical notions we implement in our analysis, beginning with *theme*. In narratology, a theme[1] is usually a (possibly) complex concept that an author can use in a narrative to create the plot (e.g. Childers & Hentzi 1995; Curtius 1953; Mikkonen 2011; Miller 1990). For instance, the *pain* theme is a central concept in *Shingeki no Kyojin*, as it is used to explore characters' emotions and reactions to various events and challenges (Yamazaki 2015). Given the multi-modal nature of comics, our discussion focuses on their visual *and* textual realization, and how these realizations interact. We use the graphical convention of representing themes via italics (e.g. *control*).

Shingeki no Kyojin blends several themes as conceptual 'building blocks' or 'rules' in a cohesive narrative, e.g. *Nietzschan philosophy* (O'Cuana 2014), *pain*, *Norse culture and myths* (Yamazaki 2015). The *control* theme implicates three other themes that are tightly interwoven with it: *world*, *social structure* and *Titans*. *Control* is typically defined as one individual or group's ability to determine the actions of another

individual or group, possibly involving resources and information (Innes 2003: 5–6). *Control* generally involves the ability to determine the space in which a controlled group is constrained, and the relations between and with the controlled individuals. Indeed, various forms of authoritarian governments and punishment systems are mostly based on this principle.

Control can be also exerted by manipulating the choices of a group, possibly without the group being aware of it. For instance, when *control* manipulates the flow of information amongst the public, it can manufacture or manipulate 'consent' so that the controlling group can exploit it to force choices and policies that are detrimental or threatening to the other often unaware groups (Innes 2003: 7–14). Although several models exist, Hermon & Chomsky's notion of consent manufacturing fits our analysis best. This model revolves around five 'filters' that permit an elite group to create consent among a controlled group. These filters are 'profit orientation', 'advertising license', 'sourcing news', 'flak', and 'the war on terror' (Hermon & Chomsky 2001: 5–38). Consent is thus formed when at least one filter is active, and can be successfully used to control opinions and lives. 'Flak' and 'the war on terror' play key roles in the narrative economy of *Shingeki no Kyojin*. These filters allow elites to use consent manipulation to discredit those who disobey them, and to construct a terrifying enemy to create consent. The other filters are not relevant in this case.

The *world within the walls* (or simply *world*) theme explains how the political forces controlling this (bounded) space exert their consent. *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s world is modelled on a dichotomy of Norse culture: *ingards* and *utangards* (Lindow 2001: 30–40; see also Yamazaki 2015). *Ingards* (i.e. 'inside') was a space where the laws of a community held, opposed to *utangards*, an outer space of lawlessness. Fences and walls symbolically separated the two spaces. In *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s world, the external world of the Titans and the internal world of the world of humans indicates this separation.

The *world* theme in *Shingeki no Kyojin* radically interprets *the ingards/ utangards* distinction: its 'inner' laws and walls place humans in captivity and ignorance. The walls look like gigantic versions (around 50 meters tall) of the

