



The Push Man and Other Stories

Yoshihiro Tatsumi , Adrian Tomine (Editor) , Yuji Oniki (Translator)

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A collection of short stories from the grandfather of Japanese alternative comics.

Legendary cartoonist Yoshihiro Tatsumi is the grandfather of alternative manga for the adult reader. Predating the advent of the literary graphic novel movement in the United States by thirty years, Tatsumi created a library of literary comics that draws parallels with modern prose fiction and today's alternative comics.

Designed and edited by one of today's most popular cartoonists, Adrian Tomine, *The Push Man and Other Stories* is the debut volume in a groundbreaking new series that collects Tatsumi's short stories about Japanese urban life. Tatsumi's stories are simultaneously haunting, disturbing, and darkly humorous, commenting on the interplay between an overwhelming, bustling, crowded modern society and the troubled emotional and sexual life of the individual.

The Push Man and Other Stories Details

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Author : Yoshihiro Tatsumi , Adrian Tomine (Editor) , Yuji Oniki (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Push Man and Other Stories for online ebook

Paul Greer says

Interesting from a technical point of view of layout and story structure, execution of plot in short form etc. But, yes, content bleaker than bleak. the violence, hatred and misogyny drips off the page and kinds of nullifies any benefit mentioned earlier. Wasn't prepared to recommend it to anyone I know. In the preface Tatsumi says do not judge him on these early works alone. Almost interested enough to see what else he did, but maybe not.

Nakkinak says

It's telling that every negative review complains about how pessimistic, misanthropic, and dark Tatsumi's stories are. In the neoliberal entertainment society it's highly unwanted to show the other side of prosperity and wealth. In a society that is supposed to honor effort with respect and wealth, the accusation of Tatsumi to be cynical doesn't make sense. His characters work hard, but they fail. Their labor just doesn't pay off. The people believing in the fun society are far more cynical than any story written by Yoshihiro Tatsumi.

There is a lot going on psychologically in these stories; that's why I like Tatsumi so much. *The Projectionist* is a good example, a story about a man who screens porn to businessmen. He doesn't talk a lot so one has to closely read his actions and the little he says to learn what this story is really about.

Special attention needs to go to his facial expressions and the close-ups. And he's comparably talkative; in most Tatsumi stories, the protagonist is completely silent, contributing to a neurotic mood, creating some kind of "dark everyman". In the ending of the story, the projectionist is implied to have shown a particularly perverted or even violent sex film to the businessmen and now questions if it's worth it to carry on and indirectly support producing it. Or is it that the screenings confronts him with his own age? That he isn't as young as before so he can't please his wife/girlfriend anymore as often? The list of possible reasons for his mood can go on, Tatsumi rarely is explicit about them; as he's examining some brooding passive-aggressiveness in the human nature that just waits to snap. Just like Hemingway, Tatsumi only states the bare essence of what is required to understand a plot, you have to think to understand what the story is *about*.

Tatsumi manga are inaccessible and bleak, but they are thought-provoking and inspiring. We can be grateful that Drawn and Quarterly released his best work so Tatsumi finally receives the recognition he deserves.

This is an important document of manga literature, essential to every serious manga and comics fan.

8/10

MariNaomi says

The art was good, but the stories were so poorly written (and ridiculously executed, but not in a good way) I wanted to cry. What a waste of art-that-doesn't-suck! And to add injury to insult, almost every story in this

book of shorts was a violent misogynist fantasy (executed with the grace of a warped, hateful child), many of them not even making much sense. I want my hour of reading back!

Joni says

Tipos peculiares los japoneses y sus odiseas a los extremos del arte, derribando lo grotesco, lo chocante. Esto es manga americanizado. Pero con la impronta de Tomine, que no solo aporta el prólogo si no que menciona al autor como influencia en su adolescencia.

Todas historias cortas en blanco y negro bien pero bien minimalistas. Las primeras me horrorizaron por mostrar femicidios excusados. O sea.. Se muestra al obrero humillado por su esposa y luego la venganza. Después detalles tan fuertes como que un trabajador de cloacas impotente se cruce con fetos descartados. Mucho morbo. Mala leche. Me contrarió el mensaje. La temática es la que predomina. El sujeto oprimido masculino que en la mayoría de las historias ni siquiera cuentan con una línea de diálogo pero igual resultan en justicieros de alguna manera justificados.

El arte es genial. La narración secuencial perfecta pero ese mensaje tan contradictorio me hizo mucho ruido y me alejó del disfrute para acercarme mas al espanto.. Arte no?

Khalid Albaih says

Super impressive technically with the structure and short story lines. The amount of Misogamy and unexplained violence. Makes me don't want to visit japan even though I did visit before.

Leif says

Seeing the approval and citation of Adrian Tomine, I thought I'd give this a try. My mistake. A strongly masculinist take on the inconstancy of materialistic women, the deviancy of sexual desire, and the vulnerable violence of men claims itself as a "slice of life" vision of the working classes, but reveals little of what it claims save for its few stories that break free from the gleeful reduction of women to their apparently-always promiscuous sex organs and men to their apparently-frequent violent rages. In these stories there are a few moments of possibility opened up by animals, who seem to be ambiguously readable because of their uncertain gender or distance from sexual availability, but these possibilities seem few and far between. Instead, a cowardly logic rules: possibility is cruelly and even violently shuttered on these often-mute men. In turn, they take out their anger on themselves and the women near to them.

I will say, however, that the clean animations and direct storytelling are powerful devices. I can see that this would be influential in a history of graphic novel design, but the blade cuts both ways: if its style and bracing directness are influential, then so too should we read its single-sided masculine self-abuse as the same?

Vicky says

The first few stories gave me a bad impression of what this book might be like. Each story features a working class man who might be a plantation worker, a push man, a projectionist. What made me skeptical

was how cold and materialistic the women were in the beginning. The men would be absolutely helpless and act upon fantasies of hurting the women, like hiding a scorpion in a purse or sticking the woman's arm into a tank of piranhas. And then I would be positioned in the protagonist's perspective, thus rooting for their acts of revenge while maintaining some kind of guilt, as if those wives are misrepresented.

At the same time, it is a fantasy, and Yoshihiro Tatsumi seems to be aware of this since he sympathizes with these men who are lonely and longing and probably misunderstood. A couple stories, I read with my face wrinkled inward. A dead fetus wrapped up in a blanket, floating in the sewer water. A large rat that won't leave this man's apartment, splashing around in his semen. Male characters that narrow their eyes and shine a nasty grin at this voiceless sex slave who lives beneath the bed sheets, whose face we never get to see, who supposedly has been conditioned with the ideal tongue shape and vagina to satisfy these masters.

My favorite story was "Make Up" for the quiet man who dresses as a woman and has what appears to be an affair with a married woman who has a crush on him as a man at work but wants to love him as a woman.

Wes Hazard says

Boo Hoo for the sad boys.

I know. I know. The postwar generation of Japan. Culturally scarred by the atom bomb. Searching for an identity when the militarist/imperialist tradition has crumbled. Occupied by foreign GIs. Faced with a sexual revolution while still rooted in a resolutely patriarchal culture. Teeming cities. Yes yes yes.

All of that's here, and it's a hell of a lot to face, and I know it's the environment Tatsumi's characters find themselves in, but damn if there doesn't come a point beyond which I could no longer care and I had to judge them for what they (almost universally) are: pathetic/incapable losers wallowing in either casual or active misogyny.

Every single protagonist is either an "I'm socially crippled and I can't talk to girls" weakling chump. Or a "all women are whores" weakling chump. There are maybe 2 women in all of these stories who aren't either avaricious, spiteful, emasculators or doomed simpletons relying on the love of a man who will never be able to give it. The others are just victims or background noise. It gets tired. To be clear, I have no problem with sex, nihilism, violence or mental wastelands in art, bring 'em on. But I didn't sense that I was just being *presented* with those elements and these characters, I was being asked to *care* about them, and in this context I just couldn't.

It seems they've released additional volumes of Tatsumi's work (each one collecting stories from a different calendar year, this one being the 1st). I might very well end up skipping a few volumes ahead to see if he ever matured (or at least diversified) because there is a lot of talent/honesty here, but I won't be doing it anytime soon.

Albert says

Amazing, disturbing, revolting. Revolutionized the way I look at manga. Yoshihiro's protagonists (dare I call them "heroes?") are mostly speechless; they're mute observers to the senselessness that surrounds them.

