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Sylvia Gardepe 4/20/2011

From America to Japan and Back!: A Survey of Stylistic Influence between American Comics and Japanese Manga, starring God, the King, and the Ronin!

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Abstract

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By Sylvia Gardepe

During the 20th century, the United States and Japan developed two distinct aesthetics and industries for graphic storytelling, despite sharing a source of initial influence: Western comic strips. In the modern American comic industry, however, modern Japanese styles are used in combination with the standard American aesthetic. Additionally, a modern mainstream comic book published almost anywhere is likely to display some form of influence from the Japanese manga visual aesthetic. What were once separate styles are now part of an international pool of aesthetic elements. Using the works of Osamu Tezuka, Jack Kirby, and Frank Miller, I traced the development of two unique national aesthetics and identified which aspects of manga are being incorporated into the American comic aesthetic. I focus primarily on the visual differences between the two styles, including character design, angles, paneling, and transitions. While the styles defined by Tezuka and Kirby are different because of their cultural contexts, Miller nevertheless uses both styles in his work. He not only juxtaposes the two styles, but also adapts elements of manga style into sections of the comic drawn in an American style. Miller could do this because the American industry was shifting away from the Kirby-era assembly line production towards a writer-draftsman approach, similar to the system of manga production in Japan. Since Miller, manga style has become a key component of the American comic industry, both implicitly and explicitly. Just as how Western style defined graphic narrative in the early 20th century, manga style is now a common thread linking the look of comics not only in Japan and America, but in the rest of the world as well. While the two styles are still seen as distinct by the general public, the creators are embracing a merging style. Modern comic artists are contributing to and borrowing from this international graphic narrative culture, and as the medium continues to evolve, a distinction between “manga” and “American comics” may soon become obsolete.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

Figures

Introduction

The Barnes and Noble in my hometown, Huntsville, Alabama, shelves Japanese and American comics side by side. The shelf of American comics is a disorganized hodgepodge of creators, titles, genres, and eras. In contrast, the multiple rows of Japanese comics are organized in alphabetical order, with the most recent titles placed in colorful cardboard displays emblazoned with smiling, large-eyed characters. The two or three American comics shelves fade in the background. From this juxtaposition alone, it is clear what the public prefers. The statistics also point in that direction- in 2007, *Publishers Weekly* stated that forty-four percent of all comics sold in American bookstores were specifically of Japanese origin.[1] The paperback, multi-chapter volumes (called *tankōbon* in Japanese) are not the only way these comics are distributed in the United States. In Japan, comics are distributed weekly in magazines aimed at specific audience groups. While perusing the magazine aisle of CVS Pharmacy, I have come across monthly issues of Viz's translation of the popular boys' comic magazine *Shōnen Jump.* American artists have also jumped onto the bandwagon, as shown by the publication of Svetlana Chmakova's Japanese-influenced "The Adventures of CG" in the popular teen magazine *CosmoGIRL*[2]. Japanese comics have established a strong foothold in the American industry, and it is clear that they are here to stay.

Despite the popularity of Japanese comics in the United States, the overall reception of the medium is different on both sides of the Pacific. In Japan, comics are everywhere. Boys and girls, and even men and women, read comics, and there are genres that cater to practically every interest. However, in the United States, even our homegrown comics have held a subculture status either as children's media or as entertainment for the stereotypical basement-dwelling

[1] Mark MacWilliams, ed., *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 14.
[2] Ibid., 17.

male nerd. Japanese comics and animation in the United States, when they were introduced, were also a subculture phenomenon that appeared first at comic conventions. Over the past twenty years, Japanese comics and animation have become more prominent in mainstream culture, as anyone who remembers the Pokémon craze in the 1990s can attest. Japanese comics have developed widespread popularity in the United States, particularly among teenagers and young adults, but American comics are also creeping out of the basement into mainstream America.

With the invasion and incorporation of Japanese comics into American culture, how has the homegrown comic industry managed to cope? Since the early twentieth century, comic strips and comic books have been a staple in popular culture, even after the advent of motion pictures, animation, and color television. While sales of comic books have fluctuated over time, there are few who do not recognize the trademark of Superman's "S" or Batman's signature logo, and in the rare chance that one could forget, Hollywood reminds the public by releasing high-budget films based on these iconic characters. However, despite the deep roots that these characters and stories have in our society, the industry is nevertheless acknowledging the rise of manga. While American comics are still actively consumed by loyal patrons of comic specialty shops, many of these shops are shifting their merchandise to cater to fans of both American and Japanese comics. Fan conventions, such as San Diego's Comic-Con, have also begun to embrace both sides by including Japanese artists like Tite Kubo, whose series *Bleach* tops charts in Japan and the United States, on their guest lists.[3] Even the creators of comics, particularly those from younger generations, are also beginning to incorporate aesthetic elements from Japanese comics into their own work. Comics drawn in Japanese style are sold alongside translated titles, and

[3] "Viz Media Welcomes Bleach Creator Tite Kubo, the Los Angeles Laker Girls and Nba Star Greg Oden to 2008 Comic-Con International," Anime News Network, http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/press-release/2008-07-16/viz-media-welcomes-bleach-creator-tite-kubo-the-los-angeles-laker-girls-and-nba-star-greg-oden-to-2008-comic-con-international (accessed December 9, 2010).

even the American comic industry, which has its own traditional aesthetic, is incorporating implicit elements of Japanese style into superhero titles. Japanese comics, referred to as *manga* in the United States to distinguish them from their native brethren, have permeated the heart of the industry itself.

Following this pattern of distinction, I will refer to Japanese comics as manga throughout this analysis to distinguish them from American comics.[4] In addition to coming from two separate industries, many examples of manga and American comics feature core aesthetic differences. One of the consequences of manga's popularity in the United States is the development of a "stereotypical" image of Japanese comic style, which is based on the samples of manga brought into American markets. The word manga, to those who associate Japanese aesthetic with *Pokémon* or *Dragon Ball Z*, brings to mind characters with large eyes, spiked hair, small noses and mouths, and an overall look of childlike cuteness. While many manga and anime characters have this appearance, this alone is not ample means of distinguishing between Japanese and American styles. Rather, I loosely define "manga style" as the visual elements of mainstream Japanese comics that are different from American comics, encompassing simplified character design, repetition of complex angles, irregular panel layouts, and nonlinear transitions from panel to panel. When manga arrived in the United States, these elements are the ones that were incorporated into American comics. Osamu Tezuka, who is credited with first creating the manga aesthetic, exhibits all of these elements in his breadth of work. Likewise, these key differences are the aspects of manga that were eventually adapted and incorporated into American comic publications. However, not all manga reflect every aspect of Tezuka's "manga style." Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima's manga *Kozure Ōkami,* for example, features highly

[4] The American definition of manga refers specifically to Japanese comics. In Japan, however, the word manga refers not only to mainstream popular comics but also to all types of visual storytelling regardless of cultural origin.

realistic character designs (as opposed to simplified), but still follows Tezuka's methods of paneling and transitions.

For the sake of comparison between Eastern and Western aesthetics, I will use the term "American comics" or just "comics" to refer primarily to mainstream superhero comics rather than the American comic industry as a whole. While the greater American comic industry encompasses everything from newspaper comic strips to funny animals to superheroes (and then some), I am focusing on superhero comics because one of the most influential artists, Jack Kirby, is a contemporary of Tezuka's. The American superhero comic "style" incorporates exaggerated character designs, stresses the importance of angles to create visual impact, and emphasizes clarity and simplicity in panels and transitions. Even artists, such as Frank Miller, who branched outside the superhero market retain traces of the classic superhero aesthetic in their other work, even after the industry began to embrace more individual styles. This American aesthetic, despite stemming from superhero comics, nevertheless expands to non-superhero stories, thus showing its prevalence in the industry.

"American comic style" and "manga style" are distinguished not only by country of production and differing visual elements, but also by the fact that both stem from two separate creators working within two separate industrial situations. In Japan, Tezuka had sole ownership of his characters and his aesthetic. Even though he worked with teams of assistants, he did much of the creative work himself. This creative freedom is what allowed Tezuka to shape the manga aesthetic. In America, however, superhero comic artists were essentially dogs of the larger corporation, forced to draw whatever the higher ups believed would sell. This led to formation of standardized, mass-produced aesthetics that were designed for profit. Kirby rose to prominence after starting at the bottom; his art just happened to sell extremely well. While the American

comic industry has since shifted towards a more individualized approach, it still is driven heavily by market demands. The incorporation of manga into superhero comics reflects the fact that products that visually resemble manga have potential to sell well. While this analysis will focus primarily on the artist's aesthetic, industrial factors must also be taken into account because of the way industry conditions affect artistic output.