walls that still surround European cities with a medieval heritage. Throughout the series, the walls act as barriers that prevent humans from seeing the Titans' world (**Figure 1**).
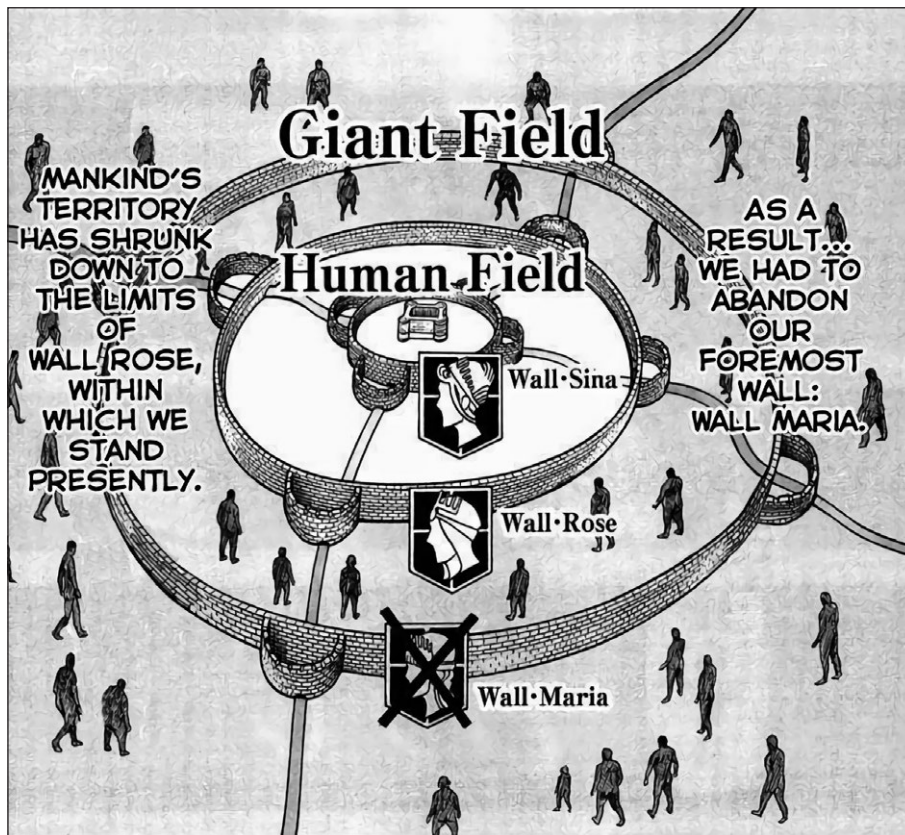
Isayama uses the world of *Shingeki no Kyojin* as an allegory of Japan, given its isolationist story and its inward-looking culture (Isayama, 2014: ch. 1), but this metaphor has a wide cross-cultural appeal, given the global distribution of walled cities (and countries, viz. the Great Wall of China: Mark 2009). The *world* theme also presents a dystopian interpretation of renaissance city-states, such as Campanella's *Città del Sole* ('city of the sun': Eco 2013: 20–30; Sullivan 1983: 1–10), bearing a strong resemblance to the Benthamian/Focauldian 'Panopticon' model of society (Foucault 1995: 4–21). This is shown in a map acting as 'information available for public disclosure', and depicting the *world*'s structure (vol. 3, #12, **Figure 2**).

The *world* theme permits the author to establish a precise 'fictional space' (cf. Cortsen 2012 ch. 3; Lefevre 2007), where *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s story unfolds and the elites exert their control on the population via the Titans.

The third theme is *social structure*, which allows us to shed light on the relations governing and connecting the controlling and controlled groups. The world within
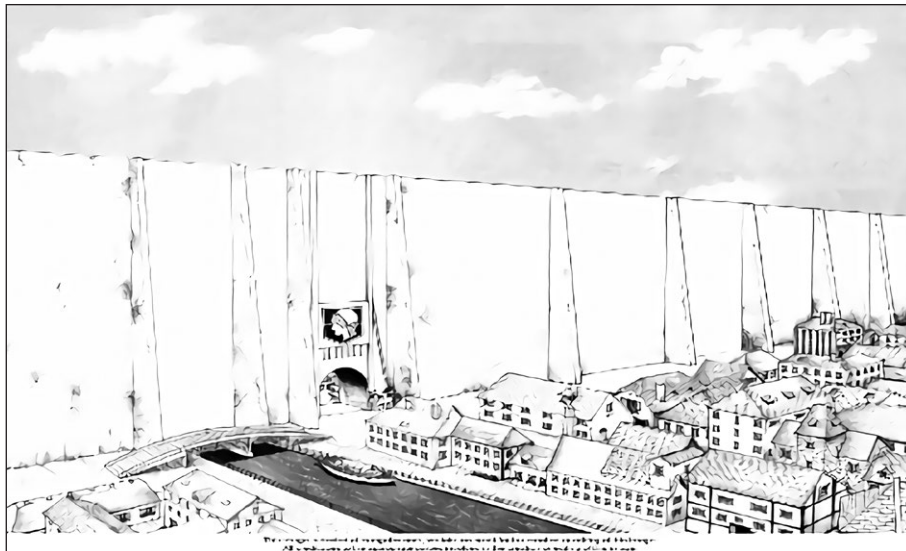
Figure 1: A portion of Wall Maria (vol. 1, p. 6, 2010). Note that the walls appear much taller than any building in the city. © Isayama, Haijime, 2009–2017.

Figure 2: The world of *Shingeki no Kyojin* (vol. 1, p. 131, 2010). Everything outside Wall Maria is *utangards*. © Isayama, Haijime, 2009–2017.

the walls resembles an absolute monarchy akin to Europe's pre-industrial society period (cf. Eco 2013: 3–10). Merchants and the press, who form small but fluid social groups, play a minor role and are usually forced to do the bidding of the monarchy. The three key social groups in the series are the military corps, the Reiss family, i.e. the 'shadow' monarchy behind this world, and the 'warriors', a group of Titan-shifters from *utangards*. The military forces are divided into military police, garrison corps and survey corps, respectively acting as covert secret service, stationary forces and *utangards* scouts.

The third group, the 'warriors', includes Eren's fellow trainees Anne Reinhardt, Reiner Braun and Bertolt Hoover. A fourth member, Ymir, plays a neutral role, although her origins and motives appear obscure. The leader of this group, commander Zeke,

controls an immensely powerful ape-like Titan. The warriors originate from a myste-rious 'village', later revealed to be a distinct country from *utangards* (#85–88), and are at odds with the Reiss family and the very existence of the world inside the walls and its inhabitants.

Overall, *the world* and *social structure* themes are tightly intertwined. The three different factions fight to determine the fate of the world within the walls, and with it the fate of this dystopian *status quo.* Crucially, since the story mostly takes place in a closed space and with a rigid social structure in place, the characters can only have a limited understanding of the forces that control the world and its social structure.

The fourth theme in our discussion is the *Titans* theme. The depiction of Titans is rooted in the description of giants and Titans in Indo-European mythologies, especially Norse mythology (cf. Lindow 2001: 40–45; Yamazaki 2015). At the same time, however, Titans combine elements from zombie narratives and mecha anime conventions. Standard Titans seem non-sentient and strive to eat humans and their spinal fluid, as zombies usually do. Meanwhile, 'Titan shifters' can also use Titans like giant organic mechas, akin to the Eva units of *Neo Genesis Evangelion* (Anno 1995: ep. 3–6).

Titans appear as humanoids of variable size, from 3 to more than 100 meters tall. On average, Titans are between 7 and 15 meters, like Eren's Titan, which is 15 meters. Taller Titans include Bertolt Hoover who is 60 meters. Titans also lack primary and secondary sexual features, giving them a gender-less appearance, except for Annie's breasted Titan. Bertolt, Annie and Reiner's Titans lack skin (vol. 5, #17). Eren, Grisha and Ymir's Titans have darker skins, muscular male bodies, and markedly pointed ears (Eren, vol. 3, #11; **Figure 3**).

Titans' faces often have grotesque traits that are vaguely suggestive of their human origins. Their bodies are often misshapen, and the depiction of their anthropophagic acts usually grisly detailed. Thus, the *Titans* theme connects to the tradition of painting these creatures as 'devourers', in the original sense of 'Titan' (Lindow 2001: 20–22).

Despite their power, Titans are victims of the elites and the warriors' group. When the beast Titan visits a village on the outskirts of wall Maria (vol. 9, #34), he

Figure 3: Eren Yaeger in his Titan form (vol. 2, p. 141, 2010). Notice the elfin ears and the powerfully build body. © Isayama, Haijime, 2009–2017.

turns its inhabitants into mindless Titans in a traumatic, dehumanizing process that creates monsters out of simple villagers. Hence, the 'devourers' are a tool of 'flak', a consent tool used to keep humankind captive, but also victims of this very consent filter. Titans are at the same time 'inside' and 'outside' the closed control system of the world, since they are the very 'terror' that the survey groups fight, and other humans fear.

Overall, the *Titans* theme acts as a connecting theme: it establishes how the *social structure* and the *world* themes interact. The Titans are victims of the *social structure* controlling the *world*, but are also used as a tool to administer 'flak' against the enemies of this system. If the Titans of myth represent anthropomorphic natural forces, then *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s Titans represent anthropomorphic forms of social control. The elites use them as a tool of control of the masses, thereby representing *control* in a very concrete manner.

Let us take stock. The *control* theme establishes how the elites control the flow of information and create consent by fear and violence. The *world* theme establishes the bounded location of the narrative, whereas the *social structure* theme establishes the roles of and relations between characters. The *Titans* theme establishes the main source of 'flak' in this consent system. Since the Titans are at the same time victims and executioners of the system, this control is total, and takes a very physical, violent form.

The intertwining of these themes and focalization involves *intra-diegetic* (narrative-internal) and *extra-diegetic* (narrative-external) functions. Intra-diegetic functions work as rules that can be used to construe a narrative and to define how the characters are related to the events portrayed. Extra-diegetic functions work as rules that establish how the fictional world is accessible from the narrator and reader's world. *Accessibility*, according to scholars working within the 'possible worlds' framework, is a relation between the readers' world and the fictional world underpinning a narrative (e.g. Mikkonen 2011, 2012; Ryan 1991: ch. 2–3; 2006). Intra- and extra-diegetic functions establish how a story—its world and events—is built and coheres (e.g. Cortsen 2012: ch. 1–2; Groensteen 2013: 118–130; Mikkonen 2012: 111–114). A narrative is the set of intra- and extra-diegetic functions and how their structure and relations allow the author to advance the plot (Juul 2005: 23–26; Schmid 2010: 14–16).

These functions determine the accessibility of the story world. Authors control which story events and facts readers can access as the narrative unfolds (Ryan, 2006) and which perspective or point of view is used to narrate a story: the *focalization* point. Genette (1988) defines the focalization point as the perspective through which a narrative is presented, and made accessible to the reader. When the narrator is omniscient, the narrative has a *zero* focalization point. When the narrative is reduced to either a restrained perspective (e.g. a camera's eye) or the characters' subjective perspective, *external* and *internal* focalization points are used, respectively.

Although the notion of focalization has been controversial (cf. Bal 2009; Schmid 2010 for recent discussions), its applications to comics have proven enlightening.

As discussed in detail in Mikkonen (2008, 2012), external and internal focalization points help readers "immerse" themselves in the narrative. This immersion can happen whether these points involve panels showing a key event through a character's eyes or an internal monologue as the key textual element, among other narrative strategies. Furthermore, a well-established internal focalization pattern is when readers can only access the narrative from the characters' "minds" (Mikkonen 2012: 644–649; cf. also Groensteen 2013: ch. 5). In manga, internal focalization and other immersive narrative techniques (e.g. decompression, Shodt 1996: ch. 2) are amply documented patterns (e.g. Bryce & Davis 2010: 42–4; Power 2009: ch. 3; Shamoon 2003). Thus, one can expect that in *Shingeki no Kyojin*, as a manga involving a complex story set in a carefully built story world, internal focalization and *control* theme interact in a systematic manner, to the effect of the *control* theme doubling as a meta-theme. In other words, readers can experience *control* on what they know about the world, through the "eyes" of the characters.

However, previous research on comics and manga has only focused on how authors intentionally use external and internal focalization points to omit or highlight key events in a narrative (e.g. Horstkotte & Pedri 2011; Mikkonen 2012; Power 2009: ch. 5). Thus, the structural possibility that themes as intra-diegetic functions constrain the use of focalization points is still poorly understood. Therefore, even if the *control* theme in *Shingeki no Kyojin* and similar works seems to offer a clear case of this interaction, its precise impact is unclear.

