“High Metabolism: Manga circa Shōwa 50”

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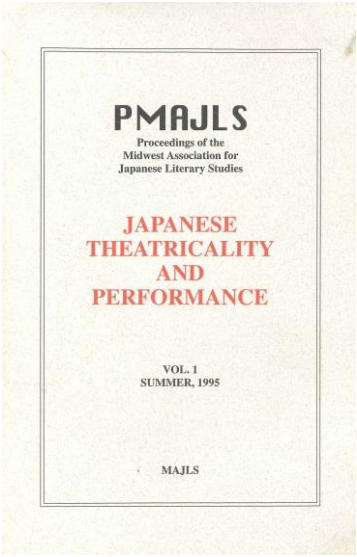

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HIGH METABOLISM: *MANGA* CIRCA SHŌWA 50

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As postwar baby boomers reached and graduated from college in the late Shōwa 40's and early 50's (ca. 1970-80) in Japan, popular culture bloomed profusely (some would say "bristled") across the land. Audiences have a hand in the rise of any art form, and the large numbers of young people with newfound time and spending money were part of what allowed the popular music, films, novels, and *manga* 'comics' of these years to spread as widely as they did. A large portion of their daily cultural diet was consumed in the form of *manga*, an entertainment genre that had been around, in one form or another, for a long time, but which virtually exploded into a variety of new subgenres when it met up with the larger youth culture of these years. The numbers of individual artists and production studios (established by the more successful artists in order to keep up with a constantly rising demand) increased accordingly, with a rush of energy that soon had some major publishing houses producing weekly and biweekly *manga*. This paper presents a brief sketch, with some examples, of how *manga* of these years represented innovations on what had preceded them or, in other ways, departed from that tradition.

Illustrated narratives have a long history in Japan, from the 'bird and animal drawings' (*chōjū giga)* of the 12th century

and the roughly contemporary, Buddhist-inspired 'hell scrolls' (*jigokuzōshi*) 'hungry demon scrolls' (*gakizōshi)* and 'illness scrolls' (*yamaizōshi)*.[1] Our focus is necessarily much narrower, and for better or worse, we begin by noting simply that in the past forty-odd years, Japanese *manga* has changed from a world of magazines produced mainly for children and adolescents into a myriad of sub-genres and characters that range from religious to pornographic, and appear weekly, bi-weekly, monthly and quarterly. Like the phoenix for which one of the longest running post-war serials (3000 pages plus) was named, and like much of the rest of Japan, the comics rose from the ashes of the war to grow into a size and shape no one could have foreseen. It is not possible to describe the new variety and vitality of the genre adequately in the short space of a conference paper, but something needs to be said about its basic parameters, both historical and structural, before considering its immense popularity in the 1960s and 70s.

The Japanese word *manga* is written with two Chinese characters, which mean 'unrestrained' or 'unprincipled' and 'picture', and together mean something like 'doodlings'. The word was apparently coined by the woodblock print artist Hokusai Katsushika, some time in the early nineteenth century. There are many, many Japanese nouns written this way, with two characters, and for most of them, what they refer to is anything but clear from the characters themselves. It is one thing to know, by simply looking at the two characters with which the word is written, that *manga* are 'doodlings'; it is

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[1] This and much of the historical survey that follows owes much to that presented by Frederik L. Schodt, in his *Manga manga* (1983), pp. 28-37. A number of the reproductions of Japanese drawings and prints in the Appendix to this paper, particularly the older ones, are reproduced from Schodt's book.

something else again to see what they have evolved into since the word was coined.

Most popular *manga*, from their modern beginnings in the 19th century to today, are rich in stereotype, both in illustration and in the language spoken by characters. Such things are hard to measure, but the primary constraint of this medium--that of presenting and developing a story in a very small number of frames--seems to have made for a much higher concentration of culturally meaningful signals per unit than we find in modes of narrative whose media allow for more mimetic development, such as written fiction and film. The stereotyped backdrops, speech styles, postures and facial expressions of *manga* almost necessarily offer a sharper-than-life outline of what kinds of postures, motions and speech fits what kinds of situations and characters. Without them, there would be no way to develop analogues of the motion inherent in film and the extensive narrative description of written fiction. But a highly stylized, synecdochic (part-for-whole, individual-for-class) presentation of gesture and character demands that the audience possess the fuller, more particular, experiential knowledge that these carefully chosen bits and pieces are grounded in and refer to. For an audience who know the conventions of the genre and/or subgenres, the distilled stereotypes of *manga* imitate Japanese behavior with a degree of density that no real slice of everyday life can offer. In this respect, they have distant functional relatives in the highly stylized gestures of Noh and Kabuki, which are effective for similar sorts of reasons.

It is important to note that almost no Japanese comics, save the four frame (*yonkoma*), single episode variety, are found in newspapers; the vast majority are published in the formats they were born to--magazines and books. A few statistics

make it very clear just how ubiquitous this form of narrative had become by the end of the 1970s. In 1980--and indications are that the number has since gone up--the *Asahi Newspaper* estimated that of the 4.3 billion books and magazines published in Japan, 1.18 billion~ were *manga*; the weekly *Shōnen Janpu* 'Boy's Jump' itself had a weekly circulation of over 2.5 million. That means ten volumes of *manga* for every man, woman and child in the land, or twenty-seven per household. One comes across them everywhere--at train stations, on trains, in coffee shops, barbershops, hospital waiting rooms, neighborhood restaurants, sushi shops and in the attache case of the blue-suited white collar worker. At the Japanese Literature kenkyūshitsu of Keiō University, you could always find one or two under a certain table in the reference library. Changes have affected not just circulation and readership, but production as well, since *manga* make money. Since the late 1960s, several of the most popular magazines have been produced by large publishing houses, among them the premier publisher of the Japanese literary classics, Shōgakkan. Titles like *Biggu komikku* 'Big Comic' and *Shōnen chanpion* 'Boy's Champion' in effect subsidize publication of scholarly editions of *Genji monogatari*, medieval poetic treatises and the works of Matsuo Bashō.

Manga are far and away the most popular form of narrative read in Japan today. The term "read" may be objected to, and validly so, in the sense that *manga* are not read by the same conventions or with the same expectations that non-illustrated stories are. However, this does not alter the fact that they are stories, and that they are read, even if by a set of hermeneutic conventions that are partly unique to them. Where Americans (relatively few) read comics, Harlequin romances, mysteries, or science fiction novels--on the way to

work or during coffee break--Japanese flip through a 200 or 300 page comic book. Over the past thirty-odd years, the *manga* phenomenon has altered significantly what we might call the "narrative economy" in Japan--the ways in which stories are conceived, shaped and consumed. While filmed narrative, animated and acted, has continued to grow, in many cases cross-pollinated with the *manga*, there has been a massive shift of readership away from written narrative to the illustrated medium. Of course, with new developments in this medium have come new variations on content, structure, and the relationship between the two.