These definitions of "manga style" and "American style" are extremely simplified and do not reflect the entirety of each country's aesthetic; however, by breaking down elements of two styles to the core aspects that set them apart, one can easily trace patterns of influence. While the superhero aesthetic did not influence manga to the degree that manga is now influencing American comics, both superhero comics and modern manga share a common ancestor: the Western comic strip model. The early Western comic strip, which featured images contained within a short sequence of small, boxlike panels, was processed through two cultural contexts and transformed into what I define as two separate aesthetics. By analyzing the different stylistic evolutions, I can see how this one root split into the elements that define manga style and American comic style. Additionally, by pinpointing where the two aesthetics differ, I can see exactly how art is incorporated and expanded upon within foreign cultural contexts by the hands of individual creators.

This adaptation and incorporation of Japanese comic aesthetics into American markets is of particular interest to me because of the questions it raises about the current, cross-cultural approach to graphic narrative. Are American creators willing to distance themselves from the traditional comic art style in order to keep up with a shifting public taste, or are they actually inspired as artists by this new medium? Similarly, why are audiences and artists so quick to adapt new styles? Is it simply because the styles are foreign and exciting, or is it because foreign

styles of images and narrative are more aesthetically pleasing? How do the two styles differ in how they tell stories, and can the adaptation of one into the other add new dimensions to the finished product? Is it even possible to visually trace patterns of influence between individual artists, factoring natural variation between each artist's unique styles? As an artist who received the majority of her influence from the manga and anime she consumed growing up, I take particular interest in the visual aspect of comic storytelling. I believe that the key to manga's popularity in the United States lies within its visual style: the stylistic differences between Kirby's comics and Tezuka's manga not only make the two look different, but also provide two distinct reading experiences. As a critic, I cannot help but wonder what factors led to the development of two separate aesthetics that are nevertheless merging in the modern industry. I believe that the development of a merged aesthetic follows a cycle of mutual cultural appropriation that began over a century ago, when the Western comic strip first appeared on Japanese shores.

While artists worldwide have combined images and narrative throughout history, the development of the Western comic strip sparked the development of both American and Japanese aesthetics. The Western strip is descended from sequences of satirical, sometimes paneled images developed by artists like Rodolphe Töpffer, who employed cartooning and paneling and established scenes where the images and text were interdependent.[5] The most direct precursor to the Western comic strip came about at the end of the 19th century, and these strips were published in newspapers and magazines. While Western satirical caricatures and paneled images would not reach Japan until 1862, Japan had already established its own native tradition of visual storytelling. For example, woodblock prints depicting folktales, pictures, jokes, and

[5] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 1994), 18.

satire (known as *akahon*) were mass-produced for adult audiences in Edo-period Japan.[6] Another woodblock precursor to manga, *ukiyo-e,* was also immensely popular in Japan during this period and depicted hedonistic urban lifestyles.[7] When the Western comic strip met *akahon* and *ukiyo-e,* the cycle of stylistic influence began, and would continue until after World War II.

At first, the Japanese would directly adapt the Western comic style, to which they were exposed through the British cartoonist Charles Wirgman's work in his magazine "The Japan Punch."[8] Through his work, as well as the work of other cartoonists like George Bigot, the Japanese were exposed to elements such as panels, word balloons, and sequential images.[9] Eventually, specifically American comic strips would arrive in Japan. American comic strips would be published in both English and Japanese, and artists like Rakuten Kitazawa and Ippei Okamoto traveled to the United States to study cartooning.[10] These American-style comic strips would continue to be published through World War II, although the government would censor many publications in the 1930s. During the Occupation, the American general would also censor these publications, but the presence of American forces would give the Japanese public access to characters such as Blondie, Krazy Kat, Popeye, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Superman.[11] It was during this time that Osamu Tezuka began to draw and publish his own work, inspired by both the influx of American culture around him as well as his experiences growing up in Japan.

Despite the influence of Western comic strips on the industries in both the United States and Japan, two countries developed standard, "national" styles that bear little resemblance to their forerunner. Early examples of Japanese comics are clearly influenced (or in some cases

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[6] Kinko Ito, "A History of Manga in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38 (2005): 460.
[7] Ibid., 458.
[8] Ibid., 460.
[9] Ibid., 461.
[10] Ibid., 463.
[11] Ibid., 466.

direct adaptations) of American comic art, thanks to Osamu Tezuka, the medium evolved into what is known as manga to American audiences today. Similarly, while Tezuka was working his magic in Japan, Jack Kirby had already begun to expand the comic strip into his vision of the superhero comic book. Each man melded the comic strip around cultural ideals, contemporary opinions, and his own artistic vision for the medium. The different stylistic elements that I use to define each aesthetic develop in the mid twentieth century and reflect the views of the artist, the intent of the industry, and the way the medium is absorbed by the public. However, the visual differences between manga and American comics are not so entrenched in specific cultural significance that meaning is lost between cultures. Indeed, it was the cross-cultural connection that allowed the Japanese to adapt the Western comic strip model in the first place.

Just as how Japan borrowed from the West over a century ago, the American comic industry is now borrowing from the manga aesthetic rather than succumbing to the influx of manga titles. In the 1980s, well after both America and Japan had established their definitive aesthetics, Frank Miller discovered manga and began to incorporate it into his American comics. While Miller came from a superhero background, both his superhero and non-superhero comics came to reflect aesthetic elements that had previously been exclusive to manga. This prompted a change in American style, which upon realizing the growing popularity and narrative potential of manga style began to incorporate more and more Japanese influence. Since Miller, manga has reached a high enough status in the United States to rival traditional American comic style in terms of influence and market demand, from the shelves of manga imports in bookstores to the implicit elements of manga paneling in a modern Batman comic.

Because I believe that the influence of manga is shown most directly by (and attributed to) its visual style, this analysis will focus primarily on the evolution of this visual aspect in

terms of both the individual creators and the respective industries. While extenuating cultural, economic, and social factors play role in the public's response to the medium as well as its production, I will dedicate my analysis solely to individual creators and how they shaped the artform through both internal and foreign influence. That said, however, outside forces cannot be ignored completely because the creators of mass entertainment have to cater to popular demand and comply with industry constraints to make a living. Additionally, I will eliminate a thematic or literary comparison of the styles except in cases where it applies directly to the images (i.e. the images and context work together to produce a certain visual effect). Comics and manga have only recently been established in critical academic discourse and are interdisciplinary in nature; to focus on one specific discipline would severely limit any possible conclusions.

This analysis aims to trace the evolution of the comic medium from the Western comic strip to the manga and American comic style, then from the two separate media into what is shaping to be an international network of stylistic influence. I will do this by closely examining the work of three core figures: the two men responsible for establishing the two national aesthetics (Osamu Tezuka and Jack Kirby) in the first two chapters, as well as the man credited with first incorporating elements of modern manga style into an American aesthetic (Frank Miller) in the third chapter. By studying primary sources from these three figures, I can pinpoint the artistic elements that first define the national styles, and then show how Miller incorporates definitive aspects of manga style into an American context. I believe that the work from these three creators sets the stage for the current state of manga both in the United States and in a wider cultural context. I also believe that while the differences in the two styles stem from two distinct cultural contexts, it is the individual creators who are responsible for not only developing these differences but also incorporating influence from the world around them into their own

work. Just as how Western comic strips became the forerunner to manga in Japan, manga style is reshaping not only the set aesthetic for American comics but also the entire industry's approach to comic creation. Many modern comics have come to represent not an exclusively national aesthetic but an aesthetic that represents a stylistic blending. Because so many modern creators have been exposed to manga style, manga style is a unifying stylistic aspect of today's comics. Instead of replacing national styles, manga style and American style have both become part of a larger pool of different, but familiar, aesthetics that creators all around the world can use for their own work. Through my research on these core creators, I will show that the two styles, in spite of their culturally-specific visuals, can nevertheless merge together, forming an aesthetic that is not indicative of a national identity but of a larger, international graphic narrative culture.

Chapter 1

Japan's God

In the years after World War II, artists began to expand upon the Western comic strip aesthetic, transforming manga into what we as Americans recognize as "manga style" today. The individual primarily responsible for this revolution is known today as "*Manga no Kamisama*," the God of Comics, Osamu Tezuka. Tezuka's career as a manga-ka spanned from the immediate postwar years until his death in 1989, and during this time, he created a legacy. His inspiration came from the world around him: comics and cartoons, the all-female Takarazuka theater troupe, cinema, Japanese history and culture, his childhood, and even his experience as a medical student. His manga, particularly in the earliest examples, reflects strong Western comic influences in terms of character design, angling, and panel layout; however, other cultural elements, both Japanese and Western, are also visible in his work. This mishmash of inspiration, in addition to his talent for storytelling, is what led Tezuka to turn manga into the Japanese cultural staple that it is today. Taking in these elements as he worked, Tezuka would continue to develop his style throughout his career.