Patterns

Our central theoretical claim is defined as follows. The control that characters experience as the story unfolds (intra-diegetic function) doubles as a meta-constraint on how much information about the story readers can access (extra-diegetic function), through the mediating action of internal focalization. Readers can thus experience the *control* that characters experience and fight against. However, visual cues in the story can offer supplementary information about the *world* and *social structure* themes. *Control* as a meta-theme may play a less relevant role than its narrative

counterpart. To prove our claim, we analyse when key aspects of our four themes are revealed as the plot unfolds, and how the characters' actions make this information accessible to readers, too.

The *Fall of Shingashina* arc introduces Eren, Mikasa, and Armin, and shows the events that trigger Eren's quest for vengeance (vol. 1, #1–2). Eren's father, Grisha, is briefly introduced as a skilled physician. Eren is shown talking with Hannes, a soldier who mentions that the Titans have not attacked humankind for 100 years, at least until that fated moment. The colossal and armoured Titans appear and charge down wall Maria. Titans pour in, devouring any humans they find in their path, including Eren's mother. The territory inside wall Maria becomes lost to the Titans. Thus, the readers are introduced to the *world*, basic aspects of its *social structure*, and the *Titans* themes through the eyes of the characters.

The *battle of Trost* and *104th trainees squad* arcs (vol. 1–5, #3–18) move the plot five years forward. Eren and the other cadets from the 104th regiment have just graduated, and have been approached by Erwin Smith, leader of the survey corps, to join their forces. The day after graduation, the colossal Titan and the armoured Titan attack again. In the ensuing battle, Eren is apparently swallowed by a Titan, only to emerge from its body as a Titan himself. Eren fights against other Titans, but becomes a target of the garrison corps. Only after proving his usefulness in fighting the 'enemy', is he reluctantly accepted as a resource.

As befits initial arcs, these parts of the story reveal only some initial information about the world and its structure, as shown in **Figure 2**. This type of information is ambiguous: it is not clear whether 'the public' consists of the readers, the citizens within the walls, or both. Internal focalization soon becomes an important narrative element. In the first two arcs, Titans are mindless enemies, the 'other' that besieges humankind. They are 'monsters' that Eren wants to wipe out, until he (and the readers with him) discovers that he is one of them (vol. 2, #8).

However, Eren's transformation reveals that Titans are not simply an external threat to the humans within the *world*, but also the tools that the elites controlling the *world* and *social structure* use to control humans, too. This arc already shows that the *Titans* theme has a precise intra-diegetic function: they prevent Eren and

the other characters from discovering the truth about the *world* and its *structure*. Since the story is narrated through the characters' eyes, the readers mostly experience this form of control on what they know about these themes as an extra-diegetic function.

Even if *control* doubles as a "meta-theme" on how the narrative structure is organized, certain visual cues allow readers to form hypotheses on the *world* and *social structure* themes that are less directly accessible to the characters. For instance, Eren's Titan is clearly different from the other Titans, since it is powerfully built, has pointed, elf-like ears and long hair. Readers can infer this difference as soon as they read the relevant passages (vol. 2–3, #8–9), whereas characters can do so only after the first battle is over (vol. 3, #13). Hence, while *control* as a theme determines how much information about the *world* and *social structure* that characters and readers can both access, the visual content *of Shingeki* allows readers to formulate additional conjectures about *Shingeki* and its themes.

The *Female Titan* (vol. 5–9, #19–33) arc involves Anne Reinhardt, one of the cadets in Eren's class, who appears during an exploratory mission in the Titan-ravaged wall Maria territories. After a gruesome battle within the innermost wall Rose, Anne is extracted from her Titan, only to enshrine herself in an indestructible crystal cocoon (vol. 8, #32). When Anne tries to climb the walls and escape before her defeat, readers discover that the walls contain many colossal Titans, acting as 'pillars' of this *control* structure (vol. 9, #33; **Figure 4**).