That's the big picture, which the remainder of this paper attempts to flesh out by detailing some of the ways in which *manga* changed since the first decade after World War II, on the way to becoming, by the 1970s, an entertainment medium preferred by the largest generation ever born in Japan. Taken in historical perspective, the topical and technical innovations that separate Japanese comics of before and just after World War II remind us of the plasticity that characterizes any living tradition. They resemble the long line of changes preceding them in the irreducibly particular nature of their own response to the exigencies of their time. At the same time, several innovations in artistic technique and topic matter have emerged, too, as the genre and its sub-genres have redefined themselves.

In the early years of the American Occupation, political satirists enjoyed undreamt of freedom, and as soon as there was enough paper, newspapers and new or resurrected magazines gave them pulpits from which to preach.[2] Social or political cartoons, however, were just not as popular as

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[2] Such as *Van* 'Van', *Manga* , and *Kumanbachi* 'The Hornet' (Schodt 1983: 60).

serialized strips that provided a few moments' relief from the hardships of eking out a living (e.g., the science fiction of Fukui and Matsushita), or reassurance that everyone would muddle through, as portrayed in Hasegawa Machiko's insouciantly optimistic story of a resourceful young woman, *Sazae-san*.[3] The strip, shown in Figure 2 as it appeared in 1946, is alive and well today. That people wanted entertainment, and lighthearted or escapist entertainment at that, was abundantly clear.

In occupation Osaka, cheap comic books with red ink covers (*akabon*) were sold on the streets and provided many an aspiring artist with a place to publish. One of these was Tezuka Osamu, a frustrated medical student who was to become a kind of Walt Disney figure, by developing a number of new techniques and almost single-handedly setting off a revolution. In 1947, he produced a 200 page piece called *Shintakarajima* 'New Treasure Island', a boys' adventure tale which overnight introduced multiple perspective and sound effects and sold between 400,000 and 800,000 copies without any publicity whatsoever.[4]

Japanese *manga* before and just after the war (and many today) work within the constraint of an unvarying "camera angle," or point of view. The reader views the goings-on much as from a seat in a theater. Even in film, it wasn't until filmmakers learned to move the camera and to splice footage shot from one vantage with that shot from another that the medium's unique potential for expression began to be exploited. And it wasn't until Tezuka Osamu showed the way that Japanese comic artists began to build their strips of

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[3] As serialized in the *Kodomo manga shinbun* 'Children's Comic Newspaper' or the revamped *Shōnen kurabu* 'Boys' Club'.

[4] Schodt 1983: 62.

drawings made from more than one perspective, thus creating the illusion of a dynamically changing point of view for the reader, much as if s/he were in the story one moment, and back outside the next. Although Tezuka's artwork retained the rounded, 'cartoony' style of drawing objects and an anthropomorphic approach to animal faces that owes much to the Disney style (recently "borrowed" back by Disney, in *The Lion King*), he employed both in ways that simply did not exist before his *Shintakarajima*. (See Figures 3 and 4.) Nor did he stick entirely to optimistic or escapist formulas. In his own words,

> I felt [after the war] that existing comics were limiting. . . . Most were drawn . . . as if seated in an audience viewing a stage, where the actors emerge from the wings and interact. This made it impossible to create dramatic or psychological effects, so I began to use cinematic techniques. . . . French and German movies that I had seen as a schoolboy became my model. I experimented with close-ups and different angles, and instead of using only one frame for an action scene or the climax (as was customary), I made a point of depicting a movement or facial expression with many frames, even many pages. . . . The result was a super-long comic that ran to 500, 600, even 1000 pages. I also believed that comics were capable of more than just making people laugh. So in my themes I incorporated tears, grief, anger, and hate, and I created stories where the ending was not always happy.[5]

Figures 3 and 4 show scenes from *Janguru taitei* 'Jungle Emperor' (1954-55) and *Tetsuwan Atomu* 'Iron arms Atom' (1952-68), which illustrate the variety in perspective pioneered by Tezuka. *Atomu* was the first in the robot genre, which has since enjoyed such phenomenal success in both animated

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[5] From Tezuka 1979, as translated by Schodt (1983: 63).

comics and the toy industry around the world. Both have been translated into English, as 'Kimba the White Lion' and 'Atom Boy', respectively; it is the former that informs much of the 1994 Disney animated film *The Lion King*.

By the late 1950s, Japan's economic miracle was about to take off, and baby boom children were getting allowances they could spend on their beloved *manga*. In 1959, the large publishing house Kōdansha came out with the first weekly devoted entirely to comics, *Shōnen magajin* 'Boys' Magazine'. Other major publishers followed suit, and there were soon seven weeklies, five for boys and two for girls, in the same, inch-thick format. The cheap "red books" in which Tezuka had his start and the 'pay libraries' that lent hard cover comic books for a fee (*kashibonya)* went into their final decline.

The move from monthly work to weekly demands meant that artists had more work than they could keep up with; those in demand hired assistants and set up production studios. In 1966, *Magajin*'s weekly circulation topped one million. By 1978, two competing magazines, *Shōnen janpu* 'Jump' and *Shōnen chanpion* 'Champion' had recorded weekly sales of two million. In January 1981, *Jump* sold three million copies in a single week. None of these weeklies was printed in color, except for the cover and the first five or six pages. Paper was and remains the roughest newsprint, except for the color pages, which are done on a less absorbent, flat white paper. For the most part, serialized narrative, drawn in a quasi-realistic style (called *gekiga* 'dramatic pictures'), became the dominant sub-genre, although a new kind of "gag" comic appeared, too. Artwork followed Tezuka's lead and moved beyond, to techniques such as collage (used in representing stream of consciousness reverie (e.g., Figs. 14, 18, 19-21) and the frequent use of silent scenes (e.g., Fig. 10). As topical sub-

genres evolved and proliferated (the samurai story, sports stories, student gang stories, historical tales, stories of white collar workers and gag strips), a new kind of realism came and went, giving way to kabuki-like caricature on the one hand (Fig. 9) and what Fred Schodt has called "flowers and dreams" (Fig. 21) on the other. The medium took off, and has yet to show signs of coming down.

One of the first purveyors of a new realism was one of the last products of the pay library market. Shirato Sanpei's *Ninja bugei-chō* 'Record of a ninja's martial arts', which appeared from 1959 to 1962, was a controversial and very graphic account of life in the late sixteenth century, when warlords vied for control of Japan and peasants occasionally dared rise up against them. The human figures are sharp and angular, albeit still drawn somewhat in the cartoon tradition. Together with simplicity of line and the use of silence, this style of illustration gives the bugei-chō a pared-down, dry, almost withered atmosphere (Fig. 5). In subsequent works of the "samurai" genre, such as Kojima and Koike's *Kozure ōkami* 'Wolf with child' (1970-), illustration became still more realistic, and the artwork of Shirato's own later works, such as *Bakkosu* 'Bacchus' (1976-78; Fig. 6) and *Kamui-gaiden* 'Apocryphal Tales of Kamui' (Figs. 7 and 8), is much more sophisticated than *Ninja bugei-chō*.

In summary, then, by the early 1960s, comics and the comic industry had evolved to a point where they can be said to have experimented their way to a new level of accomplishment and sales. The break with the past can be viewed from three perspectives: topic, technique and the manner in which the two were adjusted to each other, in a *manga* type of narrativity. Explaining these innovations in illustration and presentation of story is easier if we do not

cleave so tightly to chronological order. The discussion will therefore focus on kinds of innovation, rather than on the developmental chronology of individual works and artists. Works and artists will be introduced as examples of particular techniques.

The kind of popularity enjoyed by *manga* artists in the 1960s and 70s seems to have had the effect of encouraging them to take their work more seriously. An immense number of readers devoured almost anything served up, but it was also at this time that critics specializing in the history and analysis of *manga* began to appear. The critics, amateur and professional alike, were in most cases young people who had grown up on *manga* and were by their adolescence a bit jaded, as readers of comics go. One imagines, then, that while the market was essentially a sellers' market, it was also a critically demanding one. The situation provided plenty of work, but also seems to have created a demand for experimentation and innovation, to an extent that artists vied with one another not only in coming up with a better sports, mystery, or gag *manga*, but in some cases, by pushing the limits of what *manga* could be.

Some of the most striking changes, as already indicated, had to do with illustrative technique. Tezuka's trailblazing efforts, in *Shintakarajima* and *Hi no tori* 'The Phoenix',[6] had demonstrated that readers appreciated the resonance and depth that greater length made possible. Greater length did not mean more wrinkles in the plot, because artists put the

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[6] *Hi no tori* 'The Phoenix' is, on a macro-level interpretation at least, a story of humankind and its desire for immortality. The narrative is episodic, but over all takes the Buddhist logic of rebirth for a structuring device, and is told from past and future perspectives on an ever-evolving present; several characters appear in their past and future incarnations. 'Phoenix' has been published in book form, as a set of nine volumes, but Tezuka claimed for a long time that he was not yet finished with the series.

additional frames to work in "opening up" selected moments of the story. A staple of comics composed after the Tezuka revolution is the expansion of the narrative moment, as exemplified by a pitch in baseball that takes ten frames and two pages to reach the plate, the presentation of a scene from several perspectives simultaneously (Fig. 14, bottom), or the prolongation of a scene in silence (Fig. 10).

Readers familiar with the all-American style of Marvel or DC (formerly "Action") comics are apt to feel that not much is happening in the more realistically drawn Japanese comics. But as in several narrative forms the Japanese have developed over the centuries, the "action" in these illustrated stories is more on the paradigmatic axis than on the syntagmatic one: linear, event-centered progression is eschewed for depth and resonance in the moment. It might even be said that the revolution in *manga* of the 1950s and 1960s was basically a turning away from the flat, episodic linearity of 19th and 20th century Western models, toward realignment with older, native narrative models. In the broadest terms, they were rendered less eventful and more lyrical, less teleological but more resonant at each step along the way.

When one sets about describing this reshaping, several changes are immediately apparent. Most striking are an abandonment of the fixed "camera angle" for a fluid, dynamic point of view; the presentation of traditional symbols to create an effect or suggest an interpretation of an action or scene (as opposed to explanatory narration at the top of the frame); a (concomitant) rather active engagement of the reader in creating meaning in such passages; panning back to a wider focal field (often in nature), as a way of setting the just-depicted events in larger perspective; allusion to an earlier scene or even to extra-textual knowledge shared with the

reader, to the same effect; and removal or replacement (with an abstract pattern) of a scene's actual background when zooming in for close-ups. All of these techniques serve to expand and deepen the moment in which they are applied, to contextualize it as thickly as the artist chooses.

Many climactic scenes, in contrast with others around them, appear "incomplete" or underspecified. The drawings are simple, and silence and lack of verbalized comment conspire so that meaning is pointed at rather than presented as complete--an approach that puts symbolic resources to indexical ends. Any kind of indexical meaning, or reference by "pointing", assumes the referent to be recoverable, and so necessarily involves people participating in the present interpretive context, in this case the reader. A hint is preferred to instructions, and hints, of course, engage the reader as fuller specification cannot. Silence is an important ingredient in this style (Figs. 10, 12-13), as are symbols of the natural world (Figs. 6, 7-8), many of which are culled from the native literary tradition. In fact, a famous passage written six hundred years ago describes rather well this aesthetic preference for an indexed, or evoked, meaning, which makes the new, post-war *manga* at once so different from their immediate precursors and more traditionally Japanese:

> Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring--these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration.
>
> In all things, it is the beginnings and ends that are interesting. Does the love between men and women

> refer only to the moments when they are in each other's arms?[7]

An aesthetic that prefers incompleteness in the portrayal of an object leaves more play in the interpretive act, engaging the perceiver actively and personally in the creation of meaning, in a way that the illusion of self-contained completeness cannot. Such a relationship with the object demands of the observer a kind of Negative Capability, that attitude that Keats described as the capacity of "being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason".[8] In a sense, then, the transformation that swept the *manga* world in the Shōwa forties and fifties involves an application of what turn out to be very local resources, whether the artists recognized this in any discrete way or not. "Art and the equipment to grasp it", writes Clifford Geertz, "are made in the same shop". That these particular innovations went over so well was perhaps only to be expected.

To keep in mind the style from which *manga* were evolving, it is helpful to review the sample represented as Figures 1 and 2, with their unvarying "stage play" perspective, invariably focused on action and dialogue. The short, flat, linear strip, of course, lives on in parallel with the newer kinds just described. Figure 11, a *yonkoma* 'four frame' gag strip called *Furiten-kun* 'Li'l Mr. Furiten', is a good example of such work, which appears daily in most of the newspapers in Japan. Even here, however, there is a change in perspective, from close-up to pan, and back to close-up.

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[7] Yoshida Kenkō, *Tsurezuregusa* 'Essays in Idleness', tr. Donald Keene (1967), pp. 115-116. Keene, Donald. 1967. *Essays in Idleness: the Tsurezuregusa of Kenkoo.* New York: Columbia University Press.

[8] John Keats, December 1817 letter to his brothers George and Thomas.

But strips like *Furiten-kun* are not what sells millions of comic magazines every year. As an example of a popular strip that does just that, observe Figures 12 and 13, taken from the long-running story of the ultimate loner, *Golgo 13*, an assassin for hire who stalks the world, notching at least one woman and one hit every installment. Most of the dialogue in this series is not spoken by the (anti)hero, but by peripheral characters, those instrumental in setting up the situation in which he fires his specially modified M-16. In Figure 12, a woman begs Golgo not to leave; that her pleading gives him pause is iconically evident in the five frames spent on his reaction. The conclusion is expressed in a panning back to a larger perspective--the house in which, we are prompted to conclude, they spend the night. The two pages from *Kamui gaiden* (Figs. 7, 8) illustrate the same rhetorical move: panning outside, to the larger world, for a tacit comment on what kind of fate awaits those imprisoned in the granary. There is little reliance on verbal comment from the narrator, and this technique of refocusing off-center, or panning away, as an unspecified but definite comment, is very common. It's as if to say "Well, you guess the rest," and another indexical sign of the narrator-audience relation.

Figure 13 is from another episode of the *Golgo 13* series, in which the protagonist is shown in a bar in Bolivia, keeping an eye on a local fellow. The zoom shot on Golgo's eyes tells us that the man he's tailing is a suspicious one. Thus is the moment milked for drama: three frames, half a page. From this extreme close-up, the scene jumps to another part of town, outside. The technique is the one, so common in film, of opening a new scene by shooting from a different distance, usually from up very close or back very far. Note the complete lack of dialogue or narrative after the first frame.

Figure 14 is from 'Gym', a story about a young boxer named Aoba ('Greenleaf'), who is in love with his slightly older, female manager, but has recently been rejected by her. The people in the frame at the top of the page are sitting ringside at Aoba's most recent fight. The manager, who has known Aoba since he appeared at her deceased husband's gym many years ago, betrays her real feelings when she thinks (in the second frame) 'That boy . . . my boy (lit. child) is going to loose.' Her rejection has apparently taken much of the fight out of him, and the sight of his defenseless and bloody face is then interspersed with the flashback it triggers in her. Her recall of the scene in which she spurned his advances is expressed by the words of the two jagged balloons in the last two frames, which were his words at the time, literally 'Sister, sister'.[9] The last frame, a drawing of her surprised, upturned eyes, is, like these words, an exact repeat from that earlier scene. Once again, the narrative is handed over to the reader at its dramatic high point. Of course, if the reader didn't see the previous issue, the allusion is less clear, although its identity as an allusion is never in doubt.

Yet another visual technique used in representing a character's mental state involves the projection of his or her thoughts against the scene's backdrop, typically the sky (Fig. 18), but if indoors, the ceiling, as shown in Figures 19 and 20.. In Figure 18, as a young man walks down a road, we see that thoughts of a certain woman are very much on his mind. In Figure 19, we are gazing down into the sickroom of an elderly horse trainer, who has had to relinquish his favorite horse to another trainer. The mimetic words do do do do do do do

[9] In English, of course, a more natural term of address would be the woman's name, but not so in Japanese, in which, for people older than oneself, the names of social roles are preferred over personal ones.

represent the sound of horses' hooves. They grow larger (that is, louder) as we zoom in on his face, and see that he is in a cold sweat. The next page (Fig. 20) suddenly shifts to his perspective, looking up at the ceiling of the room, where he imagines the horses in mid-race. The sound of their hooves, represented by still larger letters, is deafening, and is joined by the noise of the crowd as well. Another very common variant on this kind of "thick" contextualization is the montage, pioneered in the work of female artists such as Ikeda Riyoko and Satonaka Machiko (Fig. 21).

Other shifts in perspective have nothing to do with characters' interior monologue. It is just as often the case that a waking scene is presented from several angles, angles which bring the reader right into the scene. Motomiya Hiroshi, whose stories of the Japanese underworld present *yakuza* gangsters in a rather romantic, even heroic light, often drew them from a low angle, looking up, so that their stature is emphasized, as in Figure 15. Figure 16 shows another technique, this one used to show intensity: a kind of halo, or shimmering of the air about the head.[10] Figure 17, from the work of the same writer, shows another low angle in the upper right hand frame, in which the reader's vantage is from the very beach on which the foregrounded leg stands. It becomes apparent that this leg, clothed in *monpe*, the traditional baggy peasant trouser, belongs to the aged mother of one of the nomad gang gathered on the beach. She has come to say good-bye to him, and hands over some money. The bottom-up angle is repeated in the last two frames at the bottom of the same page, as the gangsters *oyabun*, or 'boss', comments on how nice it is that we have people like parents to rely on

[10] In Japanese, the verb *moeru* '(something) burns' is used also to mean 'is intense'.

(lower right). The last two frames then return us to the low angle, as the gang shuffles off down the strand.

These, then, are some of the techniques which now function as narrative convention in the art of *manga*. By opening up selected moments in a story, they slow down linear progress and create a resonance and depth that we find entirely lacking in comics before Tezuka's day. The elaborating shift is away from syntagmatic connections and toward paradigmatic relations, which infuse a present scene with meaning. If "Action Comix" are the quintessential American comic, we might call the post-Tezuka Japanese *manga* of the period surveyed here "Lyric Comix".

One sign that *manga* as a macro-genre had reached a certain maturity by Shōwa 50 (1975) or so is that it was routinely parodying itself. A few examples will have to suffice. Figures 22 through 25 are from the comic *What's Michael?*, a kind of "Adventures of Everycat". This particular strip, entitled 'All about *Yakuza*', presents the interior monologue of a mobster (*yakuza*) who is terrified that fellow gangsters will learn that he keeps a cat. The opening (Fig. 22) tells us very seriously that *yakuza* cannot own just any kind of car, but must drive a Mercedes, and must, in general, behave in such a way that they are immediately recognizable as *yakuza*. The next page (Fig. 23) begins with the word 'but', and introduces us to an exception to the rule, Mr. K. The illustrative techniques of high drama are employed to present him emptying his cat's litter box; his wordless intensity (or is it the odor?) stirs the very air about his head (lower right). And what, he wonders, if they learned that he buys *Cat Handbook* every month (lower left)?? His worst fears are illustrated in the imaginary sequence of Fig. 24, as rival gang members burst into his bedroom in a by-the-formula assassination attempt.

As the strip comes to a close (Fig. 25), K wonders what in the world he would do if they learned he slept with a cat. The upward-looking angle from which the hero is drawn in the left frame at the top of the page, along with the halo in the next frame, are reminiscent of Motomiya Hiroshi's work (cf. Figs. 15, 16), and the last two frames, which zoom in on K's face and eyes, are a potshot at the kind of move seen in every installment of Saitō Takao's story of international assassin-for-hire *Golgo 13* (cf. Figs. 12, 13 above). The large letters under the final close-up declare 'CONTINUED', but are immediately undercut by the parenthetical 'or maybe not'.

Conventions, it seems, are made to be flouted. No account of *manga* in the Shōwa 50's would be complete without addressing the phenomenal popularity of Yamagami Tatsuhiko's *Gaki deka* (Figs. 26 through 32). The success of this series can be attributed in part to its burlesque of various icons of Japanese popular culture, among them type roles from "B" movies, the stars of the *geinōkai* ('entertainment world'), TV commercials, and crewcut 'cover boys'. The parody is straight-ahead, in-your-face visual and verbal caricature. The spotlight in Gaki deka was most often on the metamorphoses undergone by its hero, Komawari-kun,[11] as he took on the lineaments of one type character after another: bar hostess, innocent young girl, popular singer, petty bureaucrat, to mention a few (Figs. 26 through 28). Once his face was transformed, Komawari's language would also switch to the speech style associated with that type--city hall

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[11] A pun. *Komawari* is a 'boy police officer', and wears the regulation policeman's cap. 'Policeman' in Japanese is *o-mawari-san*, literally 'Honorable Mr. Walkabout'. The ko- of Komawari's name means 'little', which added to *mawari* 'move around/about', yields *komawari* 'little walkabout'. As ko- replaces o-, the diminutive suffix -kun replaces the polite -san.

bureaucrats, for example, invariably speak with the phrases and accents of *yakunin* we have known. Caricatures of the major types portrayed in popular movies, TV soap operas, and popular song popped like jacks in a box into frame after frame in a single weekly installment. One is hard pressed to offer analogues from our own culture--Alfred E. Newman never actually got off the cover of *Mad* and into his own strip. Komawari, like Jonathan Winters and Robin Williams, has the unnerving but usually hilarious habit of slipping into a new character any time the line to be spoken brings such a character to mind.

When readers had grown accustomed to Komawari's impersonations of human types, Yamagami began to turn him into various animals: a bunny when acting innocent, a trumpeting little elephant when excited, a cat when making a catty remark, and so on (Fig. 27). In addition to turning into animals himself, Komawari kept company with a neighborhood dog. (Fig. 29; the dog was called Tochi no arashi, a name more likely on a sumo wrestler). Komawari's animal friends soon grew in variety and number (Figs. 30), starting with the domestic variety, extended to bulls and goats, but eventually including various wild animals like deer, rabbits, monkeys, elephants, and polar bears, all of which (even the last, one feels) Yamagami drew somewhat in the style of the 12th century *chōjū giga*.

Another venerable convention of the performance arts made fun of in *Gaki deka* is the striking of a pose (known in kabuki as a *mie*), which is the primary means whereby children's superheros metamorphose into their super selves (parodied in the upper left corner of Fig. 31). The pose struck and held momentarily is also a staple of popular song, and is a component in the traditional *yakuza* self-introduction--a list

that goes on and on. During the first few years *Gaki deka* appeared, episodes would be suddenly interrupted by shrieks of *shikei*! 'Death Sentence!', as Komawari struck his own pose, standing on tiptoe, sticking out his buttocks and rotating the upper part of his body to fire two "hand guns" at the target of his ire (Fig. 31, upper right). Later poses also had their accompanying line, although both became increasingly nonsensical, culminating in Komawari-qua-deer raising a hoof and shouting *Hachijōjima no kyon!* 'Hachijō Island has kyon!' (Fig. 31, lower left). Hachijōjima is the name of a real place; kyon is a nonsense word which, nonetheless, seems to work rather well as a generic name for those of cloven hoof, which is what the illustrations suggest. Other poses are collected in Figure 32; the sequence at bottom is a commercial for 'Pervert Ramen', which Komawari (backed by three members of the 'Nerima Perverts' Club') tells us we too will switch to, as he points a finger out at us, in front of our televisions (Fig. 32, lower right). The single line spoken by multiple actors in sequence (*watarizerifu*) is another item borrowed from kabuki. In Komawari's world, many were called, but few were spared.

Gaki deka carried the gag sub-genre to new extremes, which have probably gone unreached since. Nevertheless, the more serious narrative tradition developed apace, too. A development in straight *manga* (or *gekiga*) that took hold in the early Shōwa 50's is the depiction of "ordinary lives": not samurai, French princesses, spies, detectives or sports heroes, but people like us, shown getting on with their lives as best they can. Ordinary Lives are usually romanticized somehow, whether by idealization (Yamamoto and Shirayama's agricultural school in *Mugiao* 'Barley green') or by selecting the more dramatic moments in lives we can easily identify with

(white- and blue-collar families in Saigan Ryōhei's *Sanchōme no yūhi* 'The Setting Sun [as seen] from Third Street').[12] Even some of the strips depicting the lives of "professionals", i.e., specialists like deep water tuna fishermen (*Tosa no ipponzuri*, Fig. 10 above) or pro baseball players (e.g., *Abu-san*, the story of a designated hitter with the old Nankai Hawks baseball team, who continues to play in Fukuoka), are interesting for their depiction of heros who have as hard a time as the rest of us getting through the week. Abu-san, like many of his fans, is now in his forties.

Conclusion

A concise statement of how *manga* changed between the first postwar years and their coming into their own would point out that the now dominant sub-genre, *gekiga* 'dramatic (i.e., quasi-realistic) comics', develops a narrative in a way that its short, gag-oriented predecessors never did. In styles of illustration, we see a move away from the "cartoony" approach toward varying degrees of realism or carefully cultivated surrealism.[13] Along with the shift in attention from story line to savored moments came greater length and a style of layout that combines illustration and language to create a texture that is, to use Clifford Geertz's metaphor, quite "thick".[14] Meanings are created in a very culture-specific and highly redundant way, by simultaneously relating to several kinds of

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[12] The noun *chōme* is actually a compound consisting of *chō* 'residential sector' and the ordinal suffix *-me*, so that san ('three') chōme actually means something like 'Block #3'.

[13] See, for example, the work of Tsuge Yoshiharu, such as *Neji-shiki*, which first appeared in *Garo* in 1968. See also Schodt 1983: 150.

[14] See Clifford Geertz (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures.*

context. A sequence of frames is typically structured as a set of semiotic overlays: illustrations, spoken dialogue, and mimetic words drawn into the frame, along with appeals, through some or all of these, to other contexts with which the reader is familiar.

Among the textual devices, illustrations are most richly exploited, and often comprise several overlays themselves. As we have seen, a single scene is often drawn from several different angles, distances, or moments in time, and other contexts are called up by flashback or the inclusion of symbols readily identified with a season, locale, or feeling. These symbols can be stock or highly individualistic and personal. There is also the interplay of frames containing spoken dialogue and/or mimetic words with drawings that are linguistically silent. The use of verbal silence and visual lacunae, multiple perspective and allusion serve to expand the narrative moment and engage the reader. While stories do get told, plot progress is routinely arrested for important scenes, which direct the reader's attention to paradigmatic connections, by alluding to earlier episodes (flashback), the extra-textual world (through a well placed symbol), or simply by expanding the scene in time (the stroboscopic effect). As suggested earlier, this preference for resonant moments over linear elaboration (which we saw parodied in Fig. 28) can be related to the lyrical aesthetic that has so long been a keynote in the Japanese literary tradition. In *gekiga*, alternation between slowing down to contextualize a crucial moment and moving the story along amounts to an ebb and flow of distance between the reader and the world being presented. As we progress through a story, our attention typically modulates back and forth between a more or less passive observation on the one hand, and interpretively demanding engagement, on

the other; between moments in which the artist uses dialogue or mimetic words to overspecify particular interpretations, and sequences in which illustrations are simply presented to us, for our own conclusions. The effect is very much like the ebb and flow of commentary, explicit and implicit, that we find in any mature narrative form, whether it is spoken, written or filmed.

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APPENDIX

Figure 2: Sazae-san, in the days of the Occupation

Figure 1: Nonki na tōsan, 1924

Figure 4: Tezuka Osamu, Tetsuwan Atomu

Figure 3: Tezuka Osamu, Junguru taitei

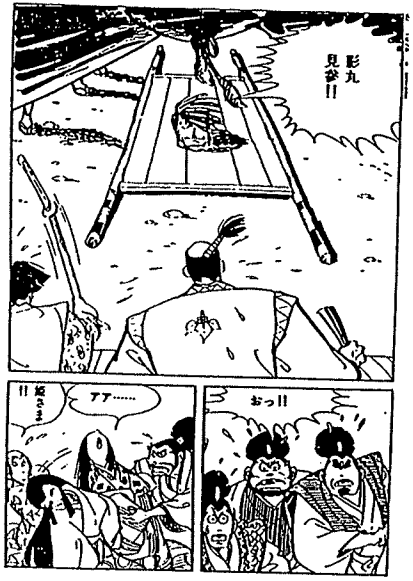

Figure 5: Shirato Sanpei, Ninja bugei-chō

Figure 6: Shirato Sanpei, Bakkosu

Figure 7: Shirato Sanpei, Kamui-gaiden

Figure 8: Shirato Sanpei, Kamui-gaiden

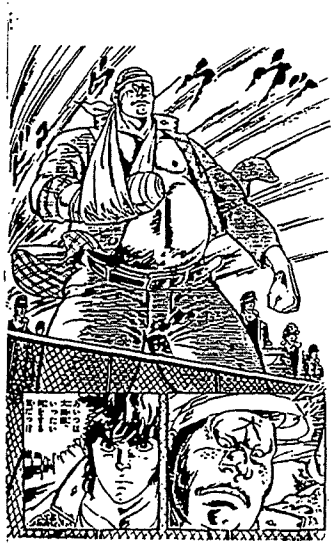

Figure 9: Kariya and Ikegami, Otokogumi

Figure 10: Aoyagi Yūsuke, Tosa no ipponzuri

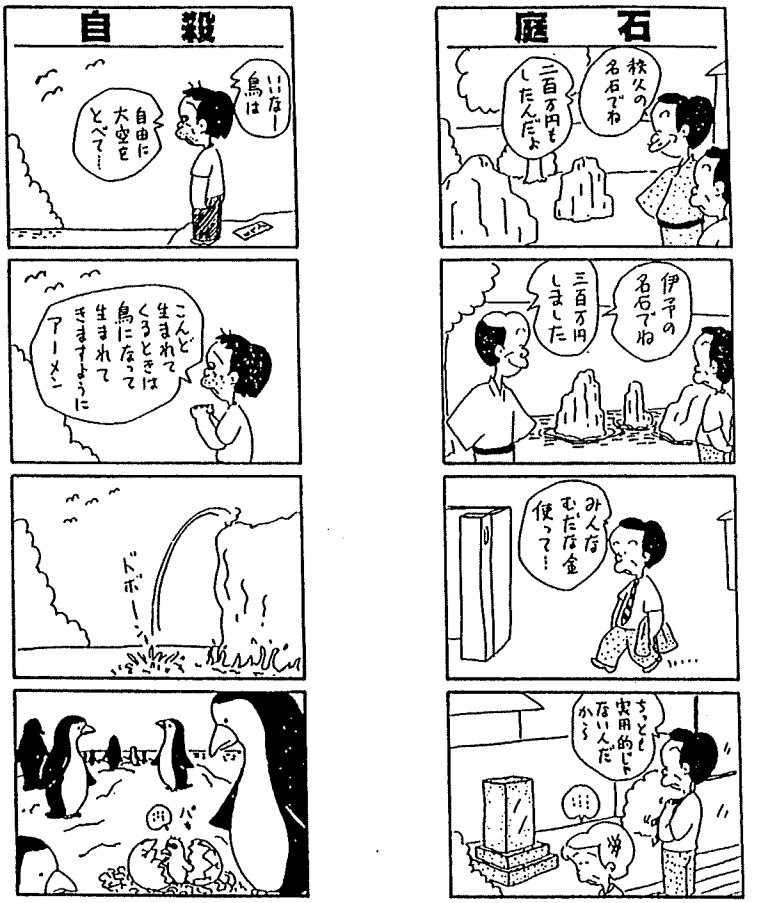

Figure 11: Ueda Masashi, Furiten-kun

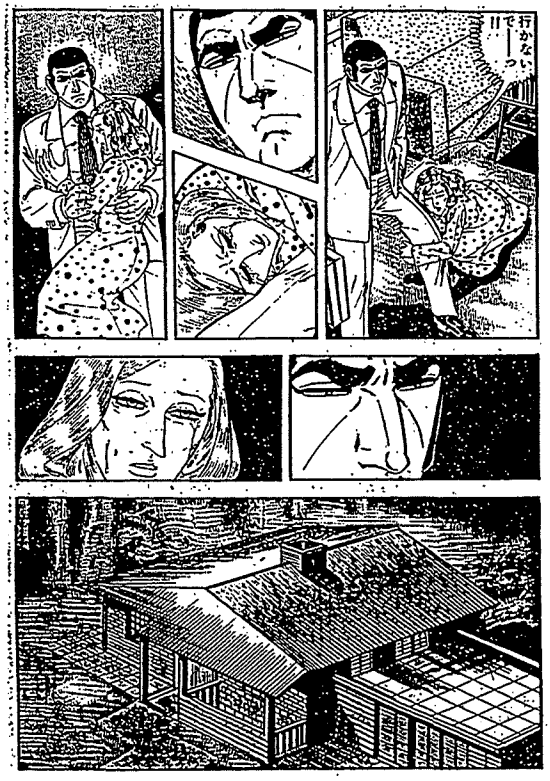

Figure 12: Saitō Takao, Gorugo 13

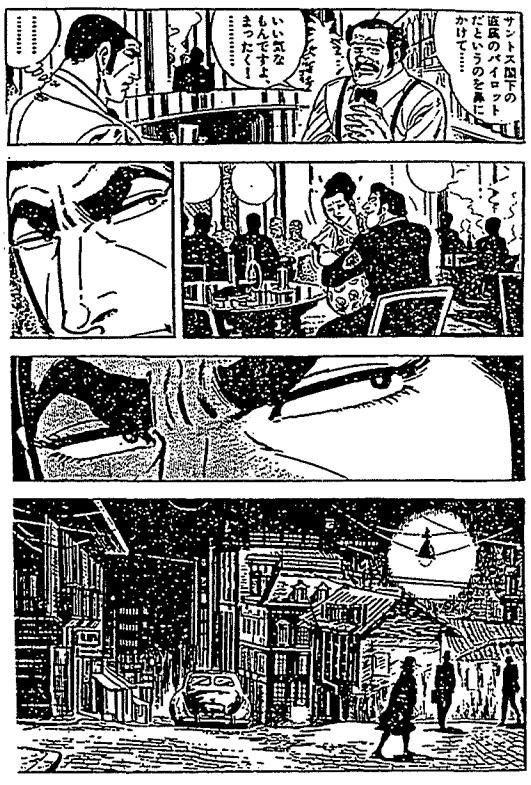

Figure 13: Saitō Takao, Gorugo 13

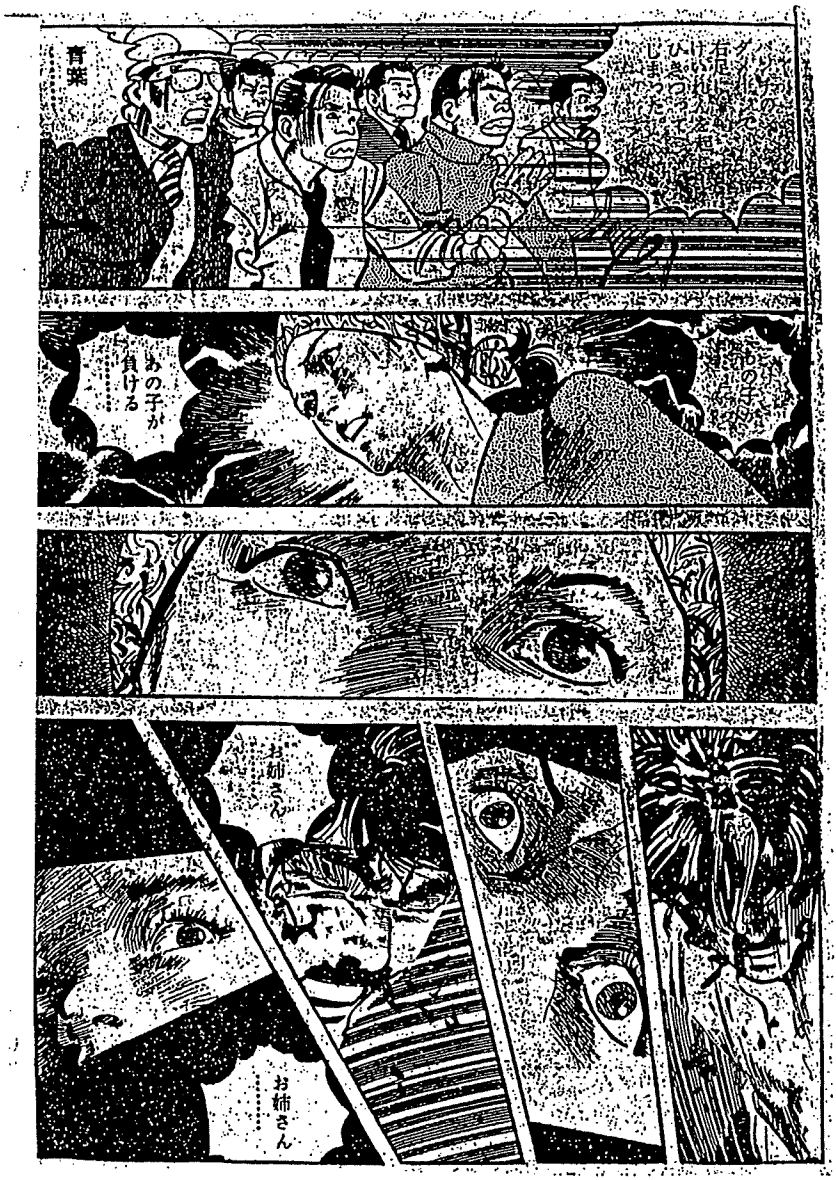

Figure 14: Ikegami and Tsumura, Iimu

Figure 15: Motomiya Hiroshi, Don

Figure 16: Motomiya Hiroshi, Don

Figure 17: Motomiya Hiroshi, Don

Figure 18: Jōji Akiyama, Haguregumo

Figure 19: Kimura Eiji, Tonekko

Figure 20: Kimura Eiji, Tonekko

Figure 21: Satonaka Machiko, Ashita kagayaku

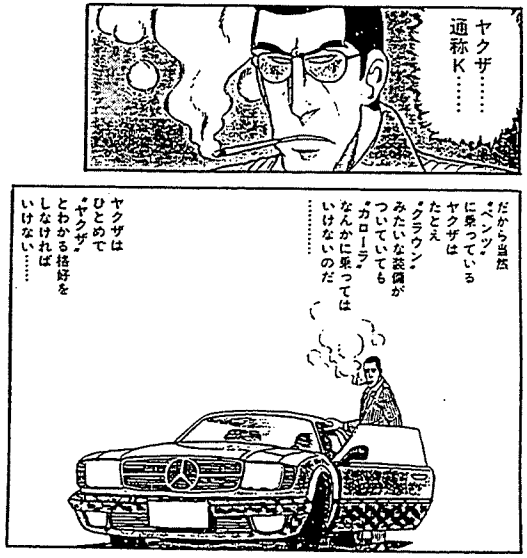

Figure 22: Kobayashi Makoto, What's Michael?

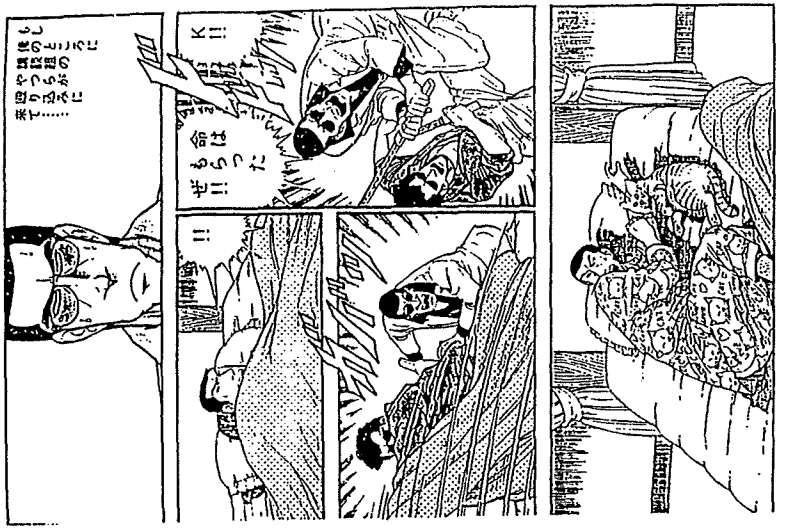

Figure 24: Kobayashi Makoto, What's Michael?

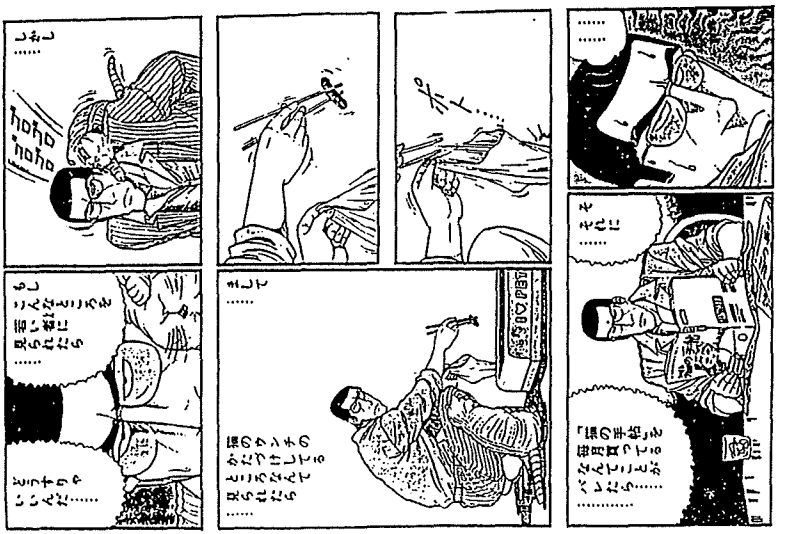

Figure 23: Kobayashi Makoto, What's Michael?

Figure 25: Kobayashi Makoto, What's Michael?

