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MAKING IT JUST IN TIME: AUTHOR-CREATOR MATSUMOTO TAIYŌ

Natsume Fusanosuke | September 20, 2021

“Ma ni atta sakka: Matsumoto Taiyō”

from Volume 4 of Shōgakukan’s *Manga Artist* series: *The Matsumoto Taiyō Book* (2018)



Translated by Jon Holt and Teppei Fukuda

My Encounter with Matsumoto Taiyō

The first time I can remember encountering Matsumoto Taiyō’s work was probably when he released his short story collection, *Blue Spring (Aoi haru - Matsumoto Taiyō tanpenshū)* [stories published from 1990 to 1993; Shōgakukan, 1993]. All of the stories concern a bunch of young dudes -- full of desires, frustrations, and violent tendencies -- and no chance they can ever get past those things. I thought to myself at that time, “Ah, I bet this stuff means a lot to readers in their teens, but they don’t really do anything for me.” After all, I was a man in my forties, so this stuff wasn’t on my radar as I was busy becoming a grown-up. Keep in mind that Taiyō himself was just in his early twenties. So, it really wasn’t that unnatural for him to write about life like that.

Something else too kept me from appreciating his manga: there was a roughness (*arasa*) and violence (*bōryōkusei*) to his line and his pictures. I just didn’t like it. Man, it was a bit too extreme. Well, it seemed like that. I felt that it was, in a way, quite similar to Ōtomo Katsuhiro’s themes that one sees in his early period of his short-story manga, which I encountered when I was in my twenties. Back then, it’s true, I was young, but I felt that Ōtomo Katsuhiro’s pictures and compositions had more sophistication and fashion - they definitely had more in their time than Matsumoto’s did at that point. For me, Taiyō was “hard to read” (*yominikuatta*). That is the best way to put it.

The person who helped me dispel my reservations about his work and suddenly got me to become a Taiyō fan was an editor at Shōgakukan. Thankfully, out of the blue, this person sent me a huge package of Taiyō manga paperbacks, landing with a thud on my doorstep. I believe it was shortly before I was due to take up Taiyō on our regular NHK Broadcast Satellite show,

Broadcast Satellite Manga Night Talks (BS Manga yawa, a series that ran from 1996 to 2009). If I have it right, then most likely it was shortly before the *Hana-otoko* show that aired on August 30, 1996.

There was *ZERO* (1990-1991), *Hana-otoko* [cover subtitle in English: “A Boy Meets a Papa and Baseball”, 1991-1992], *Tekkonkinkreet* (1993-1994) - all of which were featured in the pages of *Big Comic Spirits* magazine. I read them all at once. They knocked my socks off. Truly, it must have been around the beginning of *Ping Pong* and its serialization (in *Big Comic Spirits* from 1996 to 1997) that we get to the period in his career where he is what everyone is talking about - he is gaining popularity even outside of the core manga-fan territory. He really had crossed over.

It was then that I was really amazed at Japan’s best manga editors and the deep love they had for manga and their ability to spread manga to the world. “For God’s sake, please just read this guy - he’s so awesome!” I still remember those forceful words. Without a doubt, because of the persuasive power of that editor, who sent Taiyō’s books to me all at once, Taiyō moved up into the manga major leagues. That editor helped him get recognized in the world of Japanese comics for his talent -- but even with such a talent like that, if luck had not gone his way, he could have ended up disappearing, completely unsold and never to be heard from again.

In 1987 at the age of 20 he made his debut in Kōdansha’s *Morning (Mōningu)* comics magazine, but for a long time Taiyō had not been able to find a hit. Taiyō himself tells the story of that fateful meeting with this important editor.

Kōdansha debuted me and they let me draw a number of books for them, but I couldn’t break out and win any popularity. So it was at that point, where it seemed like I wasn’t going to appear any longer in stuff like *Morning*, that I asked for someone from Young Sunday [publisher] to put in a word for me, and then I started doing talks with people at Shōgakukan. It was Mr. Horii Yasuki, the editor of the magazine, who suddenly showed up and asked me, ‘Are you Matsumoto Taiyō?’ (Laughs). He then kindly told me, ‘Give it a go with us.’ That’s how it happened.[1]

Taiyō says that it was Horii who also supplied him the idea of doing a manga on boxing that later became *ZERO*.