In this section, I will pinpoint the elements of Tezuka's style that would go on to define the manga aesthetic, thus setting "manga style" apart from that of Western comics. For the sake of later comparison with contemporary American comics, stylistic aspects that are unique to Tezuka, such as his use of recurring gag characters and his "Star System," will be omitted from this analysis. Instead, I will focus on Tezuka's contributions to the overall manga aesthetic through his character designs, use of cinematic angles, panel layouts, and transitions. Throughout his career, Tezuka would develop these elements of comic aesthetic into what is now considered to be modern manga.

For the purpose of this analysis, I will divide Tezuka's lengthy career into three periods that reflect his artistic development, simply Early, Middle or Transitional, and Late.[12] The Early period (1946-mid 1960s) contains Tezuka's most famous manga for children and reflects his Western influence most strongly. The Middle or Transitional portion of Tezuka's career (1960s-early 1970s) is marked by his experimentation with other genres and the further development of his style, as well as his expansion into animation. The Late period (1970s-1989) is marked by Tezuka's most mature work in terms of theme and style. In my analysis, I will examine one work from each of these three critical stages of his career: *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*), *Hi no Tori* (*Phoenix*), and *Black Jack*. *Tetsuwan Atomu*, a Japanese superhero story, is a relatively early example of Tezuka's work whose subsequent anime series reached international popularity. *Hi no Tori* ran from the middle of Tezuka's career until his death and is his most experimental work. *Black Jack* is an example of Tezuka's later art style, featuring a mature storyline and a modern layout. While many other noteworthy examples of Tezuka's work exist, I will focus on these three series because of their popularity, as well as the manner in which each one represents a specific stage in Tezuka's development as an artist. By examining an early work, a middle work, and a late work, one can follow the evolution of Tezuka's manga from its western roots into the eye-catching father of today's manga.

The first of these three works, *Tetsuwan Atomu*, is a child-friendly story set in Tezuka's version of the twenty-first century where robots and humans live side by side. In the world of this manga, it is difficult to distinguish between robots and humans by appearance alone. The protagonist of this story, Atom, is a humanoid robot with the appearance of a young boy. Despite

[12] Susanne Phillipps groups Tezuka's career into the "classical," "horror-gothic," and "historical-realistic" periods. As useful as her classifications are for defining the thematic development of Tezuka's work, they do little to reflect the changes in his artistic style. Susanne Phillipps, "Characters, Themes, and Narrative Patterns in the Manga of Osamu Tezuka," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime,* Mark W. MacWilliams ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 69.

his appearance, however, Atom has extreme strength and a variety of superpowers. He goes to school with human children, blending in with them instead of hiding behind a secret identity when not fighting crime. Atom's character was first introduced as a side character in Tezuka's *Captain Atom* ("Atom Plays the Role of Ambassador") and soon became the star of his own manga named after him: *Tetsuwan Atomu* (translated as "Mighty Atom"). *Tetsuwan Atomu* ran for over a decade, so Tezuka's progression as an artist is clearly documented even within this single series. While the aesthetic of this manga is cartoony, linear, and somewhat static, it nevertheless marks Tezuka's first experimentation with more dynamic layouts and cinematic styles, particularly in its later chapters.[13]

The earliest *Tetsuwan Atomu* stories feature heavily simplified character designs. It is no secret that Tezuka was heavily influenced by Western comic strips and animation, particularly Walt Disney, and his early work resembles that of Carl Barks, a contemporary American artist who is known for his Disney animal comics. Tezuka's early work is very loose and round, giving it the cute, cartoonlike appearance. This is because Tezuka adapted the Western animation technique of basing character designs on ellipses, which allowed him to easily reproduce the character and draw the massive numbers of pages needed for his story manga.[14] Characters have round faces and large eyes, and everyone appears to be relatively small in stature, even the adults**.** There are no bulging muscles to distinguish physically powerful characters in Tezuka's earliest stories. However, Tezuka does use black and white to distinguish between characters (characters rendered with lots of black tend to have questionable motives). Additionally, a character's facial design serves to convey personality as well as his or her role in the story.

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[13] In some publications, a strip originally produced in the 1950s may look like it was drawn much later because of the way Tezuka's style changed over time. This is because Tezuka frequently went back and reworked his earliest chapters for different publications.

[14] Frederik Schodt, *The Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the Manga/Anime Revolution* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2007), 44-45.

Morally ambiguous characters, such as Atom's creator Dr. Tenma, tend to have pointier features (such as hooked noses and arched eyebrows) and have an overall more ominous presence. Some may have hair that conceals one eye, a technique Tezuka uses throughout his career to indicate a shifty nature. In contrast, the heroes and comedic characters have wide eyes and rounder features. Some characters may have comedic, exaggerated features such as Higaoyaji's mustache or Ochanomizu's nose. The designs in the early strips are simplified in these manners so that children can easily relate to the characters on an emotional level. This simplification also makes it easy to visually convey humor to the young readers. Scott McCloud theorizes that the degree of abstraction through simplification affects the amount of symbolic meaning in an image; the more simplified a face is, the easier it is for the reader to see himself or herself in the image, thereby identifying with the character and the story.[15] Simplification, in this sense, captures the pure essence of an emotion and creates a deeper emotional connection with the reader. In Tezuka's earliest work in particular, simplification is much more crucial to design than realism especially because it is targeted at children rather than adults.

Atom's simplified, youthful, and androgynous design is commonly referred to as a representative of manga aesthetic even today, yet it is nevertheless a clear indication of Tezuka's mishmash of Western influence. When he first appeared in *Captain Atom*, Atom had his characteristic pointy, plastic "hairstyle," which is Tezuka's homage to Mickey Mouse's ears.[16] Atom's large eyes (each one drawn with exactly five eyelashes) and overall feminine face are reminiscent of American Kewpie dolls, while his signature briefs and red boots are modeled after both Superman and Paul Terry's *Mighty Mouse*.[17] His face and hair had been around since *Captain Atom*, but his iconic costume would come later after Atom became the star of his own

[15] McCloud, 28-32; 36.
[16] Schodt, 46-47.
[17] Ibid., 45-46.

series, *Tetsuwan Atomu.* Despite Tezuka's later attempts to modify Atom's design, it is nevertheless as well known in Japan today as Superman's "S" is in the West. Elements of the character design aesthetic that Tezuka established early on through his adaptation of Western inspiration would last throughout his career.

In addition to Tezuka's simplified character design, the visual narrative in these early stories also lacks complexity in viewing angles and perspective. Tezuka's early art is quite flat, which could partially be explained by the fact that the majority of the art in the manga is squeezed into small, uniform panels. Indeed, Tezuka uses more complicated perspective in the half-page introductory panels at the beginning of each chapter where he actually has room to do so. For example, in one instance, a character is shown walking, and the reader can see the skyscrapers in the background stretching upwards.[18] By incorporating the third dimension through the use of low angles, Tezuka gives the reader a stronger sense of place and makes the panel more visually engaging. In early stories, the reader typically views the action from a single vantage point in the story panels; use of high and low angles is kept to a minimum, as was the case with many early American strips. Additionally, the "camera" does not zoom in or out to give different perspectives on the characters. Visually, the individual panels are straightforward and simple with little room for more dynamic art, thus making the art look static. Tezuka does compensate for this by having characters burst out of panel borders to show motion.[19] While he is limited in his ability to show motion and space within the panel, he does attempt to expand beyond its confines in order to make his pages more dynamic and engaging.

[18] Osamu Tezuka, "Atom Plays the Role of Ambassador" (1952), in *Tetsuwan Atom* vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979-1983), 38/1.
[19] Ibid., 30/4.

The limited space for storytelling in these early samples of *Tetwuwan Atomu* and *Captain Atom* stems from Tezuka's decision to divide the pages into neat rows of largely uniform panels (as illustrated in Figure 1).