Figure 26: Yamagami Tatsuhiko, Gaki deka

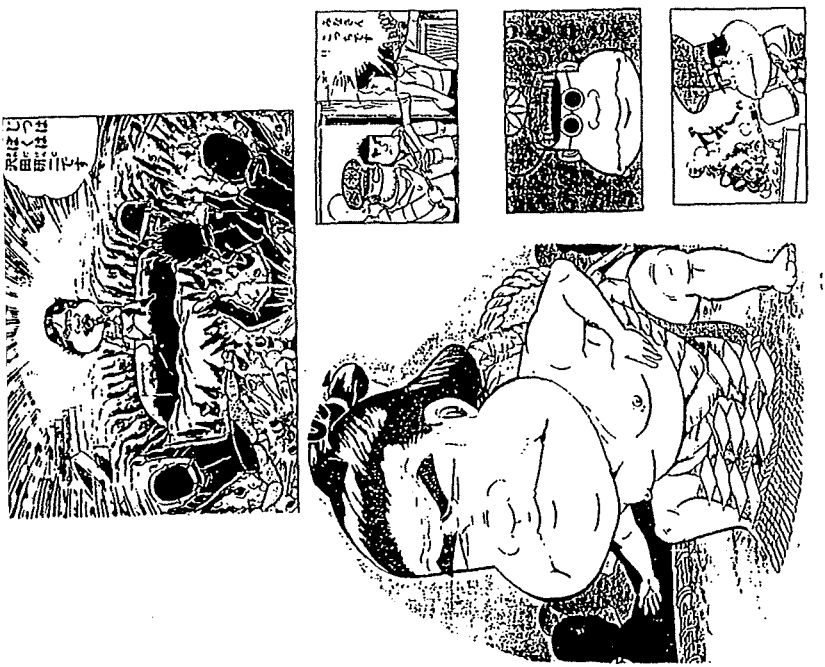

Figure 28: Yamagami Tatsuhiko, Gaki deka

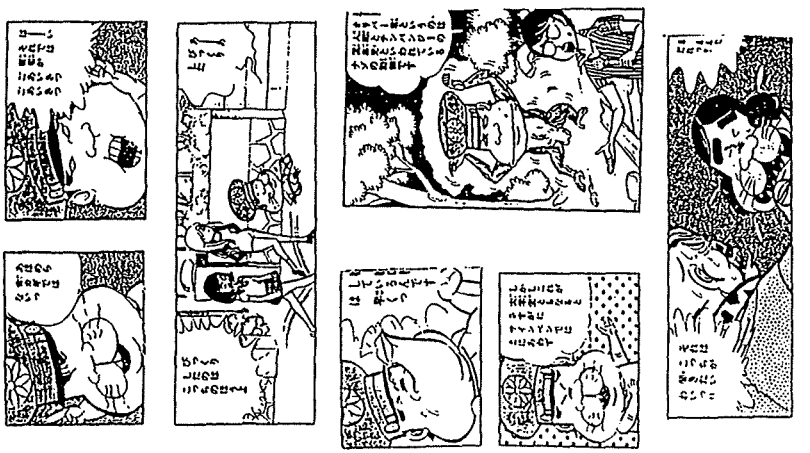

Figure 27: Yamagami Tatsuhiko, Gaki deka

Figure 29: Yamagami Tatsuhiko, Gaki deka

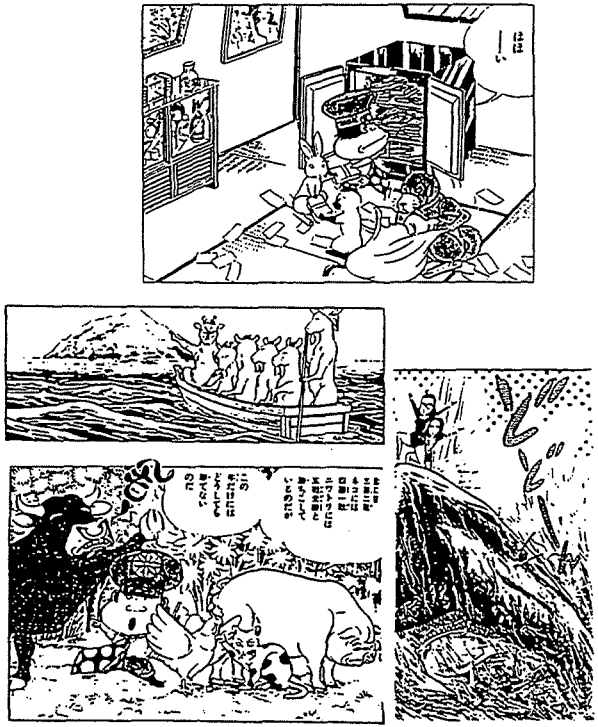

Figure 30: Yamagami Tatsuhiko, Gaki deka

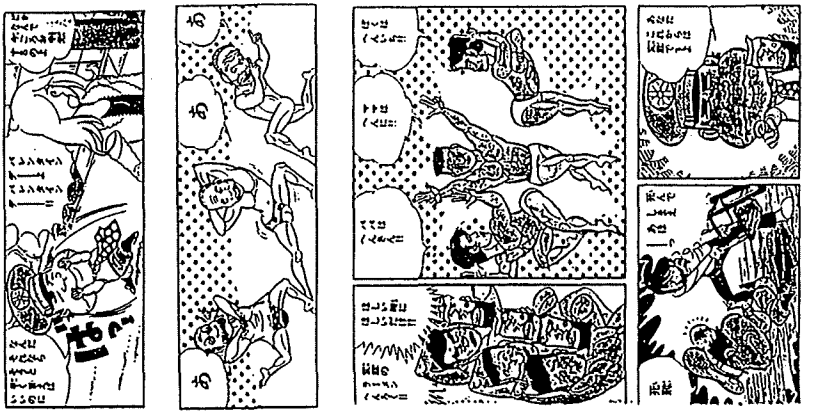

Figure 32: Yamagami Tatsuhiko, Gaki deka

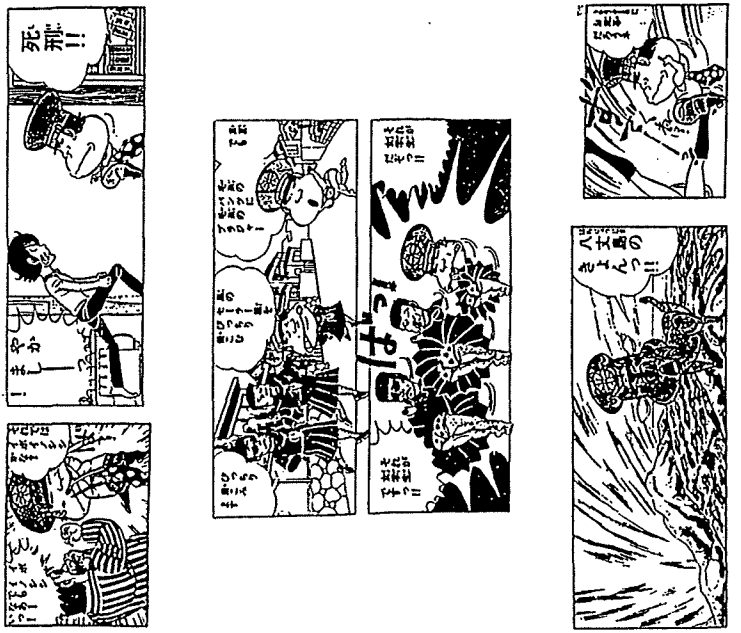

Figure 31: Yamagami Tatsuhiko, Gaki deka