Evaluating Matsumoto Taiyō’s Place in Manga

Japan holds the record for having the largest domestic market of manga, which is “the biggest cultural commodity in our mass-consumption society,”[2] and manga tends to be considered as a form of entertainment enjoyed by the masses in this country. So, we can understand how Matsumoto Taiyō’s works are notable for their “entertainment” (*goraku*) value, which can be extremely close to art. On the other hand, it might be appreciated purely as “art”, if it existed in the world of French *bande dessinée* (BD), which is known worldwide for its sheer artistry. And, in France, it is no surprise that Taiyō’s manga are extremely popular, but in Japan, of course we should acknowledge how much people find value in these repetitive genre works (*keiretsu sakuhin*), like “sports manga”, “hot-blooded” (*nekketsu*) sports stories, “shōnen (boys’) manga”, and so on. Yet, Matsumoto’s genre manga operate at the meta level, criticizing their own genres, and that is why even intellectuals accept his work. Even without such “criticality”, his works still have great “entertainment” quality. (I digress, but it is only in Japan that you have a diversity of thematic genres, like “sports manga”, “food [*gurume*] manga”, as well as a comics market that is driven by distinctions in genre, which often break down into discrete factors, like age and gender, so you have manga markets for “boys”, for “girls”, for “[male] adults” [*seinen*] and for “ladies” [*josei*].)

The name recognition of “Matsumoto Taiyō” perhaps peaked with the realistic film adaptation of his *Ping Pong (Pin pon*, 2002). If that is true, I think it is fair to say our NHK program, *Broadcast Satellite Manga Night Talks*, played an important role in getting his manga recognized. However, it was on one of those shows that a guest, the actress Kayama Rika, made this astute remark:

“Don’t you think,” she asked, “that Taiyō’s work is a lot like the manga equivalent of a *fumi-e*?” [Translators’ note: *fumi-e* are the images of Jesus or Mary that samurai officials in the Edo Period forced Japanese Christians to step on in order to force them to apostatize.] “Once you say you hate his stuff, you really are no longer fit to call yourself a person who loves manga.”[3]

Some might call her impression “sophisticated” (or: pretentious). At any rate, the very existence of it tells that, at least around the time of *Ping Pong*, Matsumoto was beginning to gain a special place in the manga reader community. For example, the critic Takekuma Kentarō said on the same show that readers used to typically find Matsumoto’s work hard to read, but that was because he had a drawing style where his line made it hard to discern the characters from their backgrounds.[4] (By the way, this is also something that started a long time ago, beginning with Ōtomo.) In other words, he was an artist about whom people would say things like, “If I say he is good, people think of me as a person who has a great understanding of manga, even though he is actually quite hard to read...”

If we approach it from another angle -- and I think I heard this from Takekuma -- because Matsumoto had such influence on people at this time, there was a rumor going around that the new manga artist applicants to magazines were all doing drawings like Matsumoto. It is well known that Ōtomo Katsuhiko changed the look of manga. I myself have written about his influence, but there are people who consider that what Ōtomo did for manga in the 20th century, Matsumoto Taiyō is doing for manga now.

When *GoGo Monster (GOGO Monsutā* [Shōgakukan]) came out in 2000, Miyamoto Hirohito, who was at that time a young manga scholar, wrote this:

Although Matsumoto works mainly for the big publishing companies and appears in the high-circulation weekly young adult (*seinen*) manga magazines, this is an artist who truly has a well-structured view of his world, and he can express that with great skill in both drawing and composition. His talent is so unusual, and he has an almost cult-like following. That is probably how people see Matsumoto.[5]

The Age of Ping Pong

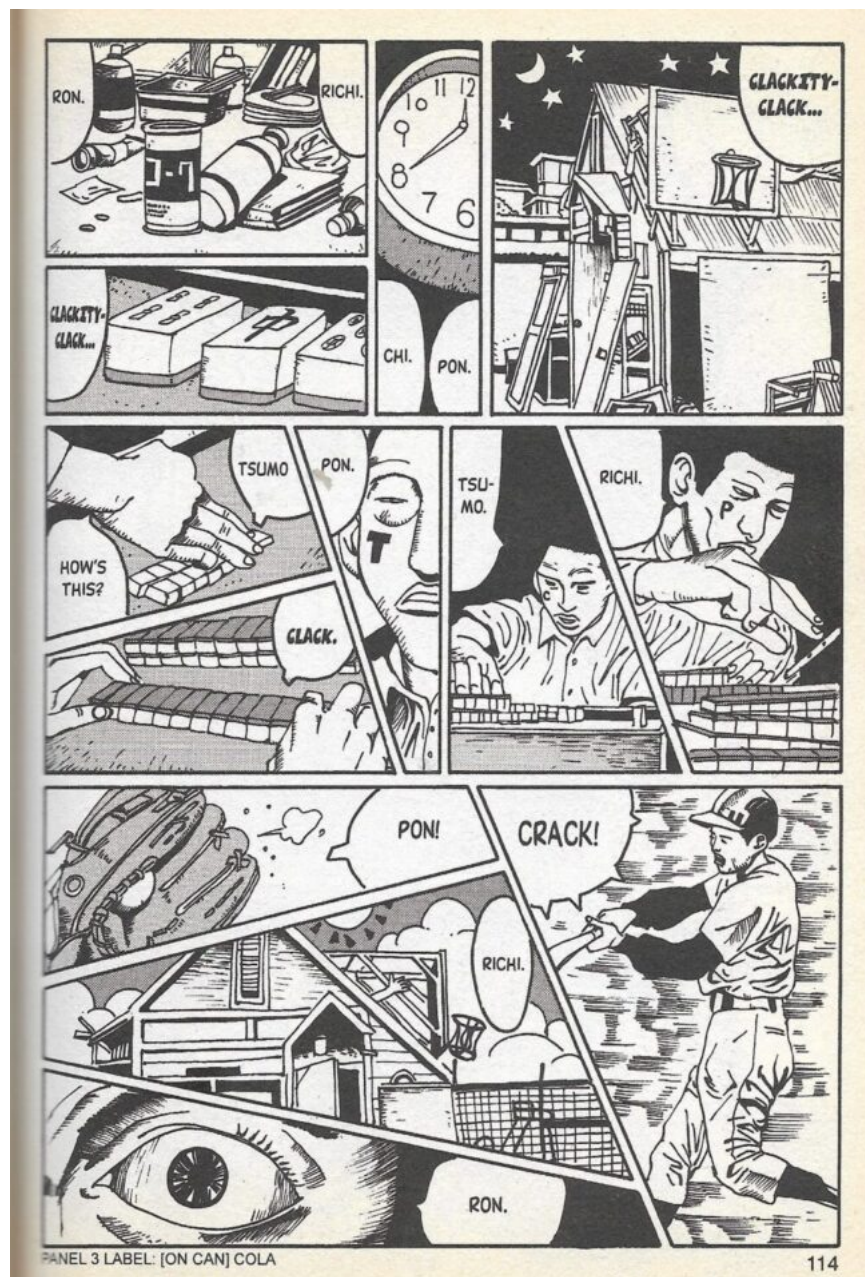
Kaneda Junko is the one person who has explained Matsumoto Taiyō in the context of manga of the time, putting his work alongside Toriyama Akira’s *Dragon Ball* (1984-1995 in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*).

