

Muhammad Siddiq

Dr. Pizzino

ENGL 4896

24 April 2018

Arthrology Displayed in *This One Summer*

Early in Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's graphic novel, *This One Summer*, readers are shown a scene in which Rose's mother drops a bowl, causing it to shatter (Tamaki 97-98). The scene perfectly displays theorist Thierry Groensteen's views regarding the spatiotopic nature of comics and arthrology: "comics is not only an art of fragments, of scattering, of distribution; it is also an art of conjunction, of repetition, of linking together" (Groensteen 22). According to Groensteen, the comics page exists as a skeleton, with the panels being joints that have the dual nature of being independent while functioning interdependently (Groensteen 28). The six panels placed on pages 97 and 98 of *This One Summer* demonstrate the network-like nature of the comics medium.

When viewing only pages 97 and 98, readers see a series of consecutive images. The panels viewed side by side reside on the surface of the same page and have a linear relation to each other. Readers see six panels in which the bowl is being held, then proceeds to slip and then finally hits the ground and disperses (Tamaki 97-98). These panels are viewed simultaneously, and each fixed image manages to show both "movement" and "time" (Groensteen 21). The relationship between panels such as these exhibit restrained arthrology. Readers easily see how each panel is connected despite each one being its own static image. They are separate but coexistent.

The connection between panels in the comics medium is not just limited to panels in close proximity to each other. The narrative of a work such as *This One Summer* is often advanced through the likeness of panels that are distant from each other and cannot be viewed simultaneously (Groensteen 147). Panels that possess a certain likeness to one another can be viewed as a sort of motif. Groensteen recognizes this relationship as “General Arthrology” and separates it from motif by emphasizing the importance of location. He equips each panel with temporal spatio-topical coordinates that cause readers to think. By articulating each panel to others like it, he explains that “the panel is enriched with resonances that have an effect that have an effect of transcending the functionality of the site that it occupies to confer the quality of a space” (Groensteen 147). Tamika displays this in *This One Summer* by repeatedly displaying various forms of dispersal throughout the graphic novel. Readers may easily relate the dispersal image of the bowl shattering on page 98 to an image of water dispersing such as the ones on pages 58 or 245 (Tamaki). Readers witness so many of the characters’ lives “dispersing” as Rose’s mother has a miscarriage, Rose witnesses her parents fighting, etc. Panels such as the ones of the bowl shattering or the water being disturbed may symbolize the theme of disruption as one grows up. The likeness between these panels certainly helps emphasize and engrain this idea in the mind of the reader.

As panels in comics exist in a network, a relationship occurs between restrained and general arthrology. Comics demand readings that connect various fragments and panels beyond simply linear relations (Groensteen 146). This connection is achieved through what Groensteen calls braiding: collaboration between “the co-presence of panels on the surface of the same page” and “a recollection or an echo of an anterior term” (Groensteen 147). Braiding can help push the narrative of a work in a variety of manners. The relationship between panels of the bowl

shattering and a panel of a glass about to tip over shows braiding in action (Tamaki 97-98; 102). As previously stated, the panels on pages 97 and 98 are viewed under the lens of restricted arthrology. The third panel on page 102 can be related back to that sequence using general arthrology. On this page we see Rose upset, hearing her parents arguing after the bowl shatters. The third panel shows a glass about to tip over. It has not yet tipped but it is on the edge, dangerously close. If the glass tips, the contents inside will disperse (Tamaki 102). In this instance, restricted and general arthrology are both employed to draw some conclusions. The restricted arthrology of the bowl shattering draws the initial attention to the act of dispersal and how it leads to discourse. General arthrology allows the readers to see a relation between the two objects (the bowl and the glass). The two events coming together can be interpreted to show that although Rose's life is not shattering like her parents' relationship, tension certainly exists.

The various forms of arthrology are present throughout *This One Summer*. General arthrology, especially, seems to be more prevalent in the graphic novel than it is in many other works. The repeating likeness between certain panels helps provide the work with a sense of substance as it drives theme. It allows readers to make connections between seemingly different events such as Rose's parents arguments and Rose's mother's fear of drowning. While very different, both evoke a feeling of discomfort. Groensteen's ideas applied to *This One Summer* demonstrate how separate images can contribute to the same narrative points whether or not they are located on the same surface. Looking at *This One Summer*, Groensteen's ideas could be expanded on. In *The System of Comics*, Groensteen speaks about the use of rectangular frames and how they cooperate with the printed form (books or magazines) rather than confronting it (Groensteen 46). *This One Summer* features many splashes and bleeds, panel formats that are much more uncommon. It would be interesting to see how Groensteen would have to modify his

theory in relation to unorthodox paneling styles. Similarly, Groenstein mentions much about how panels show time and movement, but it would be interesting to see if his theory changes regarding sound, as *This One Summer* features sound effects throughout. While these questions may be asked, *This One Summer* carries itself as a perfect example of Groenstein's idea that panels exist in a network that can be connected to form deeper meaning.

Works Cited

Groensteen, Thierry. *The System of Comics*. University Print of Mississippi, 2009.

Tamaki, Jillian, and Tamaki. *This One Summer*. Roaring Brook Press, 2014.