

Critique of Final Project

The series of comic strips under the title “This is Kyra” seeks to satirize the stereotypes associated with various popular genres of manga – from the flowery depiction of shojo girls to the overtly masculine and aggressive behavior of seinen protagonists. The series focuses a lot on the *content* of these stereotypes and a narrow application of their presentation, forgoing the opportunity to satirize the different formats and presentation styles of each specific genre. For example, the comic strip entitled “A Shojo Moment” depicts the typical pass-by moment in shojo manga during which a guy and a girl pass by each other and catch each other’s eyes in a romantic fashion, featuring dramatic wind and flower petals in the background. Though the comic effectively translates the scene onto the page, it remains in a 4-panel format rather than the kind of framing you would normally see in shojo manga. In dramatic moment like that in a shojo manga, there would likely be a huge panel devoted to the moment their eyes meet, or maybe a full-body image of the protagonist that covers several frames. If “A Shojo Moment” was framed differently, it could satirize the style even more. Instead, each comic strip is presented in the same 4-panel format.

Four-cell manga has its benefits, of course. It provides a flow and connection to the strips that might’ve been lost with the introduction of different formats. It also alerts the reader that the strip is supposed to be humorous. This is because the 4 cell style, known as “Yonkoma”, is the common format for gag comic strips in manga, newspapers, magazines, etc¹. Yonkoma takes on light and funny topics or else heavier subjects presented in a humorous way. This is what “This is Kyra” does, although it does deviate from the traditional narrative structure often used in Yonkoma (known as Kishōtenketsu).

¹ <http://www.mangaka.co.uk/?page=yonkoma>

In Kishōtenketsu, panel 1 depicts (Ki) sets up the story, panel 2 (Shō) develops upon that foundation, panel 3 (Ten) reveals the climax, and panel 4 (Ketsu) concludes the story.

The climax is not always in the third panel in “This is Kyra” but rather the last one (for example, one could argue that in the strip “Nope” the climax is more so in the second panel or else is divided between the second and third panels. Keeping the Kishōtenketsu style consistently throughout the manga could have helped the flow of the sequential narrative.

Though in the first three comic strips, the lack of background was fitting the content, more detail in the latter five strips had the potential for better communicating the reality of the situations. These strips are supposed to integrate the various manga stereotypes into real world situations, so adding more detail in the background of each strip or panel may have helped better communicate the mood or setting of the real world.