We always had tons of manga lying around... for manga readers like us, the year 1995 was far more important than the last days of Shōwa period [in 1989].... As everyone knows, in about a one-year span around 1995, there were three big things that triggered a major shift, something that we called the “*Jump Triple Shock*” (*Janpu toripuru shokku*). [What she is referring to are: the television anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996), the video game *Final Fantasy VII* [announced in early 1996, released in 1997], and the fantasy novel series, *The Twelve Kingdoms* (1991-).] In other words, this was a short time for everyone in my generation to properly retreat from the media known as “shōnen manga.”[6]



There is no other artist who can advance a story with panel constructions like this. From *Ping Pong* Vol. 2. English translation by Michael Arias, lettering and touch-ups by Deron Bennett; published by VIZ in 2020.

We should think about who and what kind of people are the “we” here, but let’s hold off on that for the moment. Anyway, Kaneda argues that this “retreat from boys’ comics” (*shōnen manga kara no tetta*) happens even in *Jump*, the mothership, as seen in parodies of battle (*batoru*) manga genre. Kaneda attempts to see Taiyo’s works as another twist on “shōnen manga”. In a special issue on Matsumoto Taiyō in the intellectual journal *Eureka* (*Yurika*), which contains this article by Kaneda, many of the other article authors also examined his work within the frame of “shōnen manga”. Indeed, his works play into their parent genres, but at the same time, his manga operates at the meta level, critiquing those very same genres: *ZERO* is a the shōnen/seinen (boys’/young men’s) boxing sub-genre; *Hana-otoko* is baseball manga; *Ping Pong* is a hot-blooded sports manga.



Baseball and mahjong in "Mahjong Summer!", collected in *Blue Spring*. English translation by JN Productions, adapted by Kelly Sue DeConnick, lettering and touch-ups by Bill Schuch; published by VIZ in 2004.

When we consider 1996, the year in which *Ping Pong* began serialization, the Japanese publishing industry was in peak form, but then everything suddenly came crashing down.

In the 1980s, the manga industry greatly expanded due to the rise mainly of the seinen (young male) magazines. In 1980, the total sales of all manga product (magazine magazines plus the trade paperbacks) reached 2.24 billion yen. In 1990, that figure grew to 4.881 billion yen. In ten years, sales had more than doubled. In Japan in 1990, the sales for country's entire publishing industry were 2.1299 trillion yen. In that year, manga sales accounted for 22.9% of those 2.1299 trillion yen.[7] It is fairly clear that, in the history of publishing in postwar Japan, through this extreme growth, manga had made one of the largest contributions to publishing overall. It had that much influence in that sector.