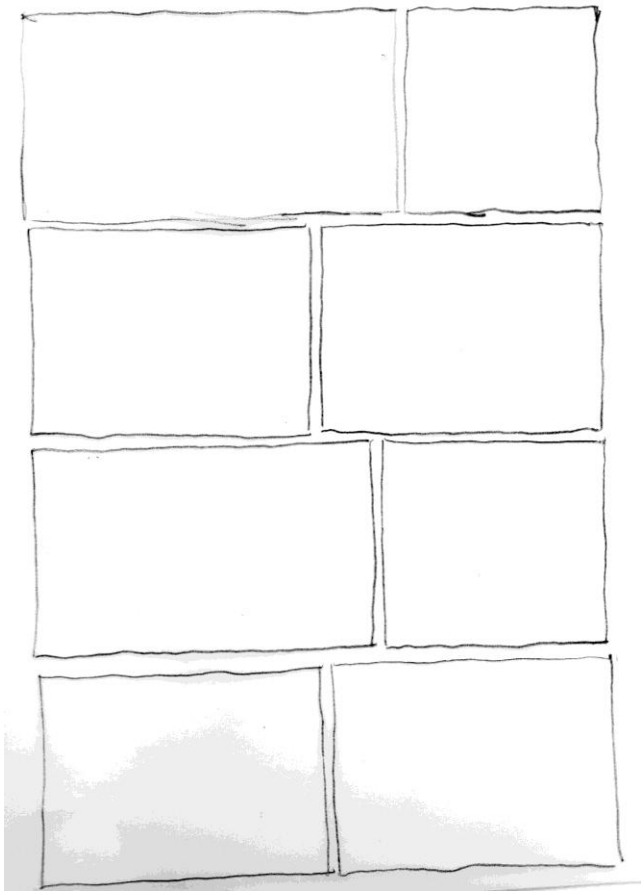

Figure 1. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, "Atom Plays the Role of Ambassador," 13).

These panels dictate not only what the reader sees, but also how the reader visually perceives the action in the story. Paneling also manipulates the flow of time, with smaller panels representing short periods of time and larger panels reflecting longer scenes. The more space a panel takes on a page, the more time it seems to take in the story (even if the panel captures a single moment). Tezuka does stretch some panels horizontally to indicate larger passages of time or to emphasize the importance of a single scene, but not nearly to the degree that he does in later

works. Occasionally, he also uses larger panels when needed to show a wider viewing angle, but pages tend to contain little variation in panel sizes. At times, Tezuka uses borderless panels to emphasize a particular image, thus suspending it in time. Additionally, the first panels of each chapter tend to lack borders and in some instances "bleed" off the page (the art extends beyond the edge of the paper). The bleeding images are used for scenes that are too large to place within panels and, when placed at the beginning of each story, indicate that the story begins in the middle of action, reflecting the episodic nature of the manga. While there is variation in the panel and page layouts at times, it is limited to the most important scenes. This type of panel structure and flow is characteristic of the traditional Western comic strip model, which Tezuka adapts here and later transforms.

The transitions in the earliest stories also reflect the static, linear nature of the page layouts. Scott McCloud identifies six types of transitions found throughout international comic narratives: action-to-action, subject-to-subject, scene-to-scene, aspect-to-aspect, moment-to-moment, and non-sequitur.[20] However, the first three transitions are the only ones that appear in the earliest chapters of *Tetsuwan Atomu*. These transitions are designed for carrying the story forward in a linear fashion. In "Atom Plays the Role of Ambassador," each box-shaped panel shows a different scene or action with the exception of narrative or flashback panels. Following Scott McCloud's model, these transitions are entirely scene-to-scene or action-to-action. This layout emphasizes clarity and is a direct adaptation of Western transitions, yet it lacks the temporal manipulation that characterizes Tezuka's later work.

Nevertheless, despite its simplification, stillness, and flatness, these early *Captain Atom* and *Tetsuwan Atomu* chapters burst with a type of energy previously unheard of in Japanese manga. While a modern manga reader might consider these stories cramped and painful, at the

[20] McCloud, 70-76.

time, they were the epitome of movie-inspired manga storytelling.[21] The stylistic elements that had made Tezuka stand out as an artist early on were the elements that would continue throughout the manga's run and make a lasting impression on Tezuka's entire career. However, Tezuka would also continue to refine his craft, altering and experimenting as he worked. The results of his experiments would begin to appear in the later chapters of *Tetsuwan Atom.*

Later *Tetsuwan Atomu* stories retain some design elements from the earlier chapters, but Tezuka's art style clearly shows his progression. The character designs are still quite simple, but there is more variety in angles, panel sizes, and transitions. These later stories are much more complex in terms of visual arrangement and image flow.

While the character designs in later *Tetsuwan Atomu* stories are largely similar, Tezuka nevertheless alters Atom's design slightly at times. Tezuka's interpretation of Atom's character changed over the years, just as how Schultz's early drawings of Charlie Brown do not resemble his later ones.[22] Elements of Atom's design, such as his hair and his costume, remained consistent throughout, but later in the manga's run, the popular opinion began to shift towards more realistically designed characters. Already, Tezuka's style was becoming old fashioned. To cope with this, Tezuka shifted Atom's proportions so that he was taller, more realistic, and cooler, yet when he did this, *Tetsuwan Atom's* popularity dropped. When Tezuka decided to draw Atom as a cute child again, his readers flocked back to him.[23] Although Tezuka attempted to evolve his art to match popular demand, Atom's original design is the one people prefer and remember in the end.

Tezuka had better luck experimenting with aesthetic elements that would make his pages more interactive, such as more complex angles. Because Tezuka used larger or wider panels

[21] Schodt, 16-17.
[22] Ibid., 46.
[23] Ibid., 48.

more frequently, he had more room to experiment with different angles. In "Hot Dog Corps," Tezuka takes advantage of larger panels to show tall structures and characters from below, emphasizing their height.[24] He also experiments with high angles to establish scenes. However, these angles are still used rarely. The majority of the panels still contain straight-on angles, even during the action scenes. However, Tezuka does use perspective to a higher degree in these later chapters. In one aerial fight in "Hot Dog Corps," Tezuka draws the city lights below the combatants.[25] Perspective is used to show the characters in relation to their surroundings or each other. The pages in these chapters gain dimension, but they still lack the visual complexity of Tezuka's later works. However, these later chapters of *Tetsuwan Atomu* also have close-ups, which Tezuka adapts from film to convey his characters' emotions in a way that is more personal. Additionally, while Tezuka still shies away from complex angles, he includes more instances of Atom zooming in and out of the panels. As Tezuka experiments with different forms of angling, he builds upon the three-dimensional space created within the panels and brings his pages to life. By doing so, he breaks free from the traditional, flat Western model and shapes the manga medium into the cinematic representation that it is today.

The more complex angles were partially due to the increase in panel variety. While the earlier chapters used only a few sizes of boxlike panels, these later stories include large, small, and differently shaped panels. While Tezuka still uses primarily boxlike panels, the number, size, and shape of the panels changes from page to page. Large, tall, or wide panels are used much more frequently, thus dividing the flow of time in the story in different increments. By providing a greater variety of panel shapes and sizes, Tezuka also makes the pages more dynamic visually. In other later stories, such as "Red Cat," Tezuka begins to separate panels with diagonal lines,

[24] Osamu Tezuka, "Hot Dog Corps" (1961), in *Tetsuwan Atom* vol. 9 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979-1983), 138/2.
[25] Ibid., 97/2.

creating what looks like a single wide panel split into two different panels.[26] These new panel shapes can be seen in figure 2.

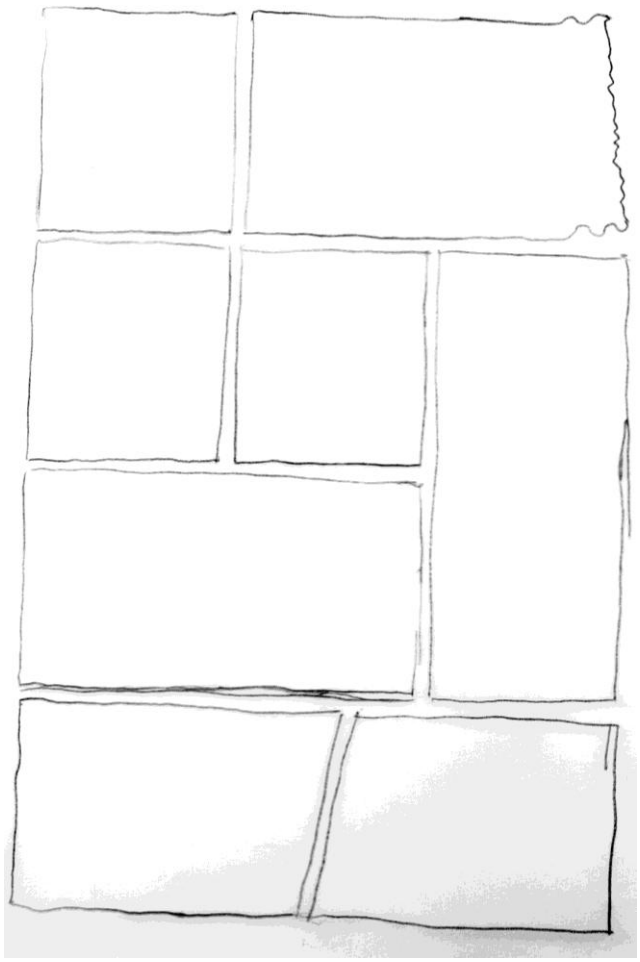

Figure 2. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, "Red Cat," 176).

