

ISSUE 18
SPRING 2026

FREE!

THE COLUMBUS Scribbler

CELEBRATING THE
COMICS, CARTOONS
AND CREATORS OF
CENTRAL OHIO



COVER ILLUSTRATION BY
DEMETRI DUPART

REFLEX

A MESSAGE FROM THE SCRIBBLER

Welcome to the 18th issue of the *Columbus Scribbler*! We have an epic edition for you this time around as we explore the wonderful world of manga.

A huge thank you to Demetri DuPart for creating our manga-infused cover, and to all the local cartoonists who contributed their talents. You can find much of their work at your local comic store. Speaking of comic shops, don't forget that Free Comic Book Day (FCBD) is May 2nd! Be sure to check with your local retailers for event details, it's the perfect day to celebrate the creators who make this art form possible.

The stars truly aligned for this issue. Mid-summer, I began researching the "God of Manga," Osamu Tezuka, for my next history article. Shortly after, Ben Towle (cartoonist and CXC Programming Co-chair) reached out to see if we'd be interested in interviewing the visiting artists from Japan. Through a collaboration with Adam Jimenez of the MINT Project, we conducted our first-ever interview with international cartoonists. Our deepest thanks to Keita Katsushika, Marco Kohinata, and their interpreter Allyson Sigman for making this possible.

The connections didn't stop there. During CXC, Ann Marie Davis (Curator of Manga at OSU) introduced me to trailblazing translator Frederik Schodt. Fred was kind enough to let us pick his brain on manga's journey in the U.S., adding a vital perspective to these pages.

With that, we'd like to remind you all that the *Columbus Scribbler* is made possible by you, the readers. You can help keep the scribbles coming by becoming a patron for as little as \$1 per month via Patreon or PayPal at columbuscribbler.com. Help us continue to inspire the future of comics.

Scribble on!

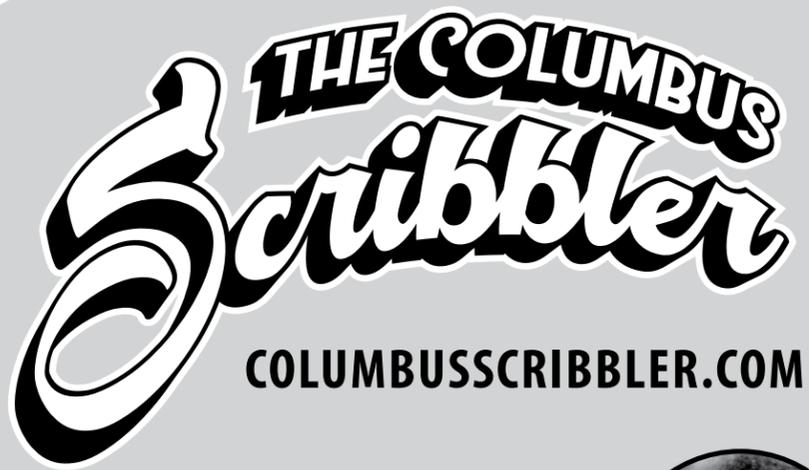
- Brian Canini

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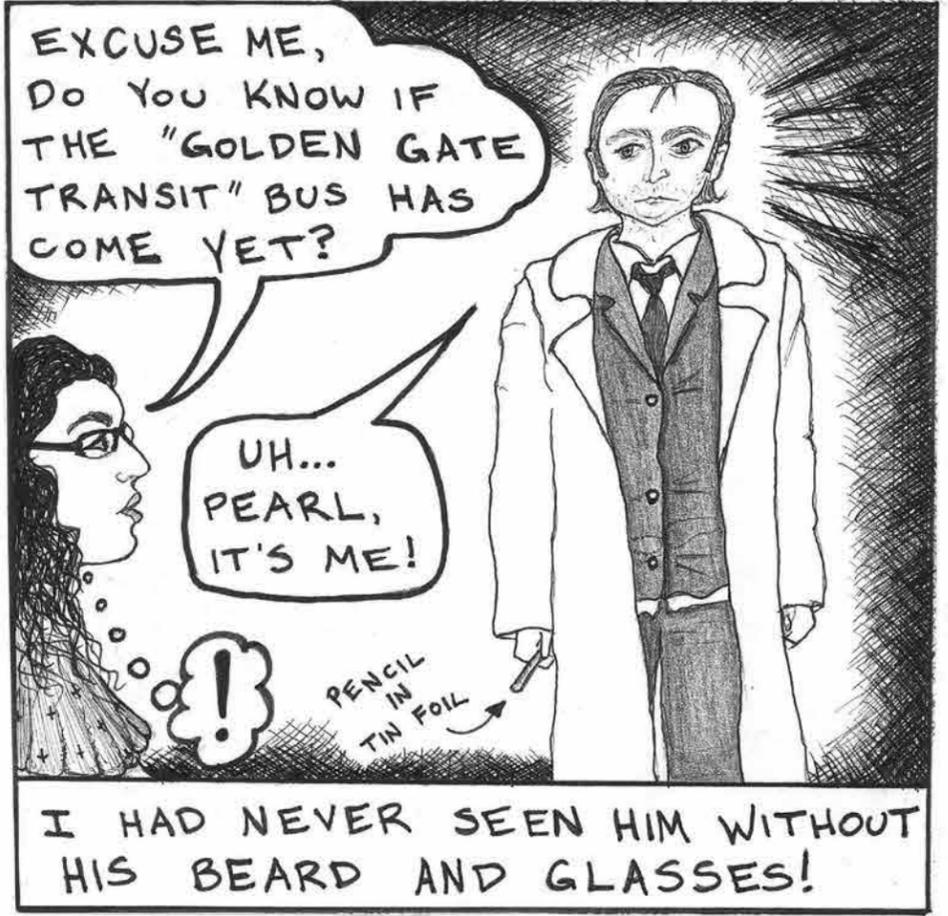
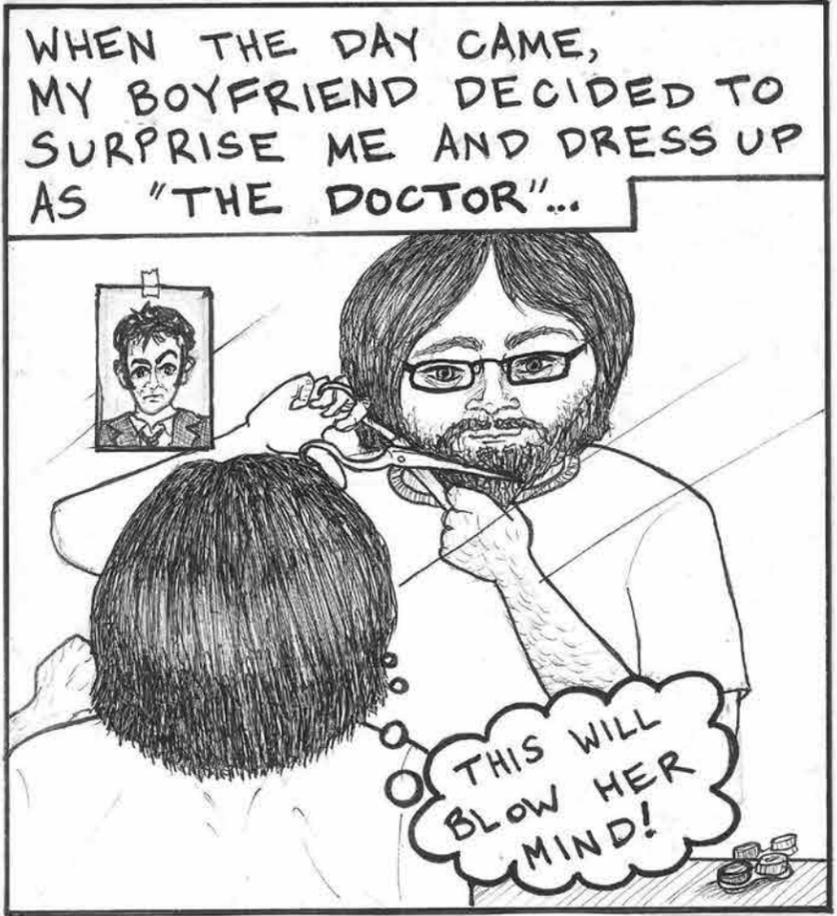


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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of The Columbus Scribbler.





“EMOTIONS ARE UNIVERSAL”

AN INTERVIEW WITH VISITING MANGA ARTISTS

BY BRIAN CANINI



Manga artists Marco Kohinata and Keita Katsushika appeared at Cartoon Crossroads Columbus 2025 courtesy of the Manga International Network Team (MINT) Project. MINT is a Japanese government sponsored initiative that aims to support early career manga artists and editors who are working to achieve a global presence, and to increase the recognition and value of manga's diversity overseas. This project is the manga section of the Creator Support Program, a program managed by the Japan Creator Support Fund, which in turn was established by the Japan Arts Council with a subsidy from the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

I talked to Marco and Keita at CXC 2025 with help from their interpreter, Allyson Sigman. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Brian Canini (BC): How's your trip been? What do you think of Columbus and the comics community here?

Marco Kohinata (MK): It has been 10 years since I've been outside of the country and I am really excited to be here. I think it's a very similar event to what we would see from a comic based event in Japan. It's a very lively environment and there are a lot of creators who are showing their passions, so it's great to be here.

Keita Katsushika (KK): It's also my first time in a while, more than 10 years, leaving the country of Japan. It's also my first time in the U.S. and I was very scared of all the cars and intimidated, but I went out into the town and I met such friendly people. I think it's a great city.

When I first saw the venue for CXC, I was very impressed. It's great to be able to network and meet other creators and hear about their work.

BC: What first drew you to comics, and who were some of the artists or stories that inspired you early on?

MK: I can't remember the first artists to inspire me because it's been so long, you know, in Japan, we have a very deep culture of manga. There's a lot of different types of manga and so I had a ton of manga in my house and I was exposed to it from the time I was a child.

But as I got older, one of the stories that I remember having a big impact on me was *Fruits Basket* by Natsuki Takaya. It's a story that resonated with me because I also had a difficult home life with a lot of stress as a child and this kind of gentle and sincere story really spoke to me.

KK: I was also exposed to a lot of different types of manga as a child and you run into them so easily when you're in Japan. However, the first one that really hit me was in 1989 when Osamu Tezuka died and I saw it on the news. I knew he had created *Astro Boy*, but I wanted to know what else he wrote. I started diving in.

As I got older, I read *Dragon Ball* and the *Shōnen Jump* series and I read lots more manga. I think that two of the biggest influences would be *Akira* and Katsuhiro Otomo. This doesn't have a direct influence on my style, but it did impact me on a spiritual level.

BC: How has your personal or cultural background influenced the stories you tell or the way you draw?

MK: I think that you can't make a piece of art without that cultural and personal background. As an example, my book, *Akari*, is centered around a young woman with no money and no network that she can rely on. She connects with an older man through the making of staining glass. That allows her to open her heart more.

This is very much based on my life experiences in my 20s. I was in a family with no money and I gave up on

my dream of going to university and studying. However, just around that time, my grandfather who was a stained glass artist passed away.

KK: My book is called *Higashi Tokyo machimachi* and it centers around the town where I'm from in Eastern Tokyo, which has a large Muslim population. For example, one of my characters is a Muslim university student. Another is an Ethiopian young girl who was born in Tokyo and so these types of characters are actually very common in my day-to-day life and some people that I would naturally come across in my town.

BC: Are there particular themes or messages you hope readers take away from your work?

MK: Whenever I get asked this, I start to tear up a little bit because it's kind of hard for me to talk about. But what I want to say the most is that life is hard, there are lots of different hardships that we all go through and sometimes those hardships weigh on you so much that you even would think about dying.

But I just want to say to everyone who reads this, thank you for staying in this world.

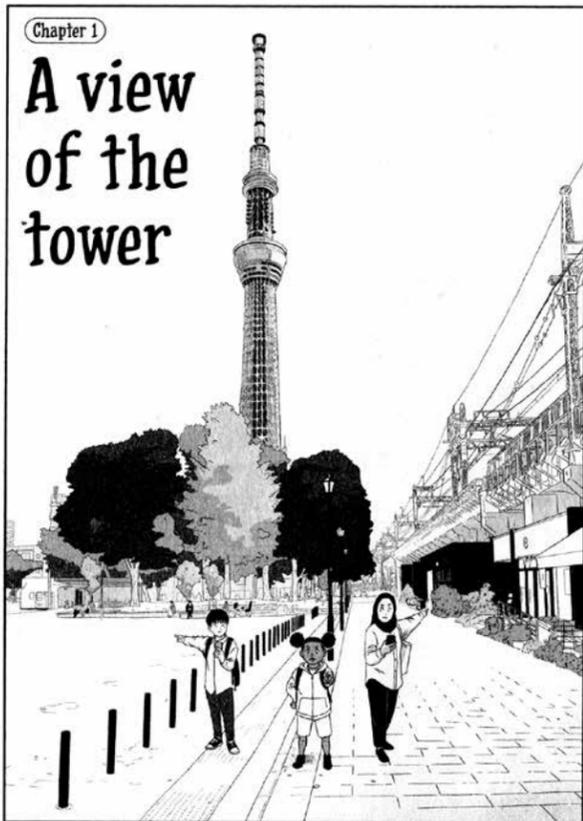
KK: It's less of a theme or a specific message that I wanted to tell about this story and more about showing people East Tokyo.

I think that Tokyo is a major city that everyone around the world has heard of and, because of that, there are some stereotypes that people think of when they consider Tokyo. They think of things like Shibuya Scramble and Akihabara in the Otaku District, or the Nerdy District. I wanted to present them with a different side of Tokyo because where I live in East Tokyo it's a completely different scene and you don't see it in any media.

So I want to show them the real world.