As we get to 1996, and we see the manga market reach its highest peak, total manga sales saw a whopping figure of 5.847 billion yen. As for total published material in Japan in that same year, including all books and magazines, total sales were 2.6980 trillion yen. This is a time when you see on the cover of *Weekly Shōnen Jump* the unusual accounting phrase appear: "6,350,000 copies sold per week!" And yet, in 1997, *Jump* reduced its weekly output to 2,500,000 units, so there was a temporary period when its rival, *Weekly Shōnen Magazine*, outsold *Jump*. This became

a big story written about in Japanese newspapers. *Jump*'s editors saw the main reason for the sudden decline being the domino effect of the cessation of the magazine's main serial stories one after another: first *Yūyū Hakusho* (1990-1994) ended, then *Dragon Ball* (1984-1995), and then *Slam Dunk* (1990-1996) -- these manga were the three great tentpoles that held up *Jump* magazine in the 1990s.

And yet, when you consider that Japan's publishing industry as a whole finally caught up with the bursting of the country's economic "bubble" (albeit a "belated popping of the bubble"), its subsequent downsizing could not have been solely due to the termination of these three giant manga series, could it? It is still not clear why these things happened.[8] From 1997 on, both units sold and sales numbers continued to drop with each successive year, and that continues even now. What we can say is that the name of Matsumoto Taiyō becomes known as a symbol for a new artistic force in the realm of young men's manga in the period that "shōnen manga" began to finally slip and fall from its dominating position. Perhaps the time before that period is what future generations will regard as the "apogee" of postwar manga: the 1980s, or, the period from the 1970s through the end of the 1990s.

Yomota Inuhiko discusses the reception of manga by academics, and he implies that manga will follow a similar demise that happened with fiction and movies. He then puts postwar manga in the larger picture: "It has long been recognized that when you saw the emerging trend of artistic self-reference in the vanguard of literature and film, the next thing you would see coming is the death of genre entertainment. So, manga reached a point where it began to lose its insatiable curiosity in the world at large and it started thinking about manga itself. We must better try to understand what such decadence tells us about this moment in time."^[9]

Following Yomota, I wonder if it might be possible to see that Matsumoto's meta-critical manga played a role in heralding the destruction of manga genres? Or, perhaps what I am calling his meta-critical manga actually had many, many precursors before it, including works by Tezuka Osamu, so that if such manga are a sign of manga's demise, then manga itself should be gone by now. Something we should pay attention to really is the occurrence of all these meta-critical arguments themselves. In that sense, the trend in meta-critical analysis of manga, including my tv show *Broadcast Satellite Manga Night Talks*, where we discussed Matsumoto Taiyō, is perhaps a sign of the death of manga genres.

The "Splintering" of Manga's Readership Base

Although Kaneda Juno makes a solid effort to discuss Taiyō in this important era, one has to wonder exactly what kind of people make up her "we". She talks about herself in this way:

I'm one of those people who have long known they should give up shōnen manga, but they just cannot quit it (*miren*). I'm also one of those women who seem to love to buy their *yaoi* amateur magazines (*dōjinshi*) that parody shōnen manga - in other words, I was a "fujoshi" ("rotten" female "geeks"). [Natsume interjects: "That word did not exist in the 1990s."] That's why then that I took so long to notice Matsumoto Taiyō. Instead, it was the group of really fashionable girls who were friends with me -- my friends who also liked manga -- they were the ones picking up Matsumoto Taiyō's manga alongside a lineup of other artists they favored, like Okazaki Kyōko, Nananan Kirko, Minami Kyūta [Q-ta], Kondō Yōko, Sasō Akira, and Kaneko Atsushi."^[10] [Natsume adds: "This list is very much a lineup that fashionable people would love."]

Kaneda then introduces herself in this context, making a clear statement to include herself as a member of that community of otaku and *yaoi* readers, but totally distinct from the so-called "subculture" (*sabukaru*) or "fashionista" (*oshare*) groups. Kaneda was born in 1973 and she is a researcher in the field of sociology specializing in otaku culture, and in 1995, she was 22 years old. She was a person who grew up thinking that shōnen manga, like *Dragon Ball*, was mainstream manga. So, when she saw the ending of *Dragon Ball*, she could not accept the reality

of the series' "failure" (*shippai*), and says: "It was like I had been a creditor, who kept spending way too much money on investing, and, as I mistook their ability for future payoff and lost all my money, it left me feeling cynical and depressed."^[11]

She is talking about a sense of regret she and others had that was hard to bear (*yarikirena*) because of their own innocent "loving attachment" (*aichaku*) to manga that caused the trend of such "habitual repetitions" (*dasei-teki hanpuku*) in these shōnen manga. Moreover, Kaneda says, discovering Taiyō's *Ping Pong* was the answer to her dilemma.

"For a while I was constantly re-reading *Ping Pong*," she writes, "and at some point, it dawned on me: I could finally, finally discover the words 'the end' to *Dragon Ball* that I needed."^[12]

Ping Pong then becomes a part of Kaneda's "first-person narrative" (*watashigatari*) that relates her personal experiences with "shōnen manga", *Jump*, and *Dragon Ball*. At the same time, her story becomes a "theory of readership" (*dokusharon*) where she suggests that her experience becomes a larger "us", a collective reading experience.