There is a different image in each section, but the diagonal split visually leads one panel into the next. Tezuka also experiments with the "panel-within-panel" effect, cutting a smaller panel out of a larger panel as shown in figure 3. The image in the smaller panel either leads into

[26] Osamu Tezuka, "Red Cat" (1953-1963), in *Tetsuwan Atomu* vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979-1983), 176/7-8.

the event depicted in the larger panel or provides a different view of the action in the larger panel. Like the diagonal splits, this effect directly connects panels in subject and in structure.

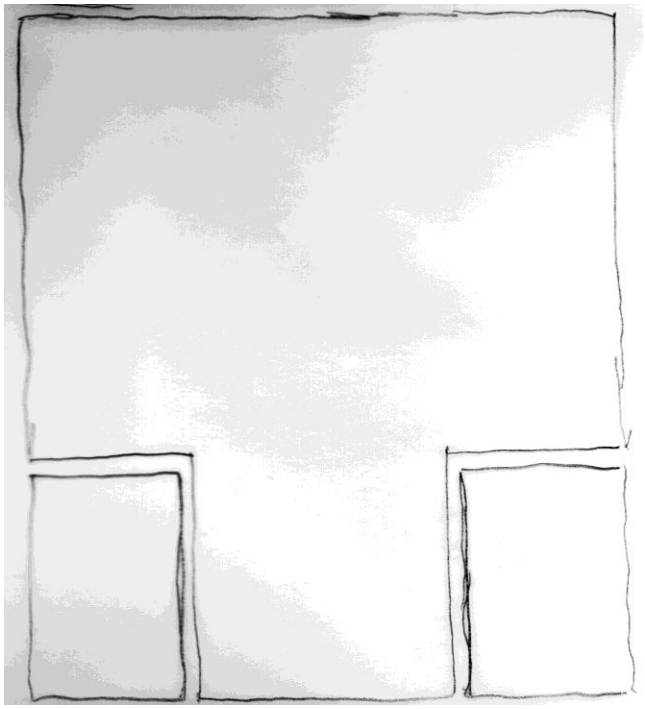

Figure 3. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, "Mystery Man of the Blast Furnace," 197/3-5).

By experimenting with panel layouts, Tezuka not only changes an individual page's appearance but also dictates how the images on the page flow together.

Adding to the varied paneling, Tezuka also introduces new ways of visually linking two images, thus visually manipulating the pace of the story. While the majority of transitions are still largely linear, Tezuka begins to incorporate aspect-to-aspect and moment-to-moment transitions. Before showing the characters in the robot research laboratory in "Hot Dog Corps," Tezuka first shows the outside of the building then the outside of the room the characters are in.[27] He establishes the scene before presenting the action.[28] With these transitions, different parts of

[27] Tezuka, "Hot Dog Corps," 98/1-2.
[28] McCloud, 79.

the scene are contained in separate panels, and the panels are pieced together like a puzzle to form the whole picture (or the picture that Tezuka wants to convey). McCloud theorizes that these transitions are, at least in part, cultural in origin, drawing upon the common motif of stillness and wandering in Eastern artistic traditions.[29] However, it is more likely that Tezuka adapted this technique from film. *Tetsuwan Atomu* also contains early examples of moment-to-moment transitions, such as when Tezuka zooms out on a character's shocked expression to show the wider scene in "Hot Dog Corps."[30] In this case, the transition is used to stretch the amount of time to convey an important moment over two panels**.** Through this type of transition, Tezuka provides two different angles on the same scene, giving more visual variety while slowing time. These nonlinear transitions are designed to stop the flow of the story temporarily, thus enhancing the reader's visual experience while emphasizing important moments. Because of Tezuka's new incorporation of angling and paneling, these different transitions could develop, thus expanding the visual capacity of the manga medium. For decades, these transitions would be unique to manga, even if they would go on to become a definitive part of Tezuka's visual narrative.[31]

Although the earliest *Tetsuwan Atomu* stories stayed close to a linear, Western style in terms of appearance and layout, by the later chapters, Tezuka had already begun to evolve his style. While his fanbase rejected attempts to change the manga's Disney-esque character design aesthetic, Tezuka nevertheless expanded the medium in other ways. Larger panels gave Tezuka the freedom to experiment with more complex angles to give his art more depth. Additionally, he began to use paneling as a more involved means of directing story flow by changing the size of panels and by incorporating different forms of transitions. These transitions, which zoom in on

[29] Ibid.
[30] Tezuka, "Hot Dog Corps," 185/1-2.
[31] McCloud, 78.

scenes or establish the setting, used in combination with a wider range of angles begin to give manga its distinctive, cinematic flow.

In his later works, such as *Hi no Tori*, these more complicated techniques are used to a greater degree as Tezuka began to morph the manga medium from its Western roots into what it is today. While Tezuka may have flirted with new stylistic elements in *Tetsuwan Atomu*, *Hi no Tori* is the work he used to really push the boundaries of the manga medium. Calling it his life's work, Tezuka began drafting the story as early as the 1950s; in 1967, it was first published and continued until 1988. By this point, cinematic manga had become common, but Tezuka continued to expand and develop the style in his own work. *Hi no Tori* consists of twelve books, each one telling a different story of resurrection and rebirth set in time periods ranging from the third century AD to several millennia in the future. Throughout the manga, Tezuka experiments with panel arrangements, transitions, angles, and varying degrees of realism. In a sense, *Hi no Tori* became Tezuka's intellectual playground, where he could deconstruct the manga medium and experiment with his new ideas. At its core, *Hi no Tori* is a story of rejuvenation, growth, and transformation, making it the perfect thematic base for stylistic change. Within its pages, Tezuka weaves a historical narrative, a volatile volcanic landscape, battles, humor, and fantasy into a visual masterpiece as epic as the tale it tells.

While *Tetsuwan Atomu* featured heavily stylized characters in a somewhat simplified background, especially in the earlier stories, *Hi no Tori* relies more heavily on the contrast between cartoonish and realistic. Many characters in the story are still drawn in a simplified manner reminiscent of *Tetsuwan Atomu*, but some of the older characters are drawn more lifelike with larger builds and angular faces**.** However, even some of the more realistic designs have exaggerated and rounded features, particularly the characters who play comedic roles. Saruta, for

example, has an unrealistically large nose. Like in *Tetsuwan Atomu,* the designs emphasize the characters' personalities. The title character of the entire series, the Phoenix, looks more like an effeminate chicken than a powerful firebird; however, its design also gives it an air of beauty and compassion that coincides its role in the story. All in all, while the designs in *Hi no Tori* are more realistic than those in *Tetsuwan Atomu,* Tezuka still maintains the elements of his early elliptical style.

In addition to more realistic and complex character designs, Tezuka also uses a greater variety of angles within the panels, making the compositions of his pages look more mature. Compared to early *Tetsuwan Atom,* which largely utilizes a straight angle, or even later stories, which only begin to incorporate different angles, *Hi no Tori* uses a variety of viewing angles with intent. For example, Tezuka frequently uses close-ups to show a character's emotions or show significant objects. These close-ups become a fixture of Tezuka's aesthetic, and on many occasions, Tezuka uses sequences of close-ups to imitate the effect of a camera zooming in on a subject. Additionally, unlike in earlier stories, Tezuka combines high, low, and straight angles in a single scene in order to deliberately show an array of perspectives. In the funeral scene, the angling makes the scene more surreal.[32] First, the reader sees from the perspective of one involved in the ritual. Then Tezuka shows the people and the flames from the ground up, making them appear larger. Lastly, he shows the entire scene from above. From that angle, the reader can see the entire funeral with white flames spiraling through the panel and contrasting sharply against the black background. Tezuka also uses angles so that the reader can see from the character's perspective, such as when Nagi is looking at an enemy down the length of a drawn arrow.[33] On this same page, Tezuka also shows the same scene from a variety of different angles,

[32] Osamu Tezuka, *Hi no Tori: Dawn* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1978-1995), 19-20.
[33] Ibid, 49/6-8.

a technique he uses to slow down time and create tension around an important event. At other times, Tezuka intentionally uses certain angles to give the reader a specific viewing effect. One sequence shows a series of narrow, horizontal panels that offer the same viewing angle on a scene throughout its duration.[34] This entire scene, combining the panel size and viewing angle with the overall layout of each panel, imitates theater; the viewer sees the action as if viewing it from the audience. This theater effect is a perfect complement to Himiko's melodramatic actions taking place in the panels. Of course, these angles are also used in combination with the "flying out of the page" perspectives introduced in *Tetsuwan Atomu.* Tezuka uses these angles to make each page more dynamic and interactive. These techniques will carry not only into his later work but also into the work of future manga-ka.