Yoshihiro's depiction of post-war Japan is very different from the standard narrative we read in textbooks of the Japanese economic miracle coupled with orderly, conservative social norms. Rather it's one of moral confusion, sexual perversion, and soul-crushing anonymity. For those reasons alone it's worth reading his work.

ka?yap says

Yoshihiro Tatsumi's art and storytelling style is brilliant. Every single panel is expressive and conveys a lot. The stories themselves, set in a modernising, urban Japan are bleak and miserable with dark humour. Our lead characters are all lonely, broken and confused working class men who often act in shocking and violent ways. They are frequently depicted in their daily drudgery, and walking alone through the city streets. Silent witnesses to a meaningless society.

Andrew says

An awesome collection of short-stories. Drawn and Quarterly (the publisher) ought to publish more volumes. The interviews at the back of each volume of D+Q Tatsumi books indicate that Tatsumi has an enormous amount of work published over the decades in Japan. I would eagerly sit down and read every single page if only I could.

I'm not sure I can say much about the actual subject matter of this book. The writing and drawing is incredible, and that should be all the prodigious comic book reader should need to know in order to rush out and grab some Tatsumi.

Trevor says

A colleague let me borrow this and I'm probably going to have to replace the copy now because I've read and re-read these dystopic little vignettes over and over again and can't stop. Tatsumi's characters strike a similar chord with me that my favorite English-speaking fiends do from drama and fiction (Shakespeare's Iago and Nabokov's Humbert come immediately to mind). Previous reviewers have already pointed out here that these stories tend to revolve around men who feel oppressed by women and hence fantasize or even act out aggressively because of it, but I think that's an oversimplified way of viewing things. All of Tatsumi's characters are broken and terrible in their own ways; and while it feels natural to want to distance ourselves from them and judge them for the awful things they do, the more we consider their situations the more we come to identify with them.

OprahLit here in the U.S. usually gets away with is moving the characters along far enough on the timeline or in "golden opportunity" moments that give these broken characters one last chance for redemption; when they make the right (but usually tortured) decision to move away from the darkness, we collectively exhale grandly and believe Everything Is Gonna Be Alright. That's why it's so interesting to read Tatsumi's stories: these golden opportunities never present themselves.

And the more we study the world, the more we realize these opportunities simply *don't belong*, that they are an elaborate rhetorical trick to get us to finally disconnect from what we're really experiencing. Tatsumi's characters aren't flawed because they drink too much and haven't found Jesus yet; they are individuals who--like all of us--are being ground up in the machinery of their jobs and relationships (this is brilliantly metaphorized by the title character, the Push Man, who is caught in an endless loop of both railing against and controlling the machine).

In the end, yes, we are all together, but we are all suffering.

Parka says

(More pictures at parkablogs.com)

Before I read the book, I had no idea who Yoshihiro Tatsumi is. He has been called "the grandfather of Japanese alternative comics" and he certainly deserves it.

The Push Man and Other Stories is a collection of short stories previously published in Japanese, now translated and reformatted for the western audience by Adrain Tomine.

In each story, Yoshihiro Tatsumi looks at a different facet of Japanese society. The main character is always a man filled with restrained angst, going about their daily jobs, ending with a solemn note. Every tale is filled with some form of sexuality — sex, abortion, prostitution, etc.

In the story "The Push Man", we're introduced to the pusher, whose job is to get commuters into packed trains by pushing them in. One day, he helped a lady whose clothes were torn from the pushing. They spent the night together and she invited him to her place the next day. The story ends with her sisters pushing each other away to get him. In "Telescope", a disabled guy committed suicide after being paid to watch someone else have sex. In "Test Tube", a sperm donor can't stop thinking about his recipient and eventually forced himself onto her. You can see that there are no happy endings here.

The storytelling is masterly. Every story is told in a darkly comic style, short dialogues and cleanly laid out panels. Even without text, the stories will be easy to understand. Yoshihiro Tatsumi has a way of dissecting his characters, providing a very raw look at their hard and unforgiving life.

The 16 stories are short. I like short if it means leaving the reader wanting more* at the end.

It's highly recommended but certainly not for everyone.

Akylina says

3.5 stars, to be exact.

Ahk says

The male protagonist in each of the stories is a different person (they all have different names and jobs), but are usually drawn with the same bland, innocent, open face. That face becomes more and more disturbing as each story reveals the violence and anger underneath. All of the women in the stories are flippantly cruel, taunting, and promiscuous. The protagonist is routinely mocked by other men in his life, usually co-workers. But it is usually the women that he destroys in the end, in sensationalist ways - by mutilation, poisoning, car crashes - behind his wide-eyed, placid, wondering expression. Disturbing.