Again, this is a person born in 1973, so she fits right in the middle of Generation X [or *dankai junia* (junior boomers) or *dai-niji bebi būmā* (post-Baby boomers)]. Similarly, she also fits the category of a people described as "second-wave otaku" (*otaku dai-niji*) (the first-wave otaku were born shortly before or after 1960). Thus, she is very much a person belonging to the social groups that supported the expansion and diversification of the postwar manga marketplace. The otaku were quite content with their computers, videogames, and the internet. They also greatly supported the manga marketplace. On the other hand, those otaku active in the 1990s were quick to turn their attention to other forms of media, and it is very likely that it was their group that began to split apart the foundation of manga readership.

If Kaneda's sense of estrangement from shōnen manga helps us make sense of the larger context of symbolic consumption of *Jump*'s six-million-unit bubble, where we then see people wanting to go in new and various directions to other media, then we can say that her personal impression of that time is like a snapshot of the turning point in Japan's mass entertainment industry.

If *Dragon Ball* and *Jump* had a symbolic connection to their own childhoods, then is it too much of a stretch to consider *Ping Pong* as the key to understanding their weaning off and maturation from manga? It is true that, with Matsumoto Taiyō, you often get the cold eye of a child; however, you do not get much of the eye of an adult -- the kind of adult perspective seen in BD. So, maybe I'm wrong in wanting Matsumoto to embody this zeitgeist like this.

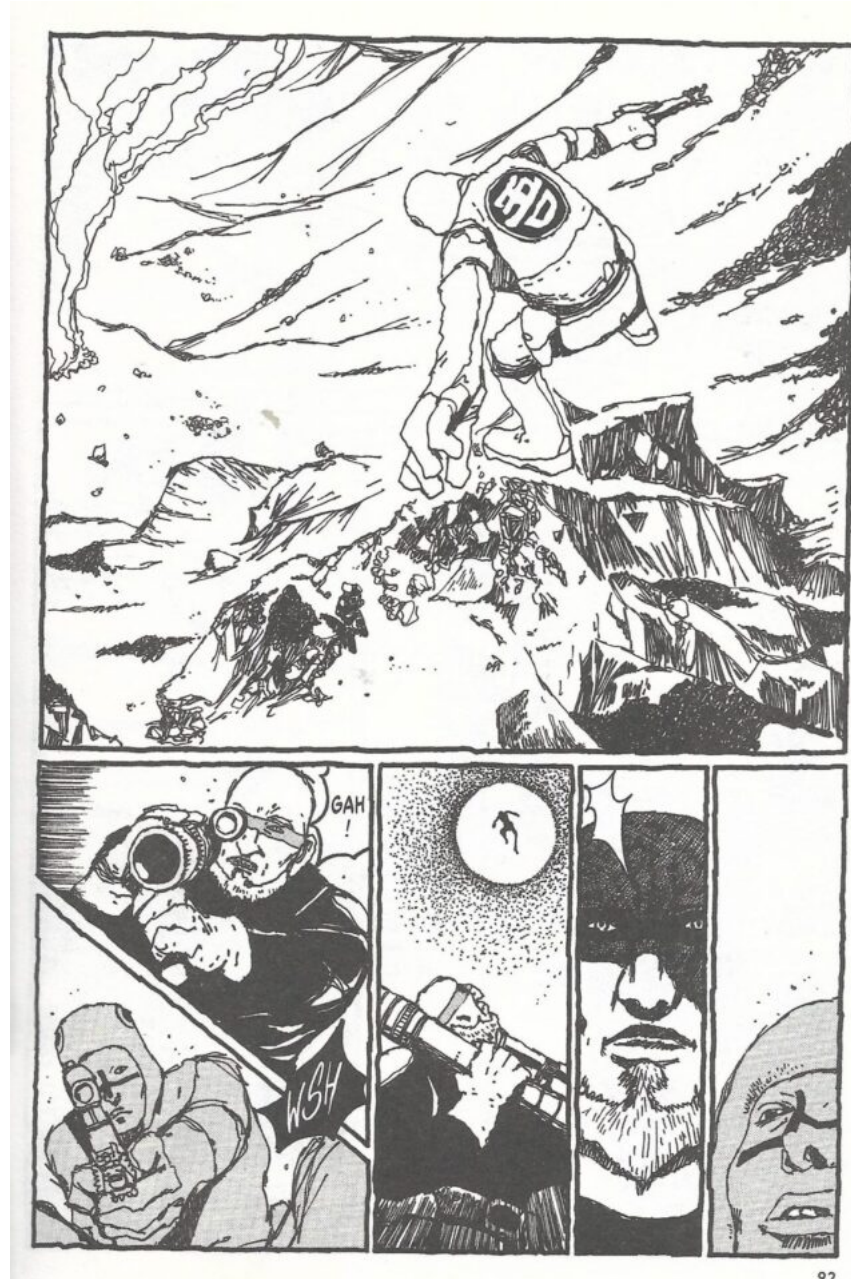
Matsumoto Taiyō's Two Legs

If we reevaluate the oeuvre of Matsumoto Taiyō, anyone can see that there are two types of works he does.