To contain these more complex drawings, Tezuka also incorporates a greater number of different panel sizes, shapes, and arrangements. These panels not only frame the images but also serve to visually emphasize or drive action, and, at times, create dramatic tension or other emotional responses. As opposed to previous works, the panel layouts in *Hi no Tori* are much more intense. Continuing his experimentation in late *Tetsuwan* Atomu stories, Tezuka expands on his use of diagonally-split panels, but he also alters the shape and spatial arrangement of the panels on a page. For example, in one early page, Tezuka begins with a standard rectangular panel, then as the volcanic eruption progresses, the panel arrangements on the page become more chaotic. [35] Panels two through four are actually a rectangular panel split into three parts diagonally, with a different image drawn in each section. The fifth panel is rectangular, but it is tilted slightly on the page. The last panels, numbers six through eight, are tilted at even more

[34] Ibid., 104-109.
[35] Ibid., 8.

extreme angles and are layered on top of each other at the bottom of the page. Figure 4 illustrates the panel shapes during this scene.

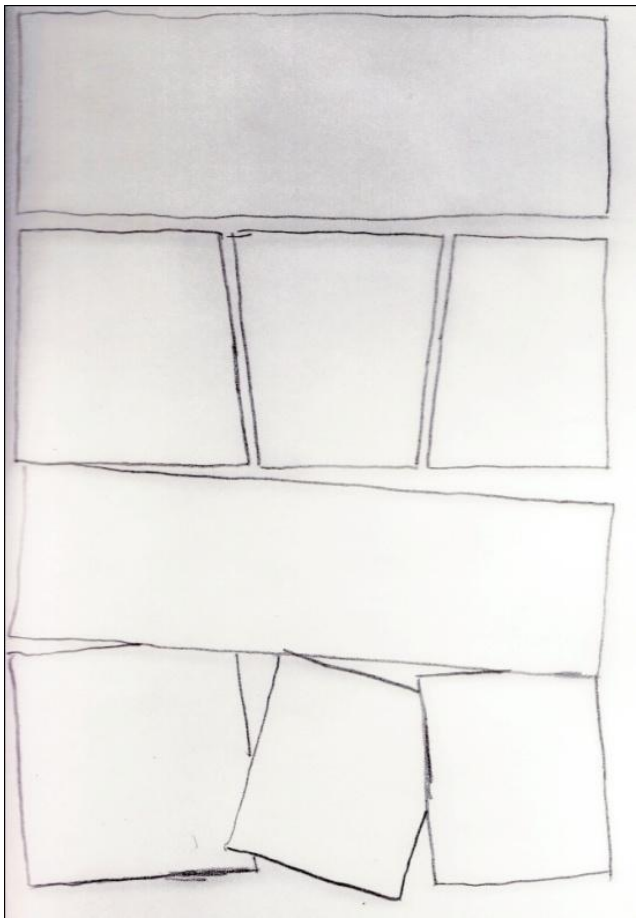

Figure 4. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, *Hi no Tori: Dawn*, 8).

The more action-packed scenes are placed in the most abstract panels. The jagged, angled splits and irregular panel arrangements emphasize the commotion in these scenes; sharp angles, particularly when contrasted with regular figures, are graphically more intense. At their most abstract, these layouts resemble broken glass, which only heightens the tension in the scene, as depicted in figure 5.

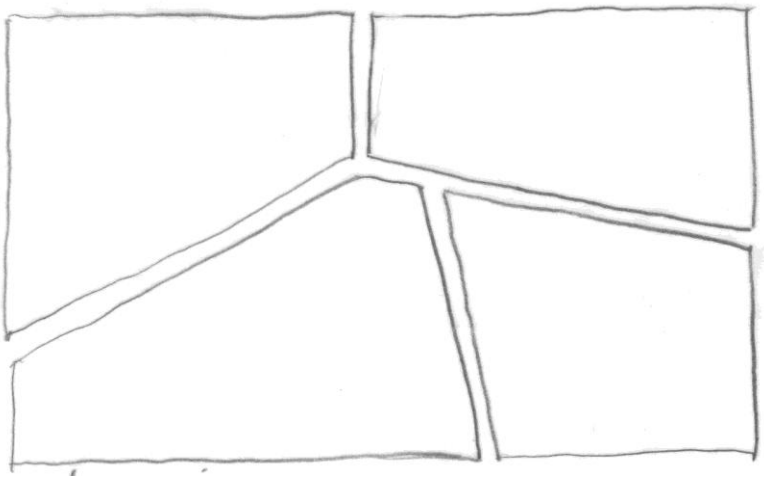

Figure 5. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, *Hi no Tori: Dawn*, 68/4-7).

Additionally, Tezuka's deviation from standard panel shape and flow may also be a visual jolt to a reader more familiar with normal paneling. However, despite their irregularity, the diagonal splits still serve to direct the reader's eye from one panel to the next, giving some order to the otherwise chaotic page.

In contrast to the visually intense panel shapes, Tezuka also includes large images to depict certain scenes in the manga. These images fill one or even two pages. One such instance of this is the spread where enemy ships are first shown approaching Nagi's village.[36] Because this scene depicts a crucial turning point in the story, it is drawn on a two-page spread. By making these panels so large, Tezuka freezes they key moments for a long duration of time, thus interrupting the panel-to-panel flow of images. The two-page spreads could be compared to a panoramic shot in film in that they give a wide perspective on a scene. However, Tezuka expands upon that principle in a way that only the comic medium can allow by making the image large in comparison to other images. Larger panels catch the eye, thus Tezuka puts important

[36] Ibid., 36-37.

scenes in the largest panels. While Tezuka did use full-page panels rarely in *Tetsuwan Atomu*, he did not use spreads. These large images play a more prominent role in *Hi no Tori.*

Conversely, Tezuka also uses sequences of small or skinny panels to show events that happen rapidly. While sometimes used to increase the flow of time, Tezuka more notably uses these small panels to freeze scenes by breaking them down. Instead of showing a single moment in one large panel, he splits the moment into a sequence of small images placed in tiny, square panels, as shown in figure 6.

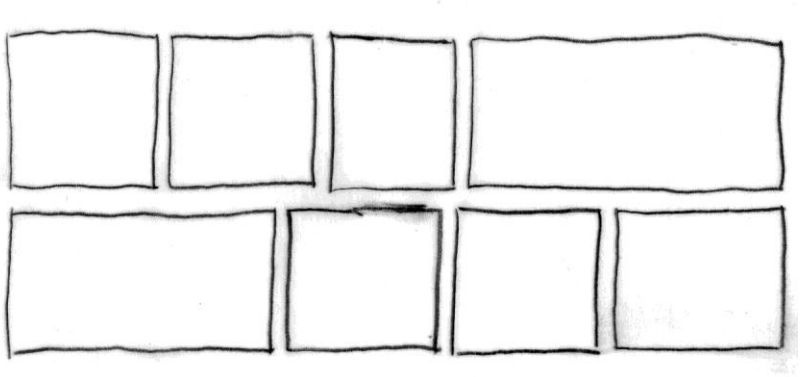

Figure 6. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, *Hi no Tori: Dawn,* 102/4-11).

This paneling technique coincides with Tezuaka's expansion on moment-to-moment transitions. In one instance, Tezuka does this to illustrate a character's reaction to a conversation with Nagi.[37] Each emotional response the character has as he processes Nagi's words in his head is depicted in a separate, tiny panel. Tezuka could have simply put the conversation and character's final response in two panels, leaving the emotional stress in the gap between panels; however, by including it in these tiny panels, he effectively stretches the scene on the page and thereby gives it more importance. At several occasions, Tezuka also highlights emotional dialog scenes with important dialogue by placing them in a sequence of thin, horizontal panels. This

[37] Ibid., 102/4-11.

effect, although visually quite different, is similar in that it breaks down a conversation into a series of emotional responses by using an abnormal panel layout. Through his manipulation of sequences of tiny panels in *Hi no Tori*, Tezuka heightens emotional tension by graphically controlling the flow of time.