In this arc, more 'narrative-internal' information about the *world* and the *social structure* themes becomes accessible to both characters and readers. The main characters discover that the members of the so-called 'Wallist religion' know the truth about the *world* and the walls, and that Anne and the "warriors" represent forces external to the *world*, and who wish to control the Titans. When the main characters become aware that the elites control the Titans' and humankind's lives (vol. 9, #33), *control* no longer holds as an intra-diegetic function nor as an extra-diegetic function, since internal focalization applies. Its function as a meta-theme becomes even weaker, since by this point characters formulate hypotheses about how the *world* works that in turn act as cues for readers.

Figure 4: A Titan's face appears from the wall (vol. 8, p. 130, 2012). It is implied that each section of the walls contains a colossal (50 meters tall) Titan. © Isayama, Haijime, 2009–2017.

In the *Clash of the Titans* arc (vol. 9–13, #34–50), a crucial change in the information that characters can access occurs. A Wallist priest, Father Nick, begs the survey corps to cover a damaged section of the walls. Father Nick reveals that the walls are made of the solidified skin of giant Titans, and that the royal family possesses the 'coordinate' power: they can force any Titan to obey their will and erase any memory of the citizens within the walls. Father Nick also reveals that 'Krista Lenz', a cadet, is Historia Reiss, the illegitimate heir to the royal family. By talking with her, the survey corps learn more about the secrets behind the world, its walls, the Titans, and those who control these factors.

Two factors allow Eren and the survey corps to further break free from control. First, the battle with the 'warriors' indirectly causes a breakdown in the *world* system, in the guise of the revealed Titans. When this happens, control is weakened: consequently, characters and readers alike discover more about the *world* and the *social structure* themes. Second, the dialogue between Captain Zoe Hange and Father Nick is the first occasion in which the Titans and the monarchy are connected (vol. 9, #34).

In the meantime, the sudden appearance of Titans within wall Rose places all the troops on maximum alert. The survey corps find themselves in an isolated castle known as 'Utgard', and under the attack of the intelligent Beast Titan and other Titans under his control. Historia and other corps survive the attack thanks to Ymir, who is revealed to be a Titan shifter. As events unfold, Reiner and Bertholt also reveal to Eren their identity as Titan shifters and members of the warriors' clan, thereby clashing with him.

During this arc, several further revelations about the four key themes occur. First, the Reiss family (vol. 11, #43) is revealed as the shadow monarchy controlling the truth about how the Titans have created the world, its *social structure*, and *control* system. Second, the warriors' faction has an interest in the coordinate power, but also in destroying the world within the walls (vol. 12, #45–47). Third, 'normal' Titan users do not retain their consciousness, and almost completely merge with a Titan (vol. 12, #44 p. 40). A fourth, crucial revelation is that all the Titans are innocent victims of the complex consent system creating 'flak' and 'terror' at the same time.

In *the Uprising* arc (vol. 13–17, #51–72), Eren and other survey corps hide in a farm to study the nature of Eren's Titan powers. After a few experiments, Eren and Historia are kidnapped by the monarchy's spies, and brought to Historia's father and the shadow king of humankind, Rod Reiss. The Reiss family turn out to be the descendants of the first king, who has led humankind to live within the walls. As his descendants, the Reiss family inherited the Titan serum that also contained the 'first king's will', and with it its brainwashing and memory-erasing powers (vol. 16, #64).

Grisha, Eren's father, has devoured Frida Reiss to steal the coordinate power, and to prevent the Reiss family members from controlling humankind. Eren inherited

his power when he devoured Grisha, who injected him with the serum. Eren is taken to a mysterious, gigantic cave, to be devoured by Historia. However, Rod Reiss ends up swallowing some of the serum, transforming into a misshapen but extremely tall Titan who attacks wall Maria (vol. 16–17, #68–69). While Eren is held captive, Erwin Smith organizes a coup d'état, aware that breaking the *status quo* could destroy the fragile equilibrium in the world within the walls (vol. 17, #70–71).

In the still ongoing *Return to Shingashina* arc (from vol. 18, #73 onwards), the survey corps attempt to reconquer the lost territories, but are forced to engage in a fierce battle against Zeke and the other 'warriors' (#73–84). After the battle, Eren manages to access his old home's basement, where he finds his father's diary. By reading this document and by also tapping onto his father's memories, Eren discovers that the world within the walls is located on an island, aptly named 'Paradis', where the survivors from a centuries-long war have sought refuge. The royal family created a fictional history of humans being persecuted by Titans as propaganda to shield citizens from this horrendous past (#85–88). The rest of humankind keeps a close eye on this isolated kingdom and its Titans, fearing the beginning of another war.

Overall, in these three arcs the *world* theme is dramatically altered, to accommodate knowledge about *utangards*, the world outside the walls and the 'warriors', the emissaries of this world. Crucially, much of this information about the *world* and *social structure* takes the form of memories or other 'visual' forms of narration that illustrate key events to readers. For instance, Rod Reiss narrates Grisha's attack to Eren and the other survey corps, but readers can "see" how this attack occurred via a visual flashback (vol. 16, #65). Eren's act of eating his father Grisha is shown via the first-person viewpoint of Eren's memories (vol. 15, #63). More in general, once the *control* theme loses its intra- and extra-diegetic function, its meta-narrative function disappears as well. Readers can be certain that this visual information is correct, since it presents the bits of knowledge that the characters discover about their own world as being "true" memories of previous events.

Conclusion

Let us take stock. The *control* theme as an intra-diegetic function in *Shingeki no Kyojin* also acts as an extra-diegetic function. Until the end of the *Clash of the Titans* arc, readers share the same limitations as the characters in what they know about the *world*, *social structure* and other themes. However, since comics are a visual medium, *control* as a meta-theme has a more limited narrative impact, within *Shingeki no Kyojin*'s story. Readers can access information about crucial aspects of the story because they can "see" facts that characters cannot see. Even if *control* as an intra-diegetic function brings an internal focalization point, the conflation of readers and characters' viewpoints is never total.

The case of *Shingeki no Kyojin* suggests that this interplay between themes, diegetic functions and focalization point(s) is at least in part medium-specific. For instance, in novels using an internal focalization point, readers are usually limited to the characters' point of view, since no visual information is present to give extra insights into the narrative world (cf. Mikkonen 2012: 638–639). In movies, visual information can give extra cues to spectators, but the linear nature of the medium reduces how many cues are available at any time (i.e. spectators can observe "one event at a time" on a screen, cf. Groensteen 2013: ch. 5). In videogames, players can control characters and use them to discover how the game world and its themes work, but are nevertheless limited to one event (Juul 2005: ch. 3).

Our analysis, then, suggests that comics have medium-specific features regarding the interaction of themes and focalization points. Even if *control* as a theme determines that characters will have a limited access to their own narrative world, and even if the author adopts an internal focalization point, readers can still infer how a narrative works. Visual information and the fact that readers can access several events semi-simultaneously, via panels and pages of an issue, permit readers to infer how the story and the story world operate, thus partially bypassing the effects of *control* as a meta-theme (cf. also Groensteen 2013: 150–153). In this regard, *Shingeki no Kyojin* offers a clear example about how these multi-medial differences in the use of focalization points and themes can work.

In this article we have presented an analysis of *Shingeki no Kyojin* (*Shingeki no Kyojin*)'s narrative structure and the way information control that the elites apply in that narrative filters the information readers can access. We have shown that internal focalization, coupled with the *control theme*, can partially conflate the characters and readers' perspectives. However, we have also shown that the medium-specific use of visual information can reduce the impact of *control* as a meta-theme: readers can access different parts of a story and infer how its structure works, accordingly.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

Notes

[1] Note that authors such as Mikkonnen (2011) use the term "trope", which in some research traditions is interchangeable with 'theme'. We opt for using the latter term to avoid temiological confusion.

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