As I mentioned before, one type of manga he draws are those stories that fit the boys' or young-male (*seinen*) genre, like *ZERO*, *Hana-otoko*, and *Ping Pong*. Then there is historical fiction manga with an original story, which is *Bamboo Samurai* (*Takemitsu zamurai* [original story by Eifuku Issey, which ran from 2006 to 2010 in *Big Comic Spirits*]).^[13] Then there is whole a other type of manga he does: *Tekkonkinkreet* (1993-1994, published in *Spirits*), *GoGo Monster* (2000, original paperback from Shōgakusan), *No. 5* (2000-2005 in *IKKI*), and *Sunny* (2011-2015, published in *IKKI* and then in *Big Comic Spirits*). Most of these we could categorize as science fiction, with a dystopian feel (*Sunny* might not be sci-fi, and I am also not sure if we can say that it has a dystopian feel).

With the first group, the artist developed them under the pressure from his editors to get his manga rooted in the style of Japanese comics tradition; the latter group, though, seems to have a view of the world which has been developed after Ōtomo Katsuhiro. I think, in a way, these works have some connection with BD. It's true, I might be oversimplifying things here, but it is easy to see those two trends in his work.

Come to think of it, Matsumoto Taiyō is part of a larger line of “art” manga that has a European and BD look. That would explain why he has situations where the drawing style becomes caught up with a character’s psychological state (the pictures become hard to read); in his work, he is also often inclined towards abstractions. (In his *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud posits that opposite the representational axis of “reality” and “meaning”, there is also another area of artistic “abstraction” (*chūshōsei*), which can serve as another standard of symbolization, and, we can probably say Matsumoto would be located there up near the top of McCloud’s triangular diagram).^[14]



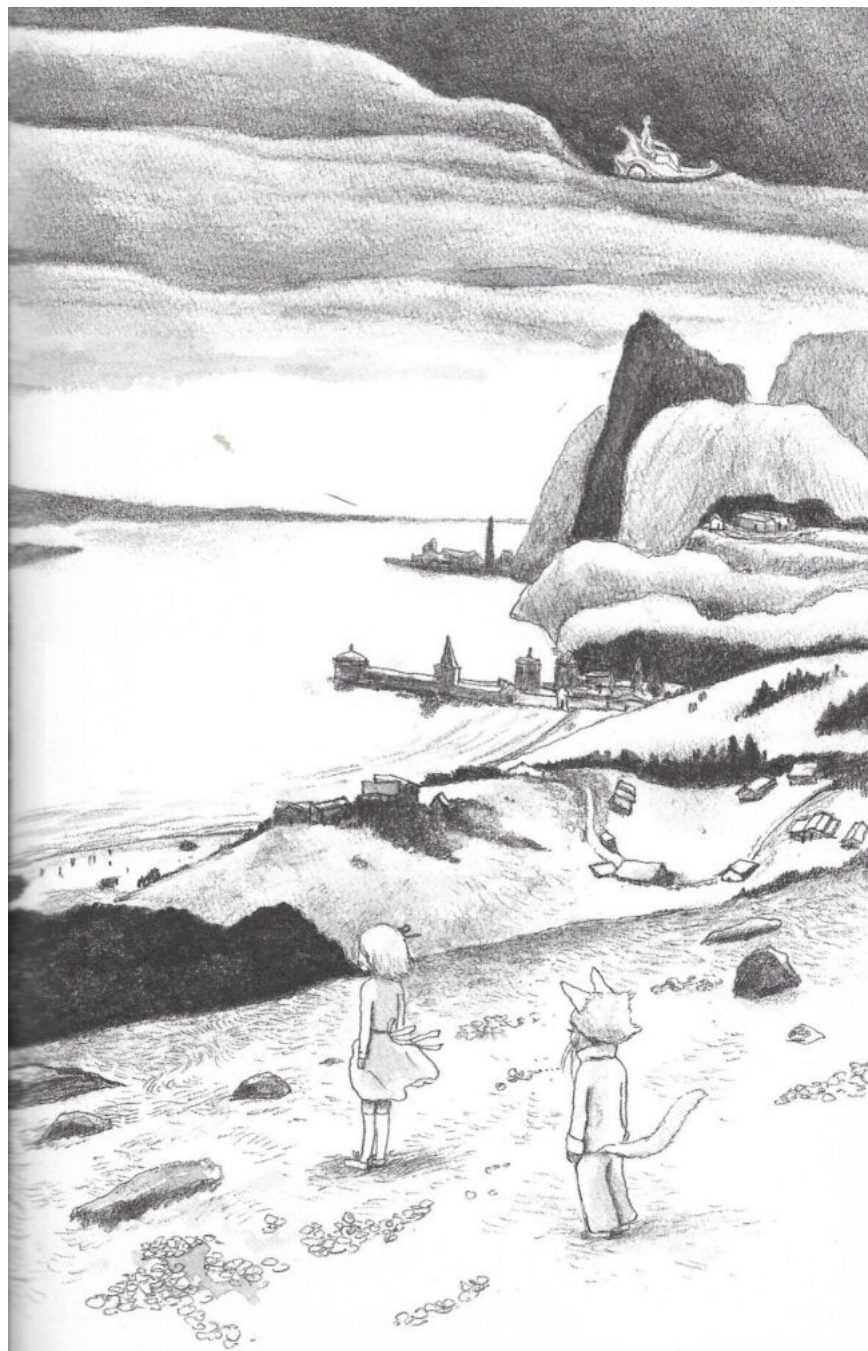
From No. 5 Vol. 1. English translation by Michael Arias, lettering and touch-ups by Deron Bennett; published by VIZ in 2021.

To put it another way, Matsumoto succeeded in bringing in that BD-like “art” sensibility to his work (to use a metaphor, his work is like “avant-garde” music in contrast to British and American “standards”). He had one leg in this field; however, what was genius about Matsumoto Taiyō’s strategy in his manga was that he had another leg planted solidly in the ground of Japanese manga, and he kept pushing his artistic expression with that leg. Although his manga

definitely succeed as classic Japanese manga “entertainment” (*goraku*), he secured another position where people see his works as having a higher, meta-level criticality to the entertainment itself.

I definitely do not think this strategy could have worked without the contribution of the “manga editor” system, which is responsible for the unique developments within the Japanese comic world. In that kaleidoscope combination of the manga publishing companies, their editorial divisions, and the magazines themselves, we see the possibilities where they can both help and hinder the growth of artists. Sometimes, they will cut an artist’s career short. Sometimes they will make him a star. In Taiyō’s case, certainly, he had the great fortune to end up at Shōgakukan’s seinen magazine, and was especially lucky to have met Mr. Hori. You cannot underestimate the work the editor did: he believed in Matsumoto; he continued to push him even there was a conflict between his own boss in the editorial division; he was the one who implied the direction that Matsumoto’s work could take.

However, at this point in time, there begins to emerge in the public sphere something of a contraction in this editor-producer system. Part of this backstory includes a couple of elements that I have already mentioned, such as the fast collapse of the publishing industry, including manga, from 1996 on, and the developing growth in the internet in this same period. We begin to see trouble happening with the end of certain number of series in 2006, like Satō Shūhō’s *Say Hello to Blackjack* (*Burakku Jakku ni yoroshiku*, begun in 2002 at *Morning*) as well in 2008, like Raiku Makoto’s *Zatch Bell!* (*Konjiki no gasshu!*, begun in 2000 at *Weekly Shōnen Sunday*). The editors’ consistent attitudes of self-preservation could be seen as a sign that Japan’s manga publishing industry was starting to fall apart. However, it is more likely that a similar decline had begun even before that time.



Matsumoto's characters enter Henri Lerambert's *Les Funérailles de l'Amour*. From *Cats of the Louvre*. English translation by Michael Arias, lettering and touch-ups by Deron Bennett; published by VIZ in 2019.

The infighting between editors and authors, best seen in the case of *Yūyū Hakusho*, which took the public spotlight due to the decline of *Jump*, became obvious after the unusual incident of the magazine running the artist's thumbnail pages (*neemu*), but also after the artist's publicly making his own statement in a *dōjinshi* [EDITOR'S NOTE: [see the opening paragraph here](#)]. The spread of the internet encouraged these kinds of revelations. It also started flushing out for everyone to see how there was a public and private face of the manga publisher - and we finally saw the bloody bodies that had been building up there for a long time. Nishimura Shigeo, the former editor-in-chief at *Jump*, who had managed the magazine during the time it reached its four million-copy sales figures, writes about hearing of the trouble at *Yūyū Hakusho* in his memoir *Manga henshūjutsu (The Art of Editing Manga)*: "It was the beginning of the editors losing all their controlling power."^[15]

We just don't know actually what happened at the editorial division. However, generally speaking, if someone in publishing bungles a contract with a writer who equals a billion-selling property, it's going to be the staff person (*tantōsha*) who gets fired. Yet if it is true that the

publisher intended to try to persecute and punish the artist, you realize how the fault lines in the manga publishing system were getting larger and all the more perilous. It is too late now, but I think at that time we should have reflected on what happened or tried better to understand what was going on. It is entirely quite possible that the shrinking of the manga market was due to the utterly swift transformation of consumption patterns within the established cycle of readerships.

In my own personal experience, it was in the late 1990s that I kept hearing a number of complaints from bookstores about the rising number of manga books being published; I also heard from authors and editors about their growing discomfort with the “salaryman-ing” of the industry as it was becoming more corporate, more driven by office decisions. Even so, from the publishing side you did not hear anyone saying they wanted to try a more objective analysis of the market during the slump; you did not hear from that side any voices saying that wanted to try to go beyond the conventional wisdom of “Produce a good book, and it will sell.”