In addition to altering the arrangement of panels on a page, Tezuka also takes advantage of the space between panels known as the gutter. The gutter is the place where the reader's mind connects two images together into a cohesive story.[38] In *Hi no Tori,* Tezuka manipulates the gutter space and the flow of time by eliminating panel borders or directly calling attention to the gutter. In a standard layout, panels are contained in borders and are separated by a gap of white space. However, in many of his borderless panels, Tezuka depicts instances that are literally suspended in time or timeless. In previous instances, he would use borderless panels to isolate a single timeless image. Nagi's reunion with his sister, however, is depicted as a sequence of three frameless images.[39] This visual contrast calls attention to the entire scene, emphasizing its importance to the story. By eliminating the borders, this scene is not restricted by temporal constraints. Because there is no border, or even a distinct gutter, the reader does not know if these images constitute three separate panels or three images contained in one panel. Without borders, the images flow together into one scene. In other instances, Tezuka actually calls attention to the space between panels by having characters blast through the gutters into the next or previous panel. In a sense, by having them go into other panels, Tezuka makes them time-travel. In one case, this technique is used as a way of exaggerating Nagi's reaction to his conversation with his sister, having him jump back in surprise, but it also changes the flow of

[38] McCloud, *Understanding Comics,* 66.
[39] Tezuka, *Hi no Tori*, 157/5-7.

time in the panel.[40] In *Hi no Tori*, Tezuka uses all aspects of paneling, from the panel size to the space between, to control time. While future manga artists may not adapt every aspect of his paneling techniques, these irregularities do make lasting impact on the unofficial industry aesthetic.

In addition to altering panel and page layouts, Tezuka also uses *Hi no Tori* to experiment with different transitions. Nonlinear transitions, such as moment-to-moment and aspect-to-aspect are characteristic of manga, yet were first brought to the forefront with Tezuka's work. While these transitions were first seen in *Tetsuwan Atomu*, they were used sparingly. In *Hi no Tori*, Tezuka uses them quite frequently. To visually stretch important scenes, rather than presenting them as a series of small, but linear, actions, Tezuka uses moment-to-moment transitions. Like in *Tetsuwan Atomu*, these transitions are used to provide a different angle on the same scene as the previous panel. For example, just as how a movie camera would zoom in for a close-up on an actor, Tezuka draws the same face larger in the next panel. In one instance, he does this to emphasize a character's fiery passion. He begins with a panel of the character's face, then over the next several panels, he zooms in closer, showing just the character's eye, then focusing on the metaphorical flames erupting in the character's pupil.[41] The small panels of one character's reactions mentioned earlier also exhibit moment-to-moment transitions. In *Tetsuwan Atomu*, Tezuka only uses these transitions over two panels, but in *Hi no Tori*, he sometimes fills half of a page with them. By spending so much time on these scenes, Tezuka makes sure the reader knows and understands every moment. This type of transition is another step in the evolution of Tezuka's film-inspired method of storytelling.

[40] Ibid., 159/7-12.
[41] Ibid., 115/2-8.

Following this same vein, Tezuka also increases the frequency of aspect-to-aspect transitions as a means of establishing a scene, sometimes focusing on elements of the landscape and at other times showing different parts of characters. For example, when Nagi is training by fighting wolves, Tezuka fills several panels with different parts of the wolves: the nose, then the claws, then the teeth, then the wolf's snarl.[42] Indeed, in this scene Tezuka actually makes a note that he is imitating "film style." At other times, like in *Tetsuwan Atomu*, he uses these transitions to establish setting, showing elements of the surroundings before focusing on the characters' actions. Tezuka also occasionally cuts to an image of the sun or moon during tense scenes, thus interrupting the direct flow of the story. However, in this manga, the moment-to-moment transitions are much more prominent. In the case of transitions, Tezuka takes techniques developed early on and applies them to different situations in his later work. The techniques he developed in *Hi no Tori* would last throughout the rest of his career.

Hi no Tori, Tezuka's adolescent manga, reflects a period of heavy experimentation and attempts to deconstruct the manga medium to the heart of its storytelling. Tezuka's aesthetic in *Hi no Tori* is based on the themes of the work, and one of these themes is rebirth. Through his experimentation in *Hi no Tori,* Tezuka finds a method of storytelling that he can apply to later works. In terms of design, layout, transitions, and visual impact, *Hi no Tori* is more mature. Core aspects of Western influence are still visible, but by the 1970s, the manga medium had long since evolved. The loose, cartoony style of his earliest work had become obsolete and was being replaced by more realistic styles, especially in manga aimed at older audiences. However, because Tezuka was able to grow and develop his style, he was able to keep up with the changing market attitudes towards his manga.

[42] Ibid., 83/4-7.

By the 1970s, other manga-ka had begun to move against the aesthetic established by Tezuka in his early works, leading to the rise of *gekiga.* These *gekiga* feature more realistic art and storylines aimed at adults rather than children. However, instead of admitting defeat, Tezuka responded to this movement by creating a *gekiga*-inspired work of his own: *Black Jack*. *Black Jack*, one of Tezuka's latest works, became an instant success and represents the culmination of his evolution as an artist. This work has the most in common with modern manga in that many elements of *Black Jack's* style of paneling, transitions, angles and character designs are visible in examples of manga today. The manga's visuals are extremely dynamic, which correlates with the dramatic, more mature storyline. The protagonist, Black Jack, is an unlicensed yet highly skilled surgeon who can treat almost any ailment for a high cost. The episodic stories in this manga are simultaneously unsettling and heartwarming, reflecting the themes of contrast and ambiguity in the work. While this manga does not push the boundaries in the way *Hi no Tori* did, it nevertheless contains elements of experimentation. Like in *Hi no Tori*, *Black Jack* maintains aspects of Tezuka's original art style, yet its compelling pages and characters clearly indicate his progress as an artist.

Although the character designs in *Black Jack* are much more realistic than in previous works, Tezuka's methods of simplification are still apparent. While Black Jack himself is drawn in a more realistic manner, his assistant Pinoko is extremely stylized. Her design gives her the appearance of a living doll with a disproportionately large head and eyes and tiny body as well as her cute, childlike face; in terms of facial features, she looks very much like today's image of a stereotypical manga girl.[43] In general, women and children in Tezuka's work tend to have much more simplified faces than the men, although as was the case with previous works, both male and

[43] Osamu Tezuka, "Star, Magnitude Six" (1977), in *Black Jack* vol. 1, trans. Camellia Nieh (New York: Vertical, Inc. 2008), 162.

female comedic characters have exaggerated and simplified features as well. Black Jack's appearance is much like that of a typical Tezuka villain: his face is heavily scarred, his clothes are all black, and his two-tone hair always covers one eye. The contrast between black and white, as well as the hidden eye, draws upon the distinctions Tezuka made between good and bad in his early work and conveys Black Jack's moral ambiguities. In *Black Jack,* character designs depend heavily on the character's personality; each character has a unique design. While this can be said about all of Tezuka's characters in past and later works, the characters in *Black Jack* have more complex personalities and thus more complex, symbolic designs.

The angles in *Black Jack* are also more developed and are used to add visual and emotional dimensions to the scenes. In *Black Jack,* Tezuka again uses a large number of close-ups to show emotions as well as different parts of scenes. For example, during surgery scenes, the camera zooms in on Black Jack's hands, his face, and the operation site.[44] By using a sequence of close-ups contained in small panels, Tezuka focuses on the important parts of the scene rather than showing them in a larger image of the entire scene. Every panel shown is significant when depicted in this manner. This technique also heightens the tension during these scenes. Additionally, Tezuka utilizes high angles to show a birds-eye view of scenes as well as low angles to make characters look more impressive. He also incorporates Dutch angles, positioning the character diagonally within the frame. At one occasion, Tezuka uses a Dutch angle to show Black Jack leaving the operation room after a procedure to address the patient's family.[45] This angle adds a visual sense of unease to a scene that is, thematically, already tense. It also serves to make Black Jack look mysterious and impressive. In larger panels, Tezuka also utilizes a more complex perspective in order to squeeze as much visual information into a panel

[44] Osamu Tezuka, "Is There A Doctor?" (1973), in *Black Jack* vol. 1, trans. Camellia Nieh (New York: Vertical, Inc. 2008), 22.
[45] Ibid., 23/4.

as possible. In one panel, he shows Black Jack looking through a window at a car driving away.[46] Black Jack is in the foreground and viewed straight-on, but the reader also sees the car leaving from above. In this circumstance, the angle emphasizes Black Jack's detachment from his patients while reinforcing his prominence in the story by placing him in the foreground. Additionally, while Tezuka's previous works also contain images of characters bursting from the panels, he expands upon this in *Black Jack* by incorporating this effect with perspective. For example, in the opening pages, he shows a car bursting out of the panel directly at the reader.[47] In *Black Jack*, Tezuka uses angles to show important elements of a scene, give different perspectives, convey emotions, emphasize thematic elements, and overall involve the reader more directly in the action. Tezuka's applies these angles to an enormous range of meanings dependant on their context, thus showing the range of visual and thematic complexities in his work.