Chapter 1

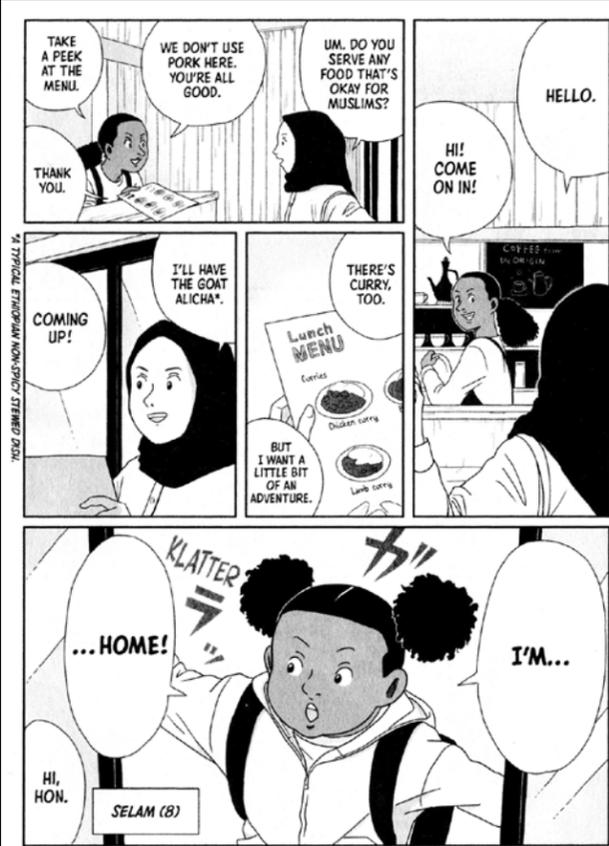
A view of the tower



Keita Katsushika has been a manga artist since 2010, first seeing his work published in independent magazines like *USCA* and *PON-RAI*. His current manga, *Higashi Tokyo machimachi* (translated to *Diverse East Tokyo*) draws upon Keita's upbringing in the Katsushika ward in east Tokyo.

When traveling to Japan's capital, tourists tend to gravitate to more popular streets like "otaku" hub Akihabara and the high-fashion boutiques of Omotesando. Keita seeks to remedy that with *Higashi Tokyo machimachi*. As the title denotes, he tells a slice-of-life tale that showcases the area's diversity. His ensemble cast features Muslim university student Sarah and 8 year old Selam. While out, they encounter 13 year old Haruta, a boy who refuses to attend his classes in favor of walking the neighborhood. Together, the three explore the charms of east Tokyo, culminating in ascending the real life Tokyo Skytree observation tower for a panoramic view of the city.

Originally serialized as a webcomic on the Japanese site Michikusa, *Higashi Tokyo machimachi* has also been collected for print by Tokyo publishing company Two Virgins. You can follow Keita @ktsksketch.



BC: What is your creative process when creating a new manga?

MK: First, I'll come up with an idea of something that I think would be a good manga and then I'll start collecting information. I'll talk to people, I'll read books and then I'll start sketching everything out and that kind of solidifies the image.

I think this first step is the most important step in the process. After that, you're just drawing non-stop.

KK: For me, I really wanted, in this particular book, to represent the town and let people see into the town, so I researched a lot into its history, its geography. I walked around and looked at what type of people were collected in what areas, what kind of shops were on certain streets.

And then I tried to figure out what the story would be from that.

BC: What habits do you use to stay motivated and productive?

MK: I think it's not an exaggeration to say my entire life is built around, maintaining motivation and productivity. I go to bed early. I wake up early if it's not raining I take a 30 minute walk every morning.

So everything I do, whether it's how I sleep, my food, is all to maintain that healthy body, healthy mind so that I can keep drawing.

I also decide what I'm going to do for that day and write one line in a notebook and say this is what I want to get done. Then I set a one minute timer and with that one minute, I clear off my desk and clean everything up. And then I set a five minute timer and with that five minutes, I want my pen to just not stop.

KK: So for me, I do all of my work on an iPad and so

there's a cafe near my house. I go at a specific time. Every day, I sit at the same seat in this one cafe and I work for a set number of hours every day and having that habit repeated is really important for me.

And for my own mental health, I stopped Googling myself!

BC: Manga has seen record sales in the U.S. Why do you think it resonates so strongly with American readers?

MK: I think it's probably that regardless of what country you're from or what your culture is, human emotions are universal. The scene where someone is trying very hard leads to success. When someone dies they're very sad.

These kinds of emotional themes are going to be universal and resonate with everybody. As long as a manga is incorporating those, I think it will do well and people enjoy reading it.

KK: I agree with Marco about the emotional side in manga and I also think the character design has a lot to do with it. There are characters, like Goku or Luffy, that are known all over the world and people appreciate these characters and want to cheer them on and like them. I think the way they're designed has a lot to do with why manga is successful.

I also think that being widely available is a big factor as well. Now that anime has been around since the 90s in the U.S., people who watched anime transferred over to reading manga. Those people have grown up, their kids are now used to a world where manga is just widely available.

BC: Marco, you've worked in animation, what similarities or differences do you notice between animating and drawing manga?

MK: I would first say how much you have to draw to communicate. The biggest difference with anime is that you have to draw so many different images to make one second of animation. Whereas manga, you can draw one single frame and communicate a lot.

Another difference is the movement that's used in animation. For example, in a manga like this, I can tell a long story. However, even with a short animation, I can show the beauty of the movement in that animation.

I think the main similarity is that they both use images to tell stories.

BC: Keita, how did you decide what locations of East Tokyo to choose to highlight?

KK: I mostly feature areas that I think are interesting as I'm looking at them. I didn't want to put too many areas that were major tourist areas that are particularly flashy. I wanted to focus more on the average town and that landscape in history that people maybe don't know about.

That's what I wanted to write. However, having just a boring old town is something that my publisher warned me against. So I do put some of the more major landmarks in my writing.

BC: On that note, what has the publishing experience been like for you both?

MK: It's very strange to realize that if you publish a manga through a publishing company, your work is getting into the hands of thousands or tens of thousands of individual people. It's a strange feeling, but it's also a really great feeling.

KK: I think publishing through a publishing company is quite different in terms of how you feel the responsibility. It's very different from the responsibility



Marco Kohinata is an award-winning manga artist who debuted in 2015, with work first serialized under the pen name MARU-CO on the manga app Comico. Her latest story, *Akari* (meaning "light" in Japanese and often associated with feelings of hope, warmth, and clarity) is a "one and done," meaning it is not part of a larger series and completely self contained.

The critically acclaimed tale tells the story of elderly stained-glass artist Kagari. While struggling to come to terms with his wife's death, Kagari's estranged granddaughter Akari appears at his doorstep. Even though he has not seen her since she was a mere child, he welcomes her into his home. The two begin to make up for lost time, forming a bond that even shakes Kagari from his depression, inspiring him to resume his stained-glass art. Just as you, the reader, begins to feel a connection with these characters, Marco throws in a surprising twist that may doom their relationship.

Akari was published by Hero's Inc. in 2022. You can find Marco's other books, as well as her animation and illustration work on her website, kohinatamarco.com.



you feel when you're just writing something for yourself.

And I feel more responsible because my work is getting out there and it could unintentionally harm a certain group of people with the wrong interpretation of it. And so this was something that I felt a lot of stress over. I wanted to make sure that my work was being interpreted correctly.

That type of misinterpretation hasn't happened, but it is concerning.

MK: I feel exactly the same.

KK: I also feel that putting out a book allows you to make unexpected connections with people. These could be famous people or writers that you've always looked up to and on your own you never would have met them. But now because you have this work out in the public, you are able to make a connection.

BC: Manga is often categorized by age group and genre—where do you see your work fitting in, and do you find these labels helpful or limiting?

MK: When I started writing manga, I wasn't thinking about the audience in terms of what age they would be or what genre my work would be, but my publisher kind of decided of their own volition that this is what category I fell into.

I think categorization is important for the publishers because when they go to sell the comic they have to say well this is gourmet based, cooking base. This is Shōjo. This is Shōnen and it makes it easier to sell that work. And it also makes it easier for the readers to find that piece.

I do sometimes feel a little bit limited by that label though. I just also think it has a purpose and so I've accepted it.

KK: There are many genres like action, horror, sci-fi, and having those labels makes it easier for the publishers to sell and the readers to discover, just like she said. So my work doesn't fall into one of those categories very cleanly and I've been thinking a lot about how to market it better.

Luckily, now that we have web-based comics both in websites and in apps, we see more mediums for manga that don't fit into a specific category to be discovered. So the more mediums there are, the more genres will appear.

I think that reading other genres is very helpful as a reference for my work. But if I'm stuck reading all the same genre, I'm not going to get that diverse perspective, so I do occasionally pick up a manga that's not in my wheelhouse just for reference.

BC: Where do you see manga heading in the future, and how does your work fit into that vision?

MK: If you look at the history, the original manga was a scroll-based artwork, like toilet paper. And the funny thing is now that we have smartphones, we're all back to scrolling.

I don't know how technology is going to advance in the future. Maybe we're going to experience manga through virtual reality, like those goggles that Google is making. And I think that if we get to that stage, then we're going to see a new type of expression come out for that technology.

I don't know where my art will fit in that spectrum. I am influenced by a lot of different styles of art like oil painting, illustration, animation, and I think I want to be kind of in the middle of all of those with a new type of expression.

KK: I think like Marco was saying when media

mediums change, we're going to see a different type of art come about. So as technology advances, so will the mediums and so will the art that comes from it. But I think the way that people enjoy that art will remain the same.

I had the opportunity yesterday to be on a panel with a U.S. based mangaka, a France-based mangaka, and myself, and we all have different cultures but we're all being impacted by these different styles. For example, I was influenced by the French style of comic and the U.S. based mangaka was influenced by Japan's style, and so we will see more of a blend of these different types of expressions as we are all getting influenced by each other.

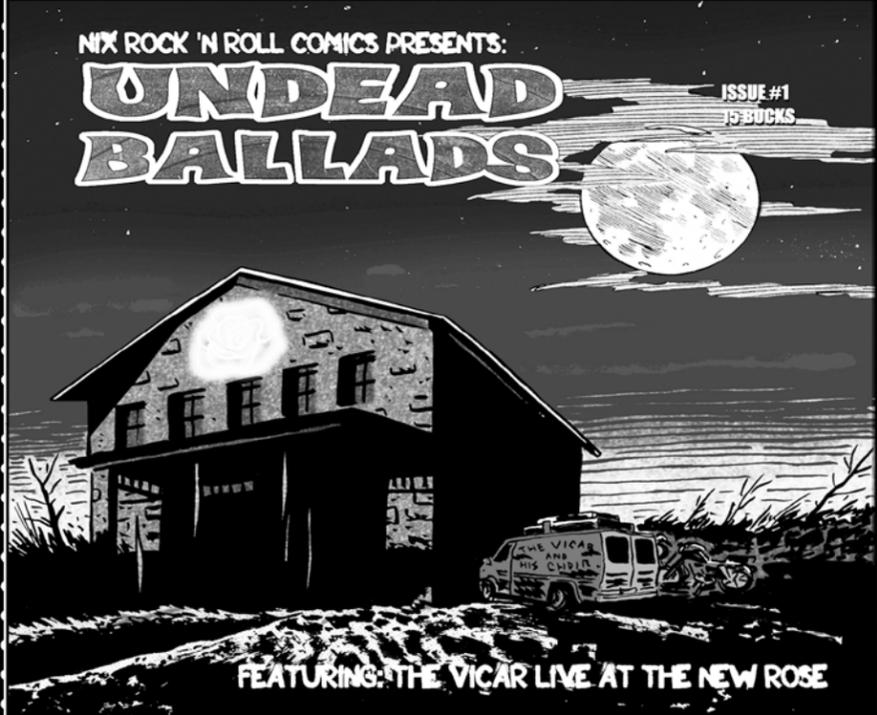
My place in all of that is that I'm interested in different cultures and different types of expressions. I am always looking out for that and I always want to incorporate it.

BC: What advice would you give to young artists who want to create manga, either in Japan or abroad?

MK: Don't forget to have fun in your art. Don't forget to enjoy what you do.

KK: Every person who wants to create a manga has something in mind that is particularly interesting to them. They have some theme that they really want to write and I would encourage them to cherish that and to pursue it.

Thanks to the Manga International Network Team (MINT) for facilitating this interview. You can learn more about MINT on their website, mint-mangaproject.com or follow them through social media @MINT_MANGA



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MEET THE PEOPLE OF COLUMBUS: ERIC MYERS

ERIC MYERS GREW UP IN A TWO-PARENT HOME WITH A BROTHER. HE WENT TO GROVE CITY HIGH SCHOOL IN THE 1980S. IT WAS THE ROLE OF CAPTAIN GEORG VON TRAPP FROM THE "SOUND OF MUSIC" THAT ERIC REMEMBERS AS SPARKING HIS LOVE OF THEATER, THOUGH HIS AESTHETICS WOULDN'T REMAIN CONVENTIONAL FOR LONG.



HE APPLIED TO PRINCETON AS A JOKE, BUT FOUND HIMSELF MOVING TO NEW JERSEY SOON AFTERWARD. THERE, ERIC WORKED WITH FAMED WRITERS TONY KUSHNER AND JOYCE CAROL OATES. HIS SENIOR THESIS WAS TO WRITE AND PERFORM A SHOW FOR WHICH HE CREATED "HELTER SHELTER," A PLAY ABOUT TWO MEN IN A BLINKER AFTER THE APOCALYPSE.



THE COLUMBUS THEATER SCENE SEEMED CONSERVATIVE, AND ERIC WANTED TO SHINE A LIGHT ON INDEPENDENT WORK, SO HE FOUNDED NEW ARTISTIC INCIDENTS VISION AND EXPERIMENTATION (NAIVE) WITH LENI ANDERSON, KNOWN FOR HOSTING NOISE BANDS, MONOLOGUE SHOWS, AND INDEPENDENT THEATER IN THE BASEMENT OF WALDO'S HAIR SALON.



AFTER NAIVE RAN ITS COURSE, ERIC STARTED A NEW PRODUCTION COMPANY WITH HIS FRIEND DAN O'REILLY CALLED MADLAB. THEIR INITIAL PRODUCTIONS WERE AVANT-GARDE PERFORMANCES OF THE "BACCHAE", A MULTI-ROOM EXHIBITION FEATURING DIONYSUS IN SCI-FI JUDGMENT DAY, AND "FREE INTERROGATION SEMINAR", A PARODY OF THE TIME SHARE SEMINARS.



"COMRADES' CHRISTMAS CAROL" PREMIERED AT ART FORCE ONE IN THE BACK OF MONKEY'S RETREAT IN DECEMBER 1998. IT WAS SOON AFTER HE HELPED DAN FIND THE INITIAL HOME FOR MADLAB ON NORTH GRANT IN A BUILDING THAT USED TO BE A MECHANIC'S SHOP.



IN 2001, ERIC MOVED TO SAN FRANCISCO. HE TRIED TO REMAIN THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR FOR A YEAR FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BUT EVENTUALLY GREG MCGILL, CHRIS LANE, AND FINALLY ANDY BATT BECAME THE DRIVING CREATIVE FORCES, WHILE ERIC FOUND HIS WAY INTO CO-CREATING AND PRODUCING BMIR, THE OFFICIAL RADIO STATION FOR THE FAMED BURNING MAN FESTIVAL.



ERIC MOVED BACK TO COLUMBUS TWENTY YEARS AFTER HE LEFT TO BE CLOSER TO HIS ROOTS. THOUGH MUCH HAD CHANGED, ERIC JOINED MADLAB AS THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AT THEIR NEW HOME ON NORTH 3RD STREET.



AS ERIC BECAME THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HE FOUND JOY IN DIRECTING AND WORKING WITH NEW TALENT. IN 2023, HE LED MADLAB THROUGH AN INTENSE REORGANIZATION, RESULTING IN A NEW, COHESIVE CULTURE THAT'S THE HEALTHIEST IT'S EVER BEEN. MOST RECENTLY, HE DIRECTED AND STARRED AS EBENEZER SCROOGE IN THE REPRISAL OF "COMRADES' CHRISTMAS CAROL".



ERIC MYERS HELPED CREATE SOMETHING TRULY UNIQUE, A PLACE WHERE HUMAN EXPRESSION CAN REIGN SUPREME.



HIS CULT-LIKE DEVOTION TO FINDING AND HELPING FOSTER NEW WORK HAS GENERATED THEATER OUTSIDE OF THE NORM. A THEATER FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW IF THEY LIKE THEATER AND GARNERING PRAISE FROM THOSE WHO DO.



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Hello, Thomas— WHAT in the name of all things in print landed a glorious copy of THE COLLECTED CRANIUM FRENZY into my hands? I don't know — but I am SO thankful! This is marvelous stuff & there is a 2nd volume as well? You're doing the work of the angels, preserving zine history as you are via these collections. Profound thanks & Best ALWAYS— Steve B

That's Steve Bissette, legendary Swamp Thing artist.

Not bad.



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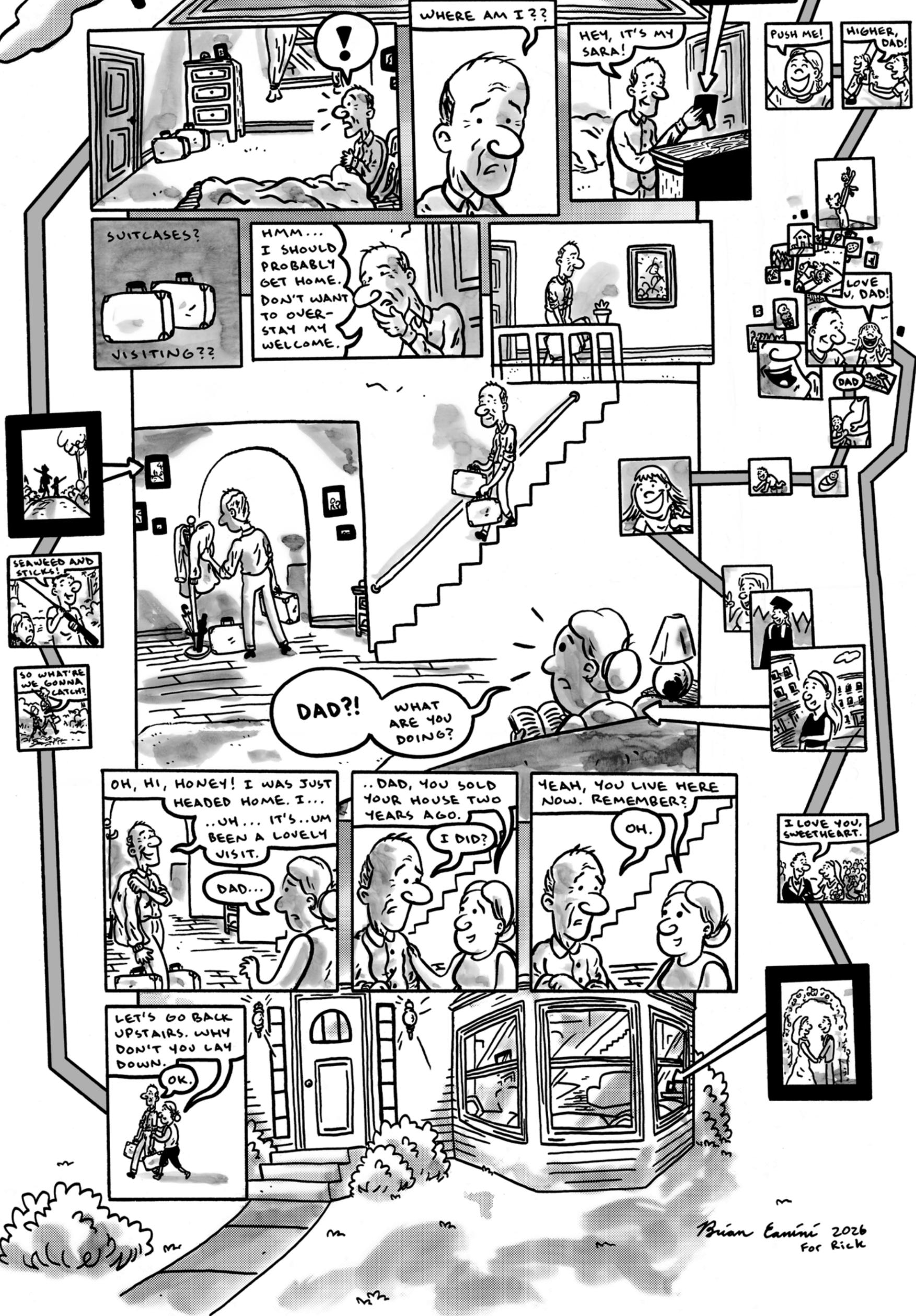
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by Brian Canini



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THE MAGE QUITE ENJOYED THE ARRANGEMENT. THE PAIR TRAVELED, ENJOYING THE PLEASURES OF THE SUN AND COUNTRY.

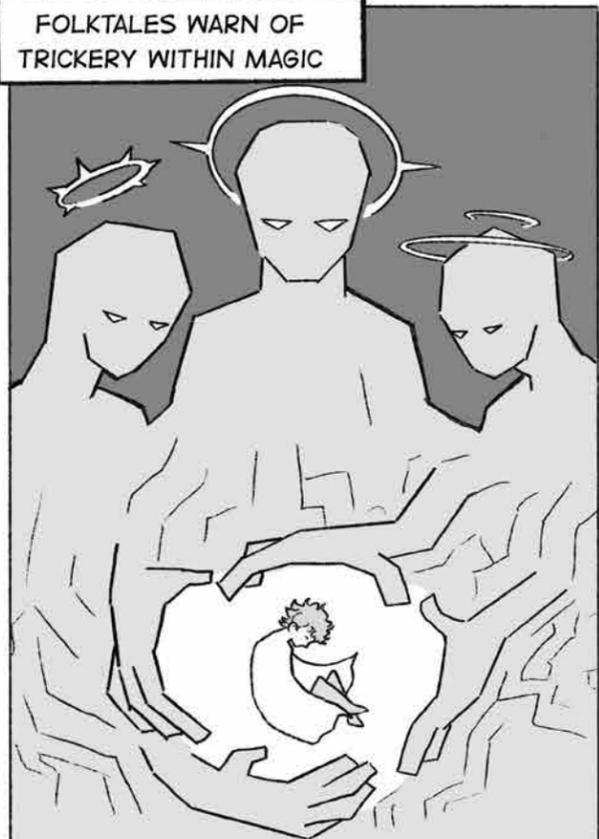


THE TWO GREW CLOSE. FIRST PARTNERS, THEN FRIENDS, AND PERHAPS SOMETHING **MORE**.

BUT AUTUMN ALWAYS ARRIVES.

THE LEAVES FALL AS PERENNIALS GO INTO WINTER HIDING. THE KNIGHT AND MAGE PARTED WAYS.

FOLKTALES WARN OF TRICKERY WITHIN MAGIC



THE GODS' SENSE OF HUMOR LIES IN **IRONY**.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, THE MAGE'S GIFT COULD NOT DISSIPATE GRIEF. FOR THE MAN HE WAS MOURNING...

... WAS NOT DEAD.



by Haadia Hyder

Haadia's Columbus Coffee Adventures

Ohio DRIVER LICENCE #41

When I first got my drivers license, I made it my goal to go to every single coffee shop in Columbus, or at least in the 270 belt

I made a Google Maps list of 101 Coffee Shops in Central Ohio. So far, I'm about halfway through. Some shops were good. Some were alright. Some were absolutely wonderful. This is a non-exhaustive list of the places I keep coming back to. (Not sponsored. Take my \$.)

In no particular order, **Mission Coffee Co.**

↳ Short North

I love this place. Some of the best coffee in the city, in my uneducated opinion. Sort of industrial-coffeehouse chic. Incredible levels of care & expertise in every cup, every time. Good, seating, good to work or chat :)

Mjomii Dessert & Coffee House

One of my favourite places to be, physically, in Columbus. Impeccable care & craft put into every single aspect of this place. Wonderful to sit and have a convo with a friend, or to just sit & be mindful. From drinks to desserts to design to service, perfection.

Third Way Coffee House

↳ Hilltop

I just adore this place! Cozy, but I never have trouble finding a seat. Unique, in house syrups & drinks, with kind people. Super community-oriented. So much local art. Coffee never disappoints. This place is a joy v

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↳ Upper Arlington

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FROM ASHES

THE ORIGINS OF OSAMU

By Brian Canini

On Sunday, April 6, 2003, at the Robodex show in Yokohama, the eyes of Japan were fixed on a sleeping android, lying still on an operating table in the middle of the convention hall. Several Mitsubishi industrial robots hovered over the table like futuristic surgeons, venting steam as they unlatched hatches on the resting machine.

Around noon, white-coated technicians wheeled the android to the main stage. There, Macoto Tezuka, son of the late Osamu Tezuka, appeared dressed as a postmodern Dr. Tenma. In that moment, the once-lifeless robot opened his eyes and began to slowly sit up. He extended his hand to Macoto. With a firm grasp, Macoto welcomed Astro Boy into the real world.

The following day marked Astro Boy's official birthday according to the manga, and major papers around Japan displayed photos of that handshake. It was a rare moment where the present finally caught up with the "future" of fifty years prior. It was an incredible tribute to one of Japan's most cherished creations and one of manga's most revolutionary voices.

The modern manga industry in Japan was born from the ashes of World War II. At its peak, over 40 percent of all printed books and magazines sold in Japan were in the form of comics. This evolution of the manga industry can be traced back to one man, Osamu Tezuka. Revered in the same way as The Beatles in music or Walt Disney in animation, Tezuka was a pioneer, establishing the visual grammar of modern manga and anime, influencing virtually every creator that followed in his wake.

Tezuka was born in Toyonaka, Osaka on November 3, 1928. He was the eldest of three children in a prosperous, well-educated household that valued intellectual curiosity. His lineage was a blend of prestige and pragmatism. His father was a manager at Sumitomo Metals, his grandfather a lawyer, and both his great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather were doctors. His mother's family, by contrast, held a

long and storied military history.

While many children of that era were discouraged from "frivolous" hobbies, reading was a pillar of the Tezuka home. Manga was always within reach—a rarity for the time. As Tezuka later recalled, "At the time, manga were not regarded as real books at all but entertainment and nobody asked what their influence on young people could be. My mother bought me them instead of toys. I read them again and again unceasingly and I knew the stories and drawings by heart."

Reportedly, the young Tezuka owned a personal library of over 200 volumes of manga, a staggering collection for a child in the 1930s.

His artistic sensibilities were further shaped by his mother's love for the Takarazuka Revue, an all-female musical theater troupe known for its lavish, romantic productions. The performers' large, sparkling eyes and the dramatic stage lighting would later become hallmarks of Tezuka's own character designs.

While his mother provided the theater and the manga, his father provided the cinema. A devoted film enthusiast, his father introduced him to the works of Walt Disney. Tezuka became an obsessed fan, famously claiming to have seen *Bambi* more than 80 times. This "Disney vocabulary" became the foundation of his style. When he began drawing his own comics in the second grade, they were essentially his attempts to capture movie magic on paper.

Once Tezuka started drawing, he became a force of nature. He produced sketches so relentlessly that his mother reportedly had to erase the pages of his notebooks just to provide him with fresh space to continue his output.

By 1944, the shadow of World War II had reached the Tezuka household. While still in high school, Tezuka was drafted to work in a factory to support the Japanese war effort. Continually reprimanded for drawing comics instead of concentrating on his work, Tezuka would often be ordered to climb the watchtower in the factory yard to look out for B-29 bombers.

The horrors he witnessed during the firebombing of Osaka would leave a permanent mark on his psyche, profoundly impacting his views on war, peace, and the abuse of scientific knowledge. These experiences eventually fueled the humanist and pacifist themes of his later masterpieces.

As the war drew to a close in 1945, Tezuka was accepted into Osaka University's medical program. Though he was training for a career in medicine, his creative output never faltered. He spent nearly every spare moment between lectures and labs filling notebooks with stories.

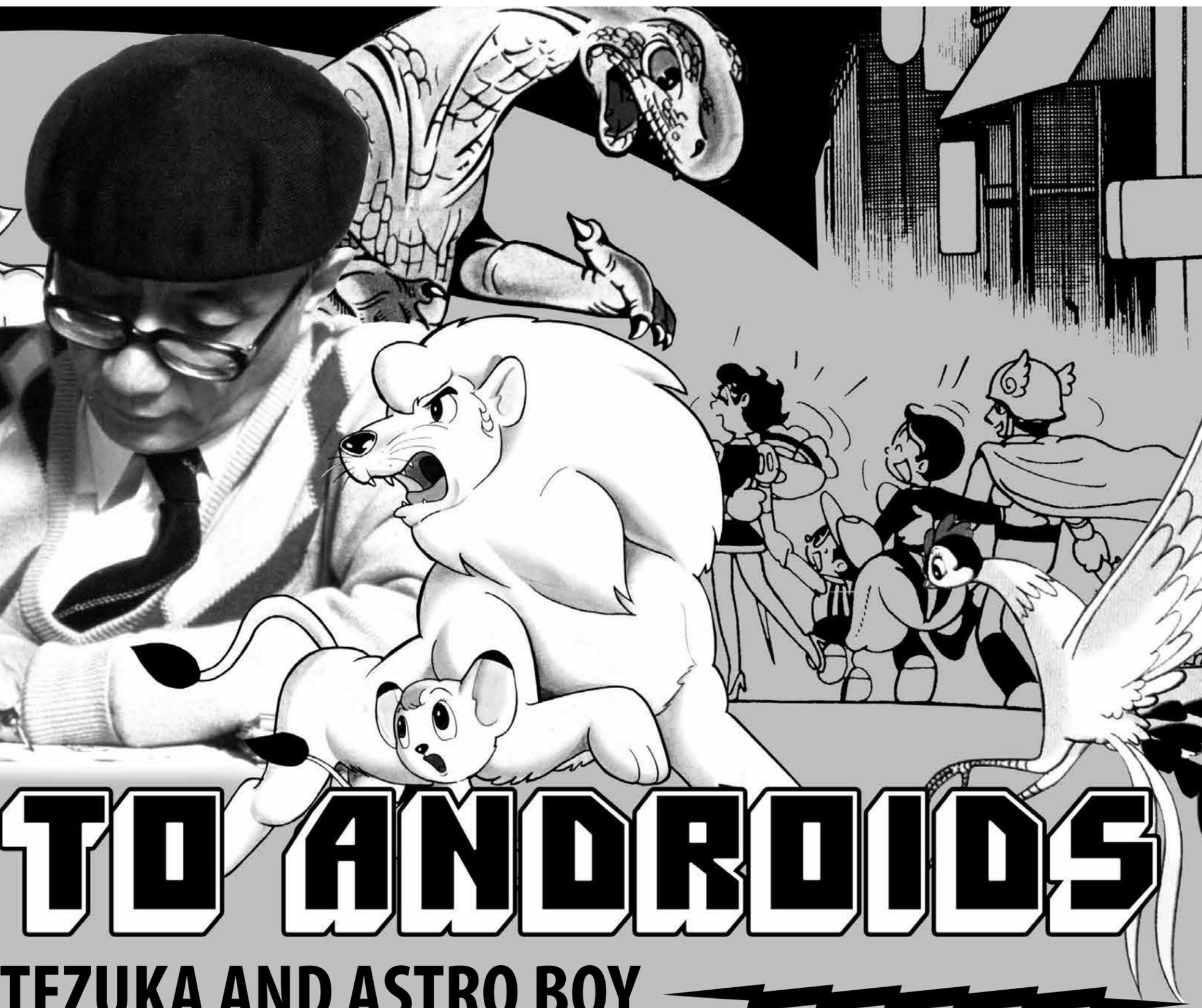
This persistence bore fruit in early 1946. At just 17 years old, Tezuka would celebrate his professional debut with *The Diary of Mā-chan* (*Mā-chan no Nikkichō*). Serialized in the children's newspaper *Shokokumin Shinbun*, the strip was a yonkoma, a traditional four-panel comic, that followed the everyday adventures of a small preschooler.

Mā-chan was an immediate sensation. Popular enough to even inspire the production of Mā-chan dolls, marking the very first instance of many Tezuka merchandise products.

The success of *The Diary of Mā-chan* caught the attention of Shichima Sakai, an established figure in the Osaka publishing scene and Tezuka's senior by twenty-three years. Recognizing the young artist's potential, Sakai pitched a collaboration, a manga based on Robert Louis Stevenson's classic adventure novel, *Treasure Island*. In exchange for Tezuka's work, Sakai promised a publishing spot with Ikuei Shuppan.

Tezuka delivered a sprawling, 250-page draft that was only loosely tethered to the original novel. Sakai trimmed the manuscript down, and it was released in January 1947 as *Shin Takarajima* (*New Treasure Island*). It was published in the akahon format.

Akahon, which literally translates to "red book," were cheaply manufactured children's comics sold through toy and candy stores. Their bright red covers were designed to catch the eyes of children on the street. Because publishers used senkashi, an inexpensive, low-



TO ANDROIDS

TEZUKA AND ASTRO BOY

quality paper, these books fell outside the strict paper regulations and censorship placed by the Allied Forces. In a country with few other sources of affordable entertainment, these “red books” were a guaranteed hit.

New Treasure Island was more than a hit, it was an overnight sensation. Selling over 400,000 copies and moving through numerous reprints, it single-handedly ignited the “akahon boom.” More importantly, it marked the birth of the “Golden Age” of manga.

At the height of this boom, as many as 600 new titles a month flooded the stands. Inspired by Tezuka’s success, other cartoonists began pivoting away from short, simple gags to produce longer, more complex narratives. However, fame brought with it a wave of imitation. Tezuka’s works were constantly pirated and his style was shamelessly copied. The market became so saturated with knock-offs that countless titles from this period featured the word *takarajima* (treasure island) just to capitalize on Tezuka’s momentum.

Throughout the remainder of 1947, Tezuka maintained a staggering pace, publishing seven more akahon volumes including *King Kong*, *Kasei Hakase (Dr. Mars)*, *Kaijin Koronko Hakase (Dr. Koronko the Mystery Man)*, *Kaitō Ōgon Bat (Great Thief Golden Bat)*, *Takarajima (Treasure Island)*, *Bat Hakase to Jim (Dr. Bat and Jim)*, and *Momōn-yama no Arashi (Storm at Mt. Momōn)*.

While none of these titles managed to eclipse the cultural phenomenon of *New Treasure Island*, they solidified Tezuka’s reputation as the most prolific and reliable hit-maker in the industry. He wasn’t just a “one-hit wonder,” he was a factory of imagination, churning out stories that would come to define the childhoods of an entire generation of post-war Japanese youth.

Despite his grueling manga schedule, Tezuka’s medical studies remained a priority. In 1948, he moved into his residency at the Osaka University Medical School Hospital. Yet, even the demands of a hospital ward couldn’t slow his pen. That February, he published *Chiteikoku no Kaijin (The Mysterious*

Underground Man), a work that signaled a sharp departure from the lighthearted adventures typical of the akahon market.

Starring Mimio, a genetically altered rabbit endowed with human intelligence, *The Mysterious Underground Man* had a complexity and emotional weight that was unprecedented in akahons of the day. Tezuka himself later regarded it as his first “true story” in the medium.

Crucially, when Tezuka saw that his young audience was not only willing to accept the story’s tragic ending but moved by it, he was emboldened to push the boundaries of the medium even further. He began to weave deeper, more sophisticated messages into his panels, infusing his work with the humanist sensibilities that would eventually define his legacy.

December 1948 brought *Lost World* to print. Originally conceived as a newspaper strip during his high school years in 1946, this ambitious epic was published as a two-volume akahon by Fuji Shobo. It was a bombastic piece of storytelling, part space travel adventure, part Jurassic Park, part Old Testament allegory, and part cautionary tale of the pitfalls of greed. Today, *Lost World* is considered one of Tezuka’s finest early works. Tezuka would later admit that the book “has no relation whatsoever to the Arthur Conan Doyle novel of the same name. I just thought it was a cool title for some reason, so I partook of it.”

Tezuka’s creative momentum was only accelerating. Just six months later, he published *Metropolis*, a 160-page story that became a seminal work and the second installment in his “Science Fiction Trilogy.” Interestingly, the story was inspired by a single image from a magazine. As Tezuka recalled, “This man-made person was based on the image of the female robot in the famous pre-war German film *Metropolis*. That said, I hadn’t seen the movie at the time and I didn’t even know what it was about.”

Within the pages of *Metropolis*, Tezuka’s “cinematic techniques,” varying camera angles, dramatic close-ups, and sweeping pans, would fully mature and later become one of his trademarks. The book also

expanded his “Star System,” a unique practice where he treated his characters like a troupe of actors, casting them in different roles across different stories. Here, he introduced the recurring “stars” Duke Red and Notarlin. Most significantly, the story birthed Michi, an artificial humanoid who served as a vital prototype for his future icons, Astro Boy and Princess Knight.

Around 1949, Tezuka began traveling to Tokyo in search of new horizons. These trips initially yielded small commissions, including a four-panel strip for *Manga to Yomimono*. However, the real breakthrough came in April 1950, when he was offered his first monthly magazine serial, *Tiger Hakase no Chin Ryokō (Dr. Tiger’s Strange Trip)*.

The transition from akahon to magazines presented a steep learning curve. Unlike the self-contained “red books,” monthly serials required a rhythmic pacing that rewarded patience. As Tezuka later reflected, “Writing eight pages a month required skill sets completely different from writing an entire book. Every segment needs to be full in content; there also needs to be a visual climax every month. Compared to other artists, my work looked plain, in addition to being hard to follow.”

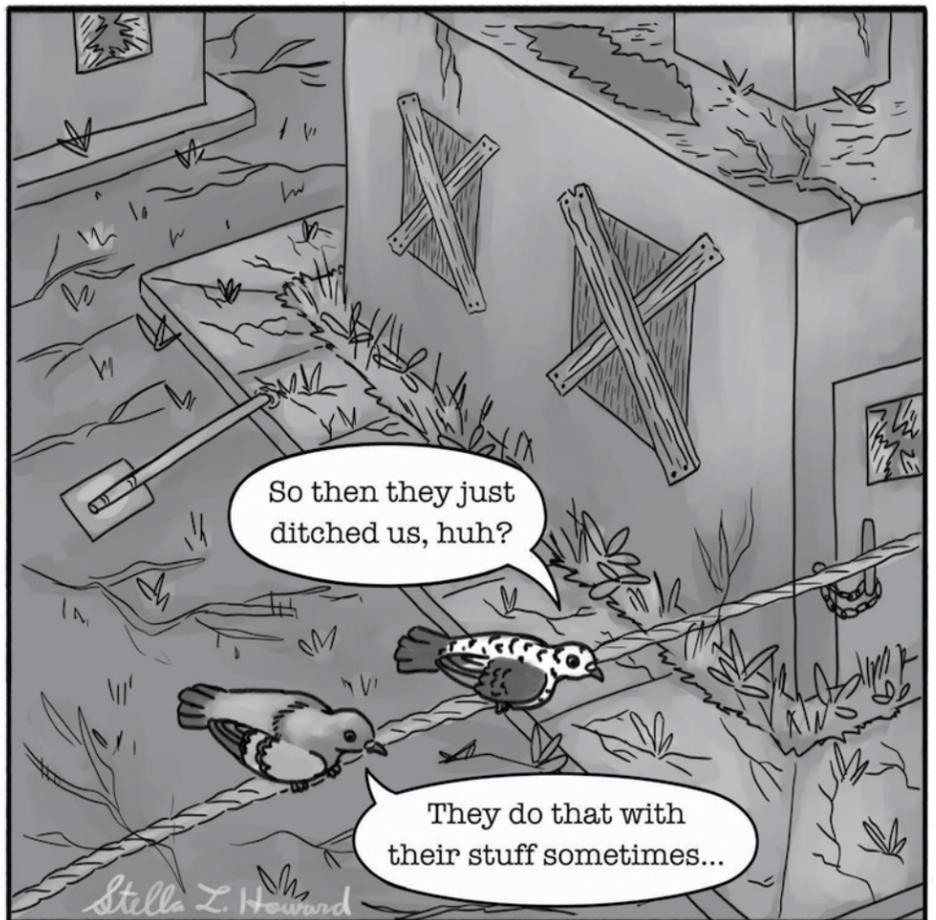
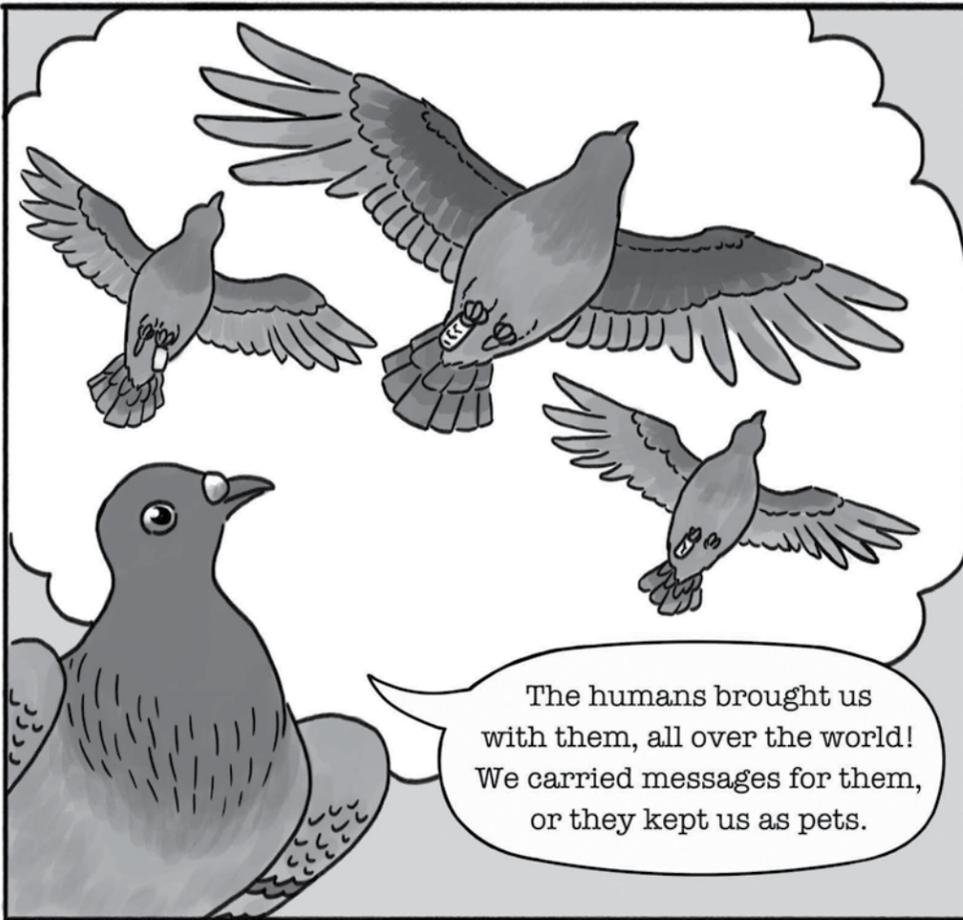
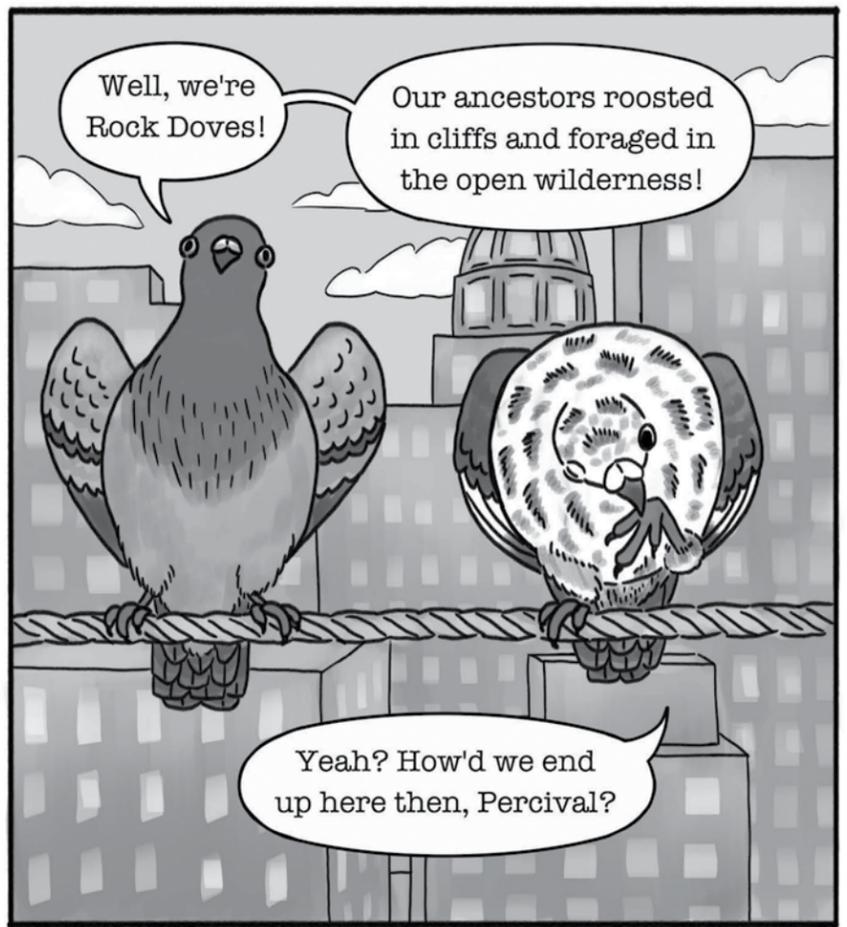
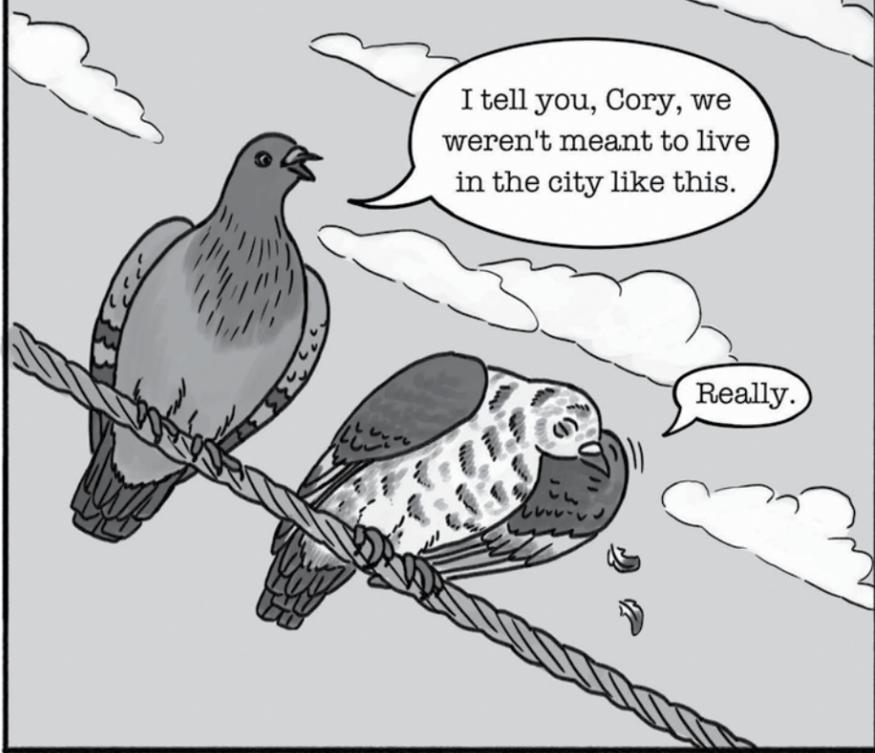
Tezuka eventually found his stride at *Manga Shōnen*, an influential Tokyo magazine aimed at adolescent boys. The publication featured a readers’ section where amateurs could submit their own work for feedback. This section became a vital resource for Tezuka; as his workload became unmanageable, he began “scouting” these talented fans to serve as his assistants. For these young artists, helping Tezuka by erasing pencil lines, “inking” solid blacks, or detailing backgrounds was considered the ultimate education. This “assistant system” would eventually become the standard training ground for the entire manga industry.

In November 1950, Tezuka launched his second magazine serial, *Jungle Taitai (Jungle Emperor)*, known internationally as *Kimba the White Lion*. The epic followed Leo (Kimba), a white lion cub who escapes

STELLA L. HOWARD

COLUMBIDAE

By Stella L. Howard



COMPLEMENTARY CULTURES

AN INTERVIEW WITH FREDERIK L. SCHODT

BY BRIAN CANINI



Widely recognized as a key figure in introducing Japanese manga to English-speaking audiences, Frederik L. Schodt is an influential American translator, interpreter, writer, and Tom Spurgeon Award winner. His seminal work, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, was the first book to examine Japanese comics for Western readers, helping ignite broader interest in manga and Japanese popular culture. Schodt has translated many classic manga works, including *Astro Boy* and *Phoenix* by Osamu Tezuka, *The Rose of Versailles* by Riyoko Ikeda, *Barefoot Gen* by Keiji Nakazawa, *The Ghost in the Shell* by Masamune Shirow, and *The Four Immigrants Manga* by Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama. Over his career, Schodt has witnessed manga's evolution from an unknown art form in North America to a cultural force that continues to grow today.

I talked to Schodt over a video call about his career, Osamu Tezuka, and the journey manga has taken in the United States. This interview was edited for length and clarity.

Brian Canini (BC): What first sparked your interest in Japan, and how did that lead to your work with manga?

Frederik L. Schodt (FS): I'm not like most Americans today who go to Japan. I didn't wake up one day at 10 years old wanting to go to Japan and become a ninja, that wasn't me.

I was 15 years old living in Australia because my father worked for the foreign service. We had long stays in each country for some reason (which was kind of unusual), but he came home one day and said, "We have new marching orders, we're going to France." I was actually remotely enrolled in the American School of Paris. Then he came back from work shortly after that and said, "Actually, everything's changed, we're not going to France, we're going to Japan."

I had no interest in going to Japan. I grew up in Norway and Australia. I didn't know much about Japan, and this was way before anyone was reading Japanese comics. I thought Japan was all jungle because in World War II, the Australians were left cleaning up after the Americans had left. They were cleaning up the Japanese forces that were still in the jungles, fighting to the death in Papua New Guinea and places like that. So my image of Japan was a jungle.

We went to Japan, and of course, I didn't speak Japanese. People weren't reading manga the way they are today in Japan. I went to an international school there, and then when I graduated left and came back to the States. When I was 20, I went on an exchange program to a university in Japan.

I was in a dormitory with all these other Japanese students, and they were all reading manga. Japan had really changed, and manga had become sort of like rock 'n' roll in the United States. It had become a sort of symbol of youth culture in Japan, which was very different from what it is today. People were very experimental and radical. Politically, Japan was in a lot of turmoil at the time, so there were huge demonstrations by university students.

What really struck me was the fact that people were reading manga, and instead of walking around campus with, you know, textbooks and whatnot, they were carrying these giant manga with 300 or more pages, sort of omnibus magazines. When I was in university in Japan, I was studying Japanese very intensively, so for me, reading manga was not only a way to learn Japanese, but also a form of relaxation, and that's when I started getting hooked on manga.

I thought it would be really great too if I could do something with manga in the future. But people in America were not interested at that point, and actually, even outside of a kind of

subculture in Japan, they were not what they are today. You didn't go into restaurants the way you do today and find manga everywhere.

After I graduated from university, I came back to the States and I was kind of a bohemian for a while, and then I went back to the same university in '75, when I was 25, to study interpreting and translation. At that point, I was deep into manga culture, and that's how I really got started.

BC: How did you first meet Osamu Tezuka, and how did that relationship shape your work?

FS: When I was 27, some friends and I put together a group called Dadakai. There were two Japanese friends and an American friend of mine. The four of us decided it would be great if we could try translating some Japanese manga and getting them published. We decided what we liked best and what we wanted to start with, and we all agreed on some artists. The one who rose to the top was Osamu Tezuka, who's kind of a legendary figure in Japan because of his role in manga.

We were able to contact his company and actually go to meet his manager. And it just so happened that while we were there, Tezuka showed up, and we were able to get permission to translate his most famous work, *Phoenix*. At that time, there were five volumes in the series that had been published; all together there are 12 volumes now. I was a big fan of that work, and so were the other people in Dadakai, because it's a graphic novel on a scale that I'd never seen in the United States. It covers the past and the future, and it converges on the present over thousands of pages.

We translated the first five volumes and handed them over to Tezuka's company, but the work collected dust for 25 years because we couldn't find a publisher. It was a very different era.

Eventually, it was published by Viz Media in San Francisco around 2002.

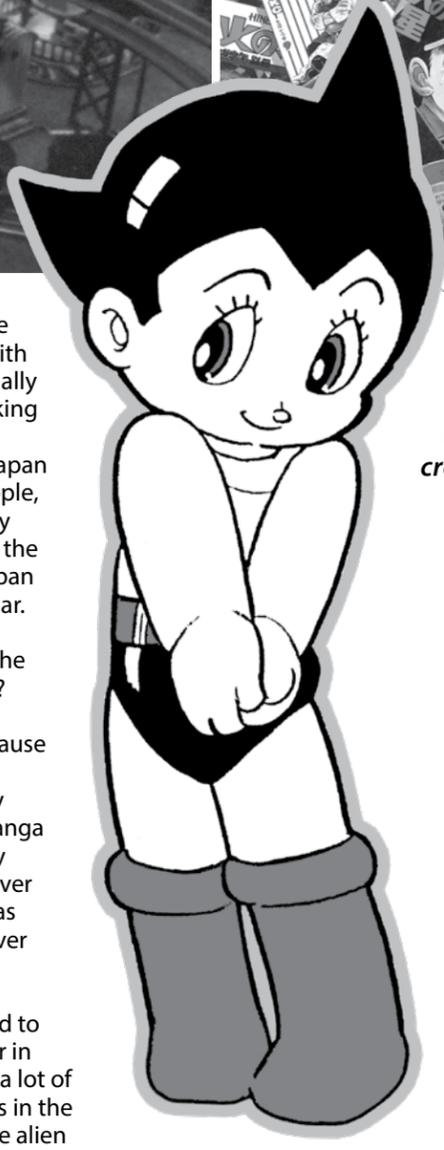
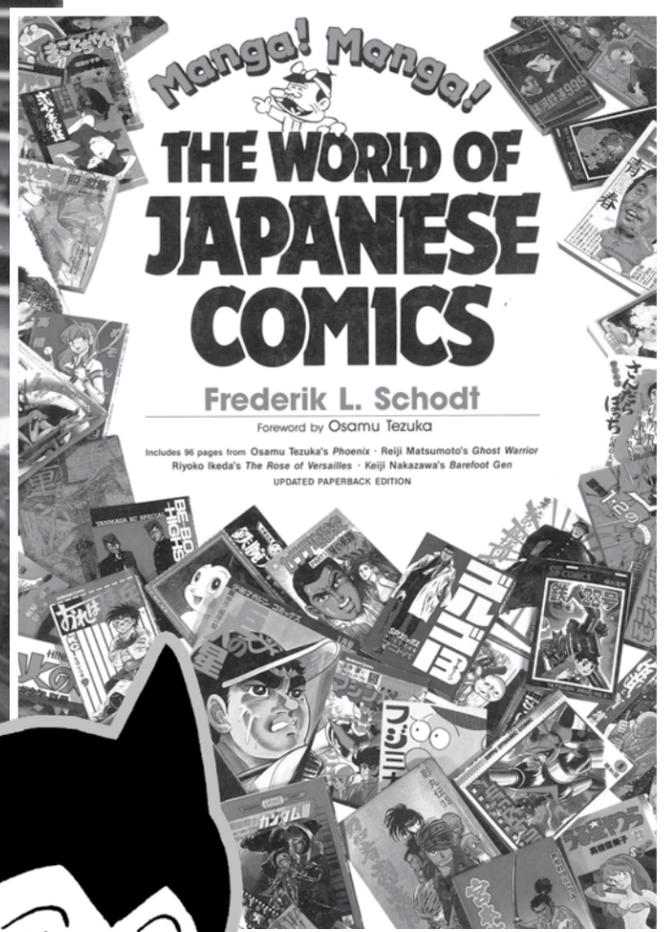
BC: Tell me about writing *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*. What led you to writing the first substantial English-language work on Japanese comics?

FS: With Dadakai, we translated five volumes of *Phoenix* and were unable to publish them. I was also involved in translating part of *Barefoot Gen*, with my friend, Jared Cook. We translated the second volume, but there were many people involved with Project Gen overall. Project Gen, I should say, was a volunteer group that was part of the anti-nuclear movement at the time. People were trying to translate this work and make it available all around the world in other languages as well as English, but it was very difficult to get any traction in the United States.

From those experiences, I knew that it was too soon, that there wasn't enough interest in North America in manga. Before people could start reading manga and before you could get any publishers interested in publishing manga in English, I knew I needed to make people aware of this interesting subculture and medium of entertainment.

That was the impetus for me to write a book about manga. I just thought people would find it amazing. How could they not? I mean, there are manga about everything, and it was such a huge industry compared to the comic industry in the United States, with a completely different approach to the comic book format.

I actually had quite a lively discussion with my editor on what to title the book. I was against using the word "manga" because I thought it would be associated with the Italian word for "eat," mangia. Also, in the library card catalogs of the day, I was afraid the book would be placed next to the word "manganese," but my editor



said, "Hey, no, let's go for something snappy. Let's put it out there."

In retrospect, he was partly responsible for popularizing the word manga, and it was good that he won the argument. Originally, the title was going to be *Japanese Comics: A New Visual Culture*.

BC: Yeah, it's probably aged a little better, too. Whenever you put "New" in a title, it's always bound to age poorly.

FS: I had no idea that manga would become as popular as they are today outside of Japan. I never imagined it. I don't know that my book played much of a role in it all, but I'm very happy that a lot of people have read the book and often wound up wanting to know more. Amazingly, after forty-two years, it's still in print and sought out by fans.

BC: In regards to Tezuka, what's your favorite of his work? Is it *Phoenix* or is it something else?

FS: *Phoenix*, yeah. But I'm also a huge *Astro Boy* fan. I translated all 23 volumes, which is, I don't know how many thousands of pages. I recommend that people read the manga and not get fixated on the anime, because the original manga, which was created in the beginning of the 1950s and ran for a of couple decades, was sort of a prophecy.

It's shocking to read it today. If you want to learn about man-machine interfaces, artificial intelligence, suicide bombers, and drug addiction problems, you should go to the original *Tetsuwan Atomu* (or *Mighty Atom*), as it's known in Japan. The stories are just incredible when you realize that Tezuka was writing in the 1950s about our world today, because "Astro" was technically "born" (created) on April 7, 2003. Most people who see the anime on TV or whatever don't understand that part, but if you read the original stories, the earliest ones now are already nearly 70 years old, and they are extraordinary. Tezuka had a real ability to think on a level that very few people do or are capable of. So that's another favorite of mine.

BC: Is there a particular work that you would recommend to a new reader for Tezuka as a place to start?

FS: Well, it always depends on what people are interested in. With Tezuka, the advantage you have is that he wasn't a normal human, he was a genius in a way. He was determined to use comics and broaden their possibilities as much as possible. So he drew for very young children and he also drew for adults. He drew stories later in life that are very provocative, many of them erotic and violent. He was all over the lot, so it's hard to recommend a specific work to someone unless you know their interests.

BC: Looking back, which manga or creator do you think most changed Western perceptions of the medium?

FS: In terms of changing people's views of comics, at least historically, if you look at the arc of how manga entered the United States, Tezuka, of course, had a very big influence on American artists. Also, *Hadashi no Gen* or *Barefoot Gen* had a big influence on Art Spiegelman and many other American artists who were exploring using comics as more of a graphic novel format, telling long arc stories.

So those are two artists who come to mind. Another might be Masamune Shirow, the author of *Ghost in the Shell*, or Katsuhiro Otomo, who created *Akira*. I'm sure it's

mainly the best-selling works that have the biggest influence, but if you talk with American artists, of course, they're usually quite agnostic, and they're always looking for something new and radical.

The depth of the manga culture in Japan and the industry is such that most people, at least in North America, just see a tiny sliver of what's out there. We don't see the many genres of manga that exist in Japan and have historically been quite popular.

BC: Can you walk me through how the translation process works for a manga?

FS: I'm sort of fading out of that because I personally don't do many manga translations anymore, but I've certainly seen the evolution of translation of manga and how it has changed. I'm personally fascinated by the process because I never imagined that manga would become as popular as it has in North America. Never imagined it.

In the beginning, of course, it was a completely different world. You needed to explain in some form or another, either in the text or even with a footnote, what a lot of Japanese things were. Like tatami mats in the houses or fusuma, all these things were alien to people in North America. When I started translating, people in North America still were not widely eating sushi. The U.S. government was recommending against eating raw fish. That has all changed. There's such a mind meld that has happened between youth culture in Japan and the United States. Japanese youth are so influenced by American culture. And North American kids are so influenced now by Japanese culture that they don't need to know what tatami mats are.

In a lot of the manga translations now, they don't even bother to translate many things. They just use the Japanese words in the text, which hard-core fans of Japanese manga often like. Some fans demand that you use words like *onii-san*, which is "older brother," or "older classmate," or they want *sensei* instead of "teacher." They want the Japanese words. It's sort of a badge of pride, I think, among hardcore North American manga fans that they know these words. They don't need them to be explained.

One of the most amazing things to me to see is that young kids today, like my grandchildren, don't mind reading right to left or left to right. They read works in Japanese page order with no problem. In fact, a lot of many manga fans now demand that translated works be published in right- to- left format, or in Japanese format. So you have kids now that'll read some of the comic graphic novels that are put out by Scholastic in left-to-right format, and then, the same day, they'll be reading something from Japan, a manga that has been translated into English, and they're reading it from right to left instead of left to right. It's incredible. I never imagined that American young people would have such a degree of what a friend of mine calls "neuroplasticity"—that they would have a flexibility that Japanese kids don't. Japanese manga readers by and large demand that their manga be read right-to-left instead of left-to-right, and when works are translated into Japanese from the United States, which happens very rarely, they generally don't do well because readers demand a certain Japanese flow, a very unique Japanese

TOP LEFT - A young Frederik looks on in the background with manga creator Osamu Tezuka at a 1979 visit to famed Disney animator Ward Kimball's California home.

TOP RIGHT - Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics was published in 1983 and offered American audiences an introduction to manga. It's considered one of the very first English-language books to examine the medium.

LEFT - Schodt received a Japan Foundation Award in 2017 in part for his work in translating Astro Boy and helping bring Osamu Tezuka's work to the world.

spacing. The works have to be read from right to left, the pages turned from right to left, and the Japanese text in the speech balloons is usually right-to-left vertical. I never imagined we'd get to the point where American readers have more flexibility than their Japanese counterparts.

In the very beginning of translating manga, everything had to be rearranged on the page. All the panels and pages, everything had to be rearranged so that Americans could read from left- to-right the way they're used to in American comic books. Even the word balloons had to be altered. There was an enormous amount of labor that went into what we called flopping the pages. In the very beginning, they used photostats that were sent from Japan, which were expensive. You'd get this large photograph of a page that had been reversed because people didn't have Photoshop or computers. So you had this physical, original art photograph that was flopped so that it would look as though the story was developing from left to right instead of right to left, but then you had to change the word balloons quite a bit. There was not only a lot of translation involved, but also a lot of touching up of the artwork, which is often not unnecessary in many of the manga that are being translated into English today.

It's true that every publisher has a different approach. There are some places that preserve the Japanese sound effects. Other places render them in English, and that requires a lot of retouching of the original art. That has all changed. It used to be so difficult and expensive to translate manga. After manga started coming out in America around 1987, there were about 17 years where everything had to be flopped. Then there was a period of upheaval in the American translated manga market, where some very clever people realized that they could persuade American readers that it was more "authentic" to read from right to left as opposed to left to right. That became a sales slogan. Then you had some companies that were still flopping everything very painstakingly, and as a friend of

TIM BEVINS

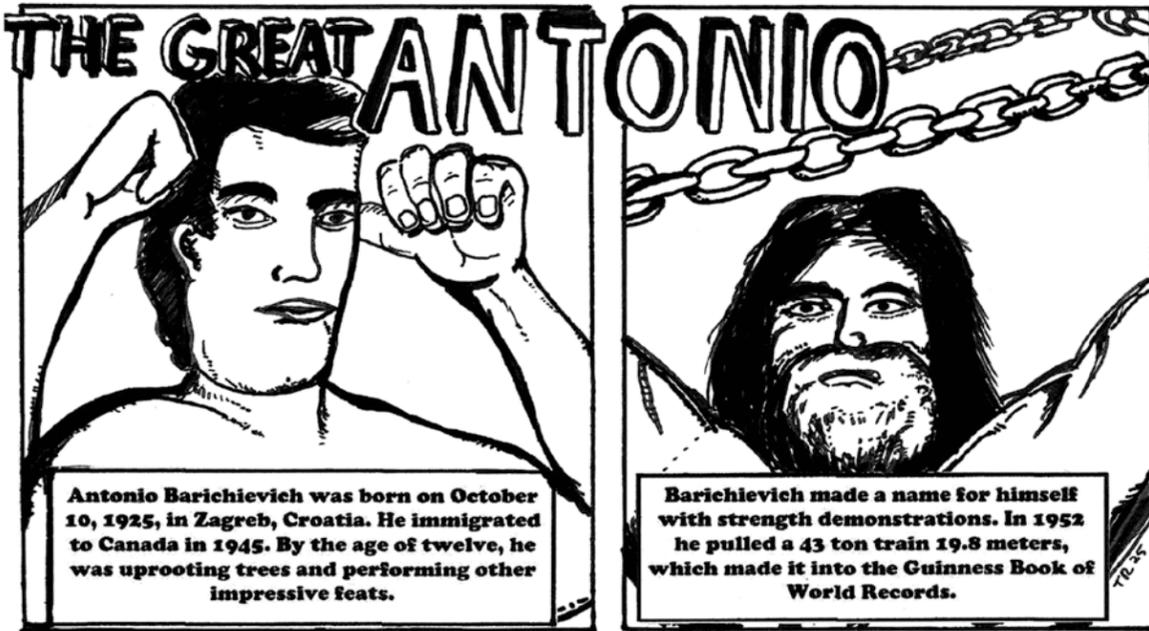
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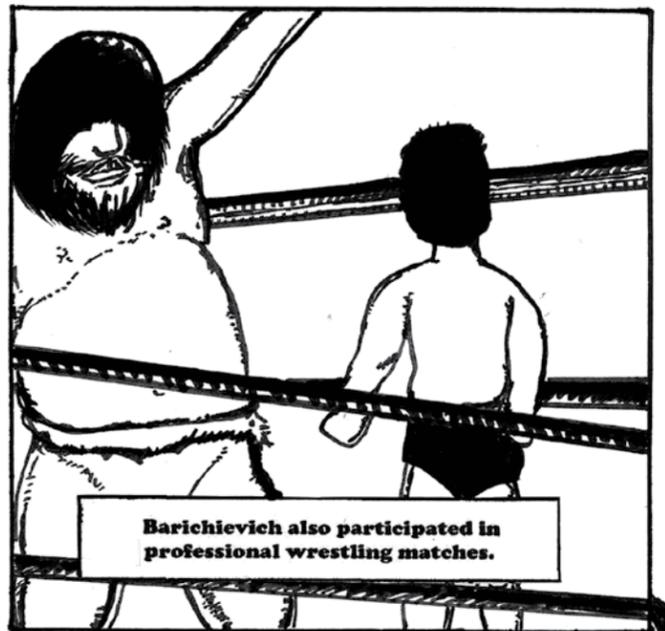


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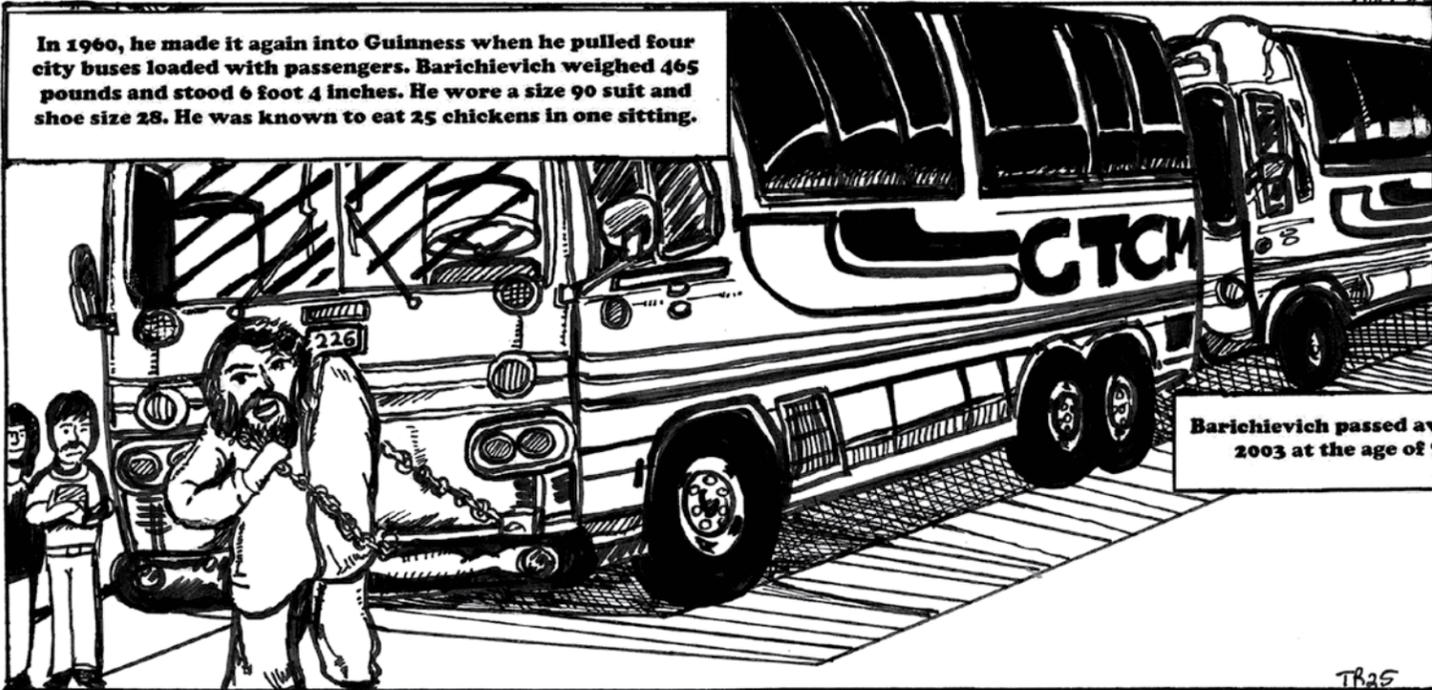


Antonio Barichievich was born on October 10, 1925, in Zagreb, Croatia. He immigrated to Canada in 1945. By the age of twelve, he was uprooting trees and performing other impressive feats.

Barichievich made a name for himself with strength demonstrations. In 1952 he pulled a 43 ton train 19.8 meters, which made it into the Guinness Book of World Records.



Barichievich also participated in professional wrestling matches.



In 1960, he made it again into Guinness when he pulled four city buses loaded with passengers. Barichievich weighed 465 pounds and stood 6 foot 4 inches. He wore a size 90 suit and shoe size 28. He was known to eat 25 chickens in one sitting.

Barichievich passed away in 2003 at the age of 77



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And the dirty sweat pants I found in the woods! Over 15 million views and counting!

LICKED

And who can forget when I licked that holy relic! It was just a prank!

LICKED

Yet, I'd never have my Bugatti or fabulous Lick Manor without a strong microbiome keeping me healthy!

That's why I've partnered with **BIOME BLYSS!**

Created by health theorists as the perfect energy drink to get your gut grind on!

Inside us all is a network of microfauna that play a crucial role in maintaining the "Lick" lifestyle!

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When you reach your peak, your microbiome will be able to expand beyond your body and spread throughout your environment! Just check out this satisfied customer's **TESTIMONIAL!**

Thanks to **BIOME BLYSS**, my microbiome took over the whole house! Who cares if my husband left me?

Before long, I was duking it out with the neighbor's microbiome for dominion over the street!

We would have totally conquered all if not for that "Karen" calling the cops!

My microbiome's got rights!

You can watch the whole body-cam online! The comments are all totally on my side, too!

POLICE STOP MICROBIOME RAMPAGE

- I drank with my microbiome
- MICROBIOME LITERALLY DO NOTHING! PRICE!
- Free Micro Bismuth!
- I smell! (actual poisoning)

Jail isn't so bad, though. I'm pretty confident when my mom smuggles me in a couple shots of **BIOME BLYSS** -

- the cell block will be ours!

That body cam vid was off the chain! Drop a like in support of my girl there!

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COMPLEMENTARY CULTURES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

mine said of these manga, "in a way they were over-engineered."

Of course, for publishers, when they realized that there was a hardcore base of manga fans in North America who actually wanted their manga to be as authentic and as close to the original Japanese as possible, they realized they could save a ton of money. Then in a very short time, people started reading manga or publishing manga in English without flopping the pictures. The artists in Japan also loved that because artists often hate to see their art reversed/mirror-imaged because if they have any weaknesses in their drawing, it often makes the weaknesses more pronounced, at least in their minds anyway. Then, of course, if you take a baseball comic and you flop the story, the players are all running around the bases in the wrong direction. And the samurai all become left-handed, which is a total no-no in Japan.

So there are problems with flopping and there's problems with non-flopping, but it's just amazing the way it has all worked out.

BC: How do you decide when to stay faithful to the original text versus when to make it more accessible to Western readers?

FS: My philosophy is the same whether I'm translating manga or a novel, to do it in a way that is as faithful as possible to the original, but still not make people think that it's a translation. You don't want people to think that they're reading a translation, you want them to enjoy the work the way it's meant to be enjoyed, and sometimes that's not possible with translating manga, but that's a goal.

BC: Are there Japanese words or cultural

ideas that are especially difficult or even impossible to translate into English?

FS: Yeah, a lot of the onomatopoeia in Japanese manga is a bit tricky. Japanese has a lot of onomatopoeia, and in manga, the artists often enjoy experimenting with these sound-effect words. For example, you might see an artist use the word "suron" to describe the sound of pouring of cream into coffee. Another one that's famous is the sound effect "shiin," which means "silence." We don't have a word for that in English, but there are things you can substitute, and if you have to, you can always just write "silence" or something like that.

Then, of course, with anything that involves humor, you're getting into a thicket of thorns because Japanese humor often relies on puns, and puns don't translate. So you have to think of some equivalent in English that might work, or at least elicit a laugh in the same way.

For humor involving real puns, direct translation can become impossible. Some of the works that were translated early on and, that were brought over to the United States, like Takahashi Rumiko's work, *Urusei Yatsura* (*Those Obnoxious Aliens*) or *Ranma 1/2*, well, a lot of that relies on puns, and a lot of that sort of work had to be largely rewritten.

Sometimes, in certain scenes, you have to rewrite the text to make humor work the way the artist intended it. You might have to tell a joke in a different way, to solicit a similar laugh from the American reader. So you'd have to insert a more American kind of joke in there. The Japanese puns often don't work in a way that makes sense, and the hardest thing of all is to translating a pun that is connected to a visual element.

I'm very proud of a scene I translated in *Astro Boy* where there's a character who's talking with some kids, and there's a robot dog, and then there's one panel where the kid tells the dog to "roll over." He says "o-mari," which in Japanese literally means to turn and roll over. Now, Tezuka had a wacky sense of humor. He always loved to

sort of explode a scene when it was getting too serious, so he would put in something totally nonsensical. So you turn the page of this story, and suddenly there's a policeman who appears.

The joke is that in Japanese, the word for policeman is "omari-san," or someone who makes the "rounds." So it "sounds" the same as the command to the dog, of "roll over." So when the kid tells the robot dog to roll over, you suddenly have this policeman appear and he says "You called me?" This works in Japanese, but not so easily in English. I was able to change it a little bit. The joke that I inserted there has the kid saying to the dog, "Roll over, please," but the "please" is spelled "puh-leeze" (which sounds a bit like "police"). Then, when you turn the page and it's the policeman, he says "You called?" It may be strained, but it kind of works in English. That's one of the rare occasions where there's a visually-linked pun that kind of worked. It's something I'm very proud of to this day.

BC: What advice would you give to readers interested in translation, cultural studies, or Japan?

FS: Well, I think manga is a wonderful way to learn about Japan and Japanese culture. Also, now of course there's also Korean manhwa, and there's Chinese manhua, so it's a global thing. If you read Japanese manga you certainly can learn a lot about Japanese culture, and if you're interested in learning a language, it's a great aid, even if you're reading it in translation. I've noticed that kids who read a lot of manga and really get hooked on manga, if they later on decide they want to learn Japanese, they tend to learn much faster because they already know a lot of the cultural aspects and the differences in human relationships that can be baffling to Americans. I always recommend that people who, if they like manga, to read more of them. It's a great way to learn about another culture.

In terms of translation, I don't have any good advice for young people who dream



of becoming translators. That's really tough. I don't think it's a viable way to make a living today, and even less so in the future, partly because of AI. It's a new world. I also meet a lot of young people who want to go to Japan to become a manga artist, and if they knew how difficult it is to be one, they wouldn't want to become one. It's a difficult life, even if you're making a lot of money, and everybody loves you, and you're famous.

BC: After a lifetime of cultural exchange, what still excites you about Japan today?

FS: I love Japan. I love the language, and I've been so involved with Japan most of my life that it's a kind of a second home, you might say. It's also a great way to learn about the United States. The more you get to know Japan, the more then you see things about the United States that become interesting and seem very unique. They're very complementary cultures in many ways.

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PICKS FROM THE SHELF

Comic Reviews by Steve Steiner



NAUSICÄÄ OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND

by Hayao Miyazaki

Perhaps my favorite manga, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* is an acclaimed series by Hayao Miyazaki. As a co-founder of Studio Ghibli, Miyazaki is an interesting figure you may already be familiar with. He directed many feature length animated movies that even a relative anime neophyte like myself recognize. *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), and *The Boy and the Heron* (2023) were all hits both in Japan and the United States. His (arguably) greatest film, *Spirited Away* (2001), became the highest-grossing film ever in Japan and earned him an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. Yet before Studio Ghibli and international fame came *Nausicaä*.

Despite his already burgeoning animation career, Miyazaki was lured to try his hand at manga by the editors of *Animage* magazine. Thus, *Nausicaä* was launched, serialized intermittently from 1982 through 1994. Today, it is considered a powerful commentary on environmentalism and man's impact on the Earth.

A thousand years after a global war that caused environmental cataclysm, the world has yet to recover. Humanity stands at the brink, caught between warring kingdoms and the threat of the Sea of Corruption, an expanding toxic forest protected by mutant insects and the mighty Ohmu. Some say the Sea is punishment for mankind's pollution of the world, a purging of what once was.

Nausicaä is the teenage princess of a small nation that is dwindling in population due to its proximity to the poisonous miasma of the fungal jungle. Her father, King Jhil, is also slowly dying of the same plague that afflicts his lands, prompting Nausicaä to explore the dangerous world of the Sea of Corruption for a cure. As the story progresses, Nausicaä matures into the leader her people need, leaning on the support from her mentor Lord Yupa and fox squirrel Teto. She leads her kingdom into battle with the Dorok Empire and embraces the uncanny connection she has with the Ohmu.

Miyazaki creates an extraordinary world that is both pre-industrial, with sword wielding warriors, and also stocked with advanced technology, like flying warships. Much of the series' action takes place in aerial dogfights, which also gives it a futuristic feel despite the inclusion of standard fantasy paradigms, like royalty and medieval weapons. Nausicaä is hardly ever without her Mehve glider, a dynamic vehicle that becomes just as important as any of the other supporting characters (think Han Solo's Millennium Falcon or the DeLorean from *Back to the Future*).

As much fun as it is to see Miyazaki illustrate the different fight scenes, I think the way he depicts the ominous Sea of Corruption is what elevates *Nausicaä* into the classic it is today. One of my favorite scenes is when Nausicaä and her subjects detect toxic fungus in a beloved 500 year old tree. They come to the sad conclusion there is no saving it and must immediately burn it to stop the spread. This very small part of the overall story, only two pages, highlights the sense of dread and hopelessness Nausicaä's people find themselves in. It's just an example of one of the emotional building blocks that lends a compelling sense of spirituality to *Nausicaä*.

I can't recommend *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* enough and I think it's a great place to start if you're just getting into manga.

GON

by Masashi Tanaka

Gon is probably the second manga I ever read (with *Ghost in the Shell* being the first) back in the long ago time that I frequently refer back to, the late 1990s. Protagonist Gon is a stubby dinosaur with an attitude. A creature out of time, seemingly stranded in our modern day as the last of his kind. His adventures typically revolve around his interactions with various animals, both real and imagined. Tanaka's story formula often has

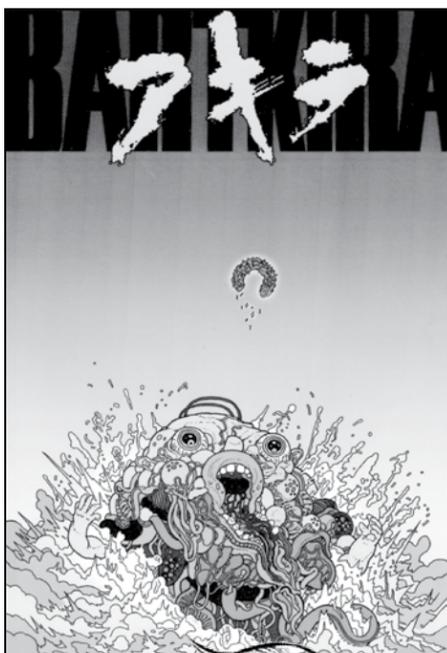
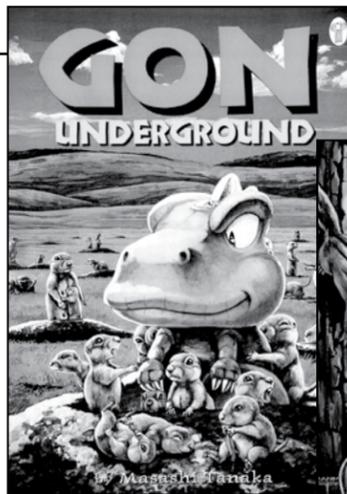
him teaming up with some friendly animals to fight off predators.

His stories are episodic, rarely worrying about carrying continuity from story to story. In one adventure, Gon might be part of a brood of hatchlings in an eagle's nest fighting off a hungry bobcat. Another he's undertaking a sprawling underground journey, fighting giant insects, arachnids, and bats.

Perhaps the most charming aspect of *Gon*, however, is he never utters a word. Tanaka's series is entirely wordless, forgoing sound effects, captions, and dialogue of any kind. It offers a kind of stoic moodiness to Gon, that in some odd way reminds me of a Clint Eastwood character. In a way, Gon is the anti-hero version of Nintendo's Yoshi (the famous dinosaur friend of Mario). He never hesitates to defend his friends, pummeling his foes until they are so battered and bruised they can hardly stand.

Not only does the wordless nature of *Gon* make for a great all ages book, it places an even greater emphasis on the art. Tanaka's renderings of Gon's world are my favorite aspect of the series. The way he portrays the various expressions of the animal characters is top notch, creating a blend of realism and cartooning.

According to my research, *Gon* saw publication through 7 volumes from 1991 through 2002, with a short stint as an animated series from 2012-2015. It seems you can still find past digest-sized books fairly affordably online.



BARTKIRA

by various artists

Bartkira is exactly what it sounds like - a fan fiction mash up of Matt Groening's *The Simpsons* and the seminal cyberpunk manga *Akira* by Katsuhiro Otomo.

I'm sure most of you are at least aware of the *Simpsons*, as it is the longest running American animated series and sitcom with over 800 episodes aired over the decades. The archetypal family first debuted in 1987 on *The Tracey Ullman Show* as animated shorts. Their series launched in 1989 and have never looked back.

Akira was originally serialized over 120 chapters from 1982 to its conclusion in 1990. It was highly influential in the United States during its run, with Marvel Comics even publishing color volumes of the work. Otomo's classic is set in the post-apocalyptic world of Neo-Tokyo and focuses on a teenage biker gang led by Kaneda (featured last issue as #49 in our "50 Greatest Characters" article). When his friend Tetsuo begins to develop powerful psychic abilities, Kaneda attempts to stop his deadly rampage through the city. The story culminates in Tetsuo's iconic out-of-control mutation into a grotesque mass of flesh.

Now imagine that with *Simpsons* characters instead. Bart takes on the central role of Kaneda and Milhouse as Tetsuo. Neo-Tokyo is now Springfield and the wider cast of Principal Skinner, Flanders, Moe, Krusty, Nelson, and the others fill in the gaps as needed.

Based on an original idea by artist (and Ohio native) Ryan Humphrey, cartoonist James Harvey took the concept and turned it into an ambitious labor of love. Since 2013, over 500 artists from around the world have contributed to *Bartkira*, recreating Otomo's epic page-by-page. The combined work of so many has an almost "anthology" effect, as different stylistic interpretations blend together. Yet, with the framework intact, it works as a seamless narrative. You can feel the deep love these creators have for both of these properties and it even inspired a bonafide viral animated trailer that took 31 animators nine months to complete.

I found a few printed collections around different sites online, but they seem to all be used and highly marked up in price. The softback version published by Floating World Comics I picked up at CXC some years ago currently ranges between \$70 to \$250 on ebay. Yikes! Fortunately, thanks to the tireless efforts of James Harvey and those behind *Bartkira*, it's free to read online at bartkira.com. *Bartkira* is a fun love letter to both properties from fans worldwide. You'll never see the familiar faces of Springfield the same!

FROM ASHES TO ANDROIDS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

captivity to return to Africa and lead the animal kingdom after the death of his parents.

Over the next four years, *Jungle Emperor* became a flagship feature for *Manga Shōnen*, proving that manga could deliver cinematic storytelling with profound moral depth. Decades later, the series would enter the global zeitgeist once more when striking similarities appeared between it and Disney's *The Lion King*, a fascinating full-circle moment for a creator who grew up idolizing Walt Disney.

By the end of 1951, Tezuka's influence was inescapable. He held slots in almost every major boys' magazine in Tokyo. *Saboten-kun* (*Young Cactus*) in *Shōnen Gahō* was a Wild West comedy about a milk-drinking hero. *Lulu no Shinkai* (*The New World of Lulu*) in *Manga to Yomimono* followed boy cartoonist Rock who is kidnapped and taken to a mysterious new world. In *Shōnen Club* he created *Rock bōkenki* (*Adventures of Rock*), a sci-fi series about an expedition to the mysterious Planet Deimon. At this point, Tezuka was a household name, but his most iconic creation was only just beginning around the corner.

In April 1951, in the pages of *Shōnen* magazine, the world would finally meet a small robot who would change everything. The series *Atomu Taishi* (*Captain Atom*) would explore themes of immigration and xenophobia, following a group of space aliens attempting to settle on Earth. While the series lasted only a year, its July issue featured the debut of a supporting character, Atom, a boy-robot who would soon eclipse the rest of the cast.

In 1952, the character moved into his own series, *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Mighty Atom*), known globally as *Astro Boy*. Over 112 chapters spanning sixteen years, the manga followed Atom, a 100,000-horsepower android created by the grieving Dr. Tenma to replace his deceased son. Set in the then-distant future of 2003, the series explored themes of humanity, discrimination, and robot rights, becoming a global phenomenon that sold over 100 million copies.

Reflecting on the character's design, Tezuka later noted, "I was unconsciously influenced by Mickey Mouse. Astro Boy resembles him. Mickey has two ears. Astro Boy has two horns. In fact, they are not 'horns' at all, but licks of hair."

As *Astro Boy's* popularity soared, Tezuka reached a personal crossroads. In 1953, he completed his medical residency and passed

the national exam to become a licensed physician. However, his "true calling" was now undeniable. He chose to abandon his medical career and move permanently to Tokyo, committing himself to the life of a full-time cartoonist. That same year, he released his final akahon work, an ambitious adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, marking the end of one era and the definitive beginning of another.

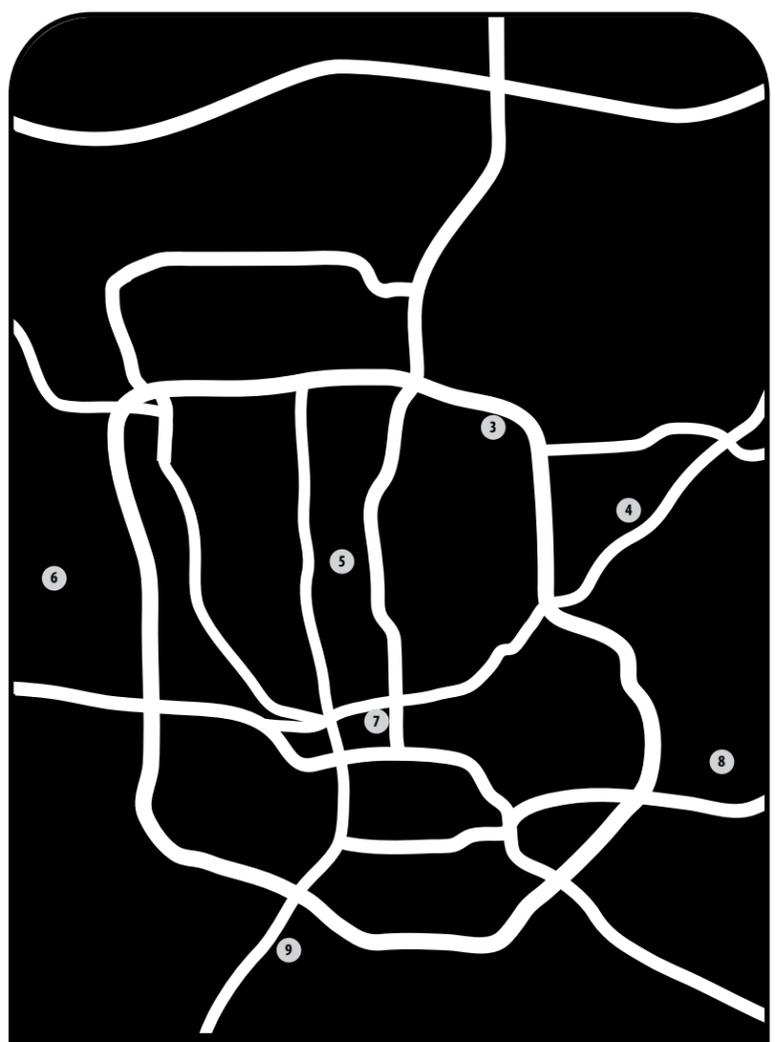
Tezuka would go on to create a staggering 150,000 pages of comics for 600 different titles. He didn't just participate in genres, he invented them giving a wider breath of possibilities for what manga could be and what it could become. His work fundamentally reshaped the cultural landscape of Japan, earning him the title he still holds today, the "God of Manga."

His ambition eventually extended beyond the page and onto the screen. He became a guiding force for the nascent anime industry, producing 60 animated works that set the template for modern Japanese animation. In a life cut short at age 60 by stomach cancer, Tezuka amassed a body of work that would typically require several lifetimes to achieve.

His death in 1989 sent shockwaves through Japan, triggering an unprecedented wave of national mourning. On February 10, the day after his passing, the *Asahi Shimbun* ran an editorial that perhaps best summarized his singular legacy, "Why do Japanese love manga, or comics, so much? To foreigners it apparently seems odd but why don't they read them as much as we do? One answer is that they didn't have Osamu Tezuka."

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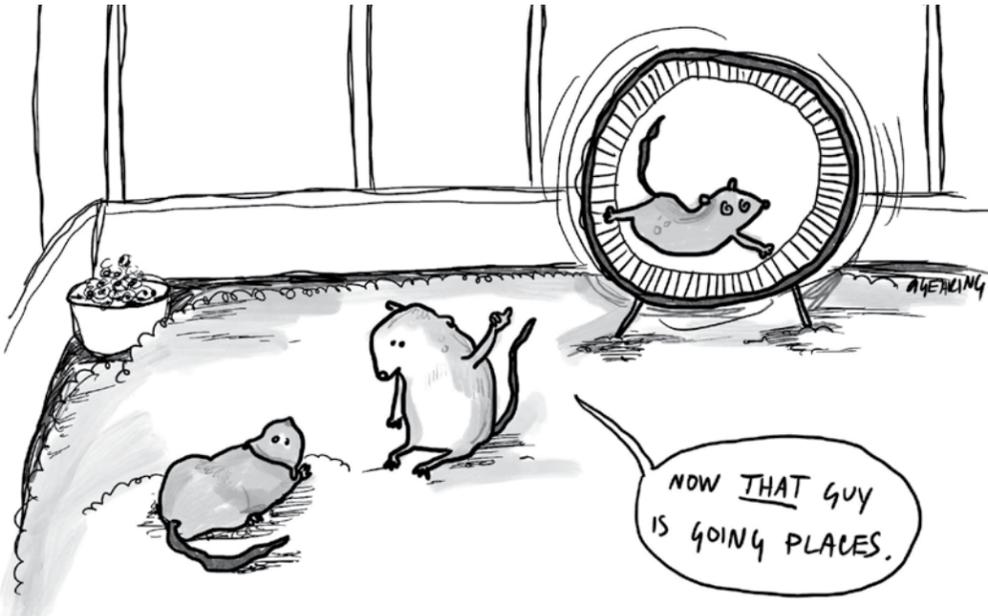
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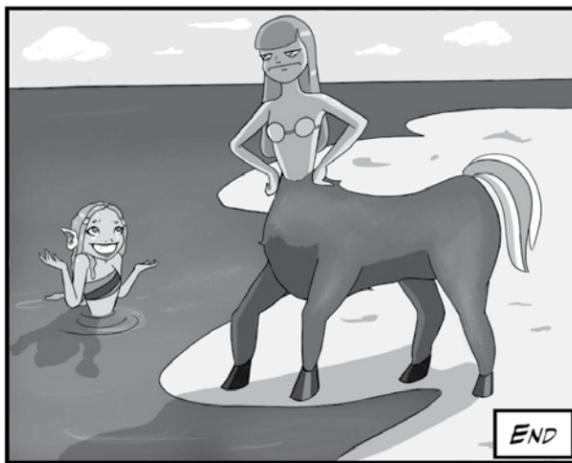
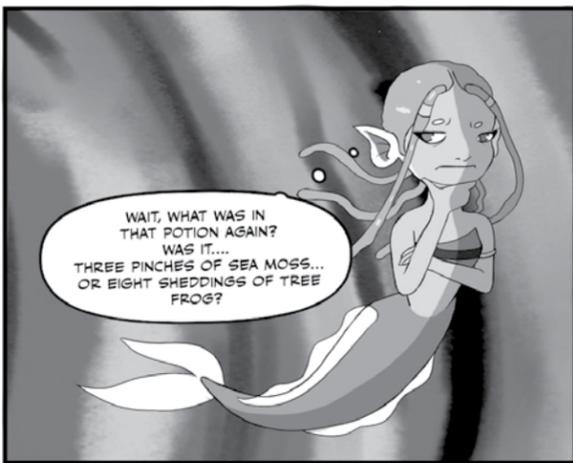
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CONTRIBUTORS



KENNETH ACHEAMPONG
instagram.com/
kennethheartist777



TIM BEVINS
instagram.com/
creaturesbytim



ANDREW W. BENNETT
instagram.com/
andrewwesleybennett



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