Now it seems that Matsumoto Taiyō had both the talent and the good luck to be able to find a place in the manga market right before the market weakened and shrunk. His talent emerged right around the time the postwar manga market sufficiently expanded and obtained its enormous capacity. In that sense, it might be fair to say that Matsumoto is one artist who made his success just in the nick of time (*ma ni atta*).

Let’s put it this way, hypothetically. The turning point was 1995. The makeup of our country’s mass entertainment culture was changing from a system of production with its center being the manga publishing industry, which had been like a great and warm mothering sea. Tentacles of various forms of media were beginning to have equal reach. It now has transformed into a complicated industry (*fukugō shijō*) with innumerable “splintered audiences” (*bunshū*) that it must serve. If I am right, it seems like Matsumoto’s strategy and the evaluation he got was greatly due to the existence of the behemoth manga market as a whole that we had at that time. It is really hard to say if, in the future, another artist can emerge like him who will be rescued with the “good luck” of critical opinion. It will really just depend upon what kind of changes happen henceforth to the market.^[16]

* * *

[1] “20 Creators: Matsumoto Taiyō,” a special interview feature for the thirtieth anniversary celebration of *Big Comic Spirits* (Issue #30) July 12, 2010.

[2] Yomota Inuhiko, *Manga no sugoi shisō* (Amazing Ideas within Manga, [Ushio Shuppan, 2018]), p. 325.

[3] See the *Kinema Junpō* (Cinema Times) special paperback issue *Kinejun mukku: Manga yawa/Vol. 1: Hana-otoko* (1998), pp. 25-26.

[4] *Kinejun mukku: Manga yawa/Vol. 1: Hana-otoko* (1998), p. 30.

[5] Quoted in Natsume Fusanosuke, *Manga no ibasho* (A Sense of Belonging for Manga [NTT Shuppan, 2003]), p. 186. (This is my book composed of columns of the same name from the newspaper *Mainichi Shinbun* from 1998 through 2002.)

[6] Kaneda Junko, “Shōnen Manga Will Never Die: Reading Side-by-Side *Ping Pong* with *Dragon Ball*,” *Yuriiika: Tokushū Matsumoto Taiyō* (2007), pp. 181-182.

[7] *Tsukuru* (Issue #9, [1991]). See articles there, like “Komikku kyodai ichiba.”

[8] For more on this, I refer my readers to Oda Mitsuo’s book, *How Will Japan’s Publishers and Bookstores Survive?* (Shuppan to shoten wa ikanishite kiete iku ka [Baru Shuppan, 1999]). By the way, sale figures in 2015 for all books and magazines were 1.6 trillion yen. That is roughly 60% of the total sales in 1996. (This data is from a Publishing Research Center report; see their 2016 report, “Book and Magazine Publishing Changes from 1976 to 2015,” page 278.

[9] Yomota, *Manga no sugoi shisō*, pp. 325-326.

[10] Kaneda Junko, p. 183.

[11] Kaneda, pp. 181-182.

[12] Kaneda, p. 186.

[13] *Bamboo Samurai* is not really a manga. Instead, it succeeds as an extremely good variation on historical [samurai] fiction (*jidaimono*), and in that sense, it is a great example of this genre, so it is better understood as a classic Japanese popular novel. It is a fascinating work.

[14] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993). Japanese translation directed by Okuda Toshio as *Mangagaku* for Bijutsu Shuppan (1998), see pages 58 to 65. [Translators' Note: *Understanding Comics* has been re-translated into Japanese by Shiina Yukari under the direction of Odagiri Hiroshi for Fukkan Dot Com publishers in 2020. Natsume wrote the new translation's afterword, "The Path from One *Mangagaku* to the New *Mangagaku*."]]

[15] Nishimura Shigeo, *Manga henshujutsu* (The Art of Editing Manga, [Byakuya Shobo, 1999]), p. 312.

[16] Finally, let me mention a few figures that dispute the shrinking of the industry. Sales figures for e-comics in 2005 were 3.4 billion; in 2008, 3.5 billion; in 2014, 8.87 billion; and in 2016, that number grew to 14.6 billion. Online publishing companies and online *dōjinshi* had sales in 2016 of a total 14.91 billion. When you add in print publishing, we see, comparatively speaking, a "plus" overall. This data comes from Publishing Research Center reports from the November 2009 issue ("Publishing Monthly Bulletin: What's Happening Now in the Comics Industry?, What's Visible from Data of a Thirty-Year Period") and the February 2017 issue ("The Print and E-Media Comics Market 2016"). If we allow for the so-called "ruin" of the industry, just keep in mind that before what you had was the term "manga" in print publishing, but they now use the term "media" instead of calling it "manga"—that may be a sign of how manga will change its form and survive in the future.

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TOPICS

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