However, even more striking than the angling is Tezuka's new method of panel organization. While *Hi no Tori* experimented with different panel shapes, the panels were still generally arranged in rows and columns with few exceptions (i.e. "broken glass" arrangements). *Black Jack* not only incorporates a wide variety of panel shapes but also contains instances where panels themselves are arranged diagonally on the page. The story still flows from right to left and from top to bottom, but the page is split in a different manner. This striking type of layout calls attention to the scene depicted in it. The panels are narrowest at the top, largest in the middle, and narrow again at the bottom, which makes this layout perfect for building tension then resolving it. Visually, it represents a complete narrative arc contained within a single page, as depicted in figure 7.

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[46] Ibid., 28.

[47] Osamu Tezuka, "The First Storm of Spring" (1977), in *Black Jack* vol. 1, trans. Camellia Nieh (New York: Vertical, Inc. 2008), 37.

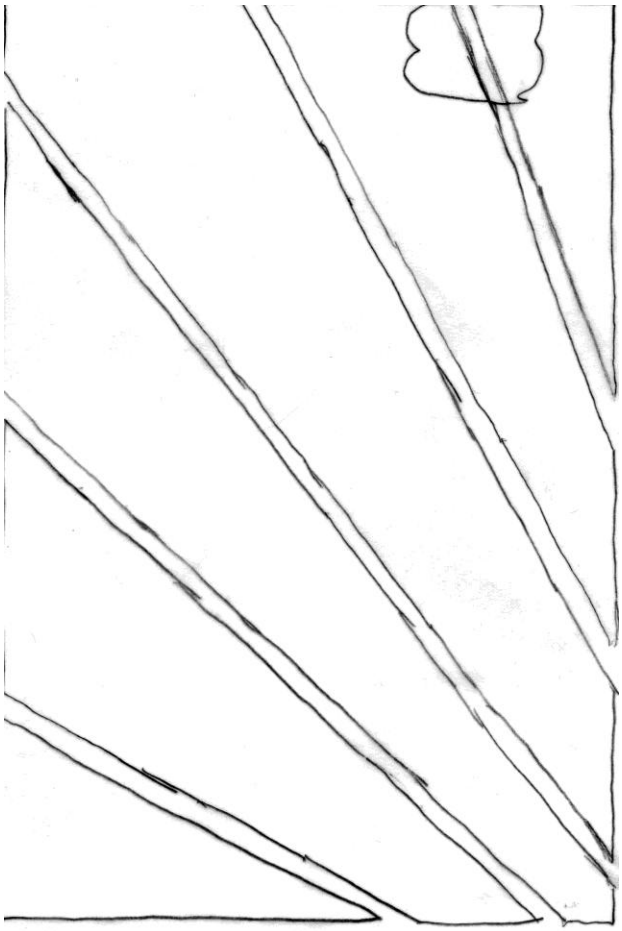

Figure 7. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, "The First Storm of Spring," 102).

In one early example, a young girl is tormented by a vision she has of a young man that only she can see. She is shown walking down the street, seeing the man, chasing after him, watching him disappear, and finally mentally debating his existence.[48] The two largest panels depict her chasing after the man and his disappearance, the climax of the scene. The diagonal splits, like in previous works, help the panels flow from one to the next. In this instance, they also make the page look like an individual, self-contained scene. Tezuka heightens the drama and increases the pace of image flow by using diagonal pages for the most extreme scenes.

[48] Ibid, 35.

Additionally, while diagonal splits between individual panels were used sparingly throughout *Hi no Tori*, these panels (shown in figure 8) appear on almost every page in *Black* Jack because of the way they link two images together.[49]

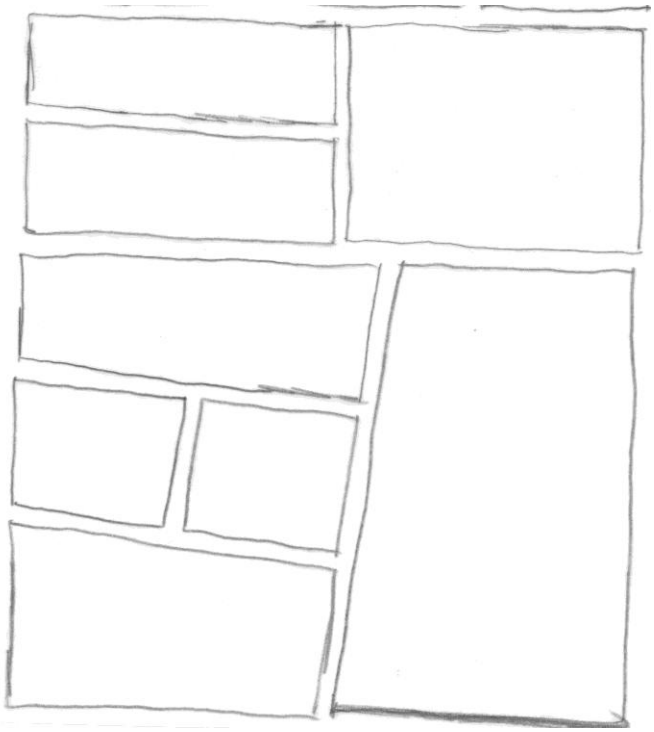

Figure 7. Panel tracing by author (Osamu Tezuka, "Is There A Doctor?," 22/4-11).

What had once been highly unusual would become a staple of Tezuka's art and of the manga industry as a whole. Natsume Fusanosuke states in his essay *Komatopia* that an artist's freedom to split panels (*koma*) is limited only by the reader's ability to interpret the flow of images.[50] Tezuka's work exhibits the extremes of this statement, and his unusual paneling would be replicated and expanded upon by numerous future artists. However, diagonal page layouts are not the only paneling method that Tezuka develops in *Black Jack.*

[49] Tezuka, "Is There A Doctor?," 22.

[50] Natsume Fusanosuke, Margherita Long and Hajime Nakatani, "Komatopia," *Mechademia* 3 (2008): 69/1-3.

Like in *Hi no Tori*, Tezuka also incorporates the gutter space into his page layouts. In *Black Jack*, however, instead of having characters travel in and out of panels through the gutter, he chooses to superimpose images of characters over panels. In one instance, Tezuka depicts a female doctor's mental torture by superimposing a full-body image of her over panels containing nightmarish images of people's impression of her.[51] The panels show a montage of images from inside the doctor's head rather than a linear story flow. By superimposing a picture of the doctor over them, Tezuka thematically connects the panels. While this type of paneling is radical compared to Tezuka's earlier works, it actually becomes a defining characteristic of manga in later years. The paneling used in Tezuka's middle and late manga works hand in hand with transitions because of the way it manipulates the flow between two images.

Depending on the scene conveyed in *Black Jack*, the temporal flow goes from linear to abstract. The overall progression of the story is linear, and Tezuka frequently uses image-based, action-to-action transitions during surgery scenes. Like in *Hi no Tori*, *Black Jack* utilizes aspect-to-aspect transitions to establish a specific atmosphere; however, in *Black Jack*, Tezuka expands the application of these transitions. For example, during tense surgery scenes, Tezuka interrupts the flow of action panels by cutting to an image of the clock similar to the way a person would glance at the clock when under a time crunch.[52] Compared to other works, Tezuka actually uses these aspect-to-aspect transitions much more frequently. These transitions, while used before almost exclusively to establish a scene, are also used in *Black Jack* to create tension similar to the way a writer might incorporate the story's setting as a parallel to the main action.

Compared to *Hi no Tori*, however, moment-to-moment transitions are used to a lesser degree. This is likely because *Black Jack* is quite fast-paced, having little need to freeze certain

[51] Osamu Tezuka, "Black Queen" (1975), in *Black Jack* vol. 1, trans. Camellia Nieh (New York: Vertical, Inc. 2008), 192.
[52] Tezuka, "Is There A Doctor?," 22.

moments for a long period of time. When they are used, however, they are used to indicate the most important scenes, such as when Black Jack reunites with his former lover.[53] This single moment is stretched over two pages partially through the use of moment-to-moment transitions. These transitions, like in previous occasions, serve to zoom in on important images or stretch important scenes, but this effect is heightened because the images are placed in larger panels than before. While he uses these transitions sparingly throughout *Black Jack*, this only heightens their importance when they do appear. Despite this, however, these transitions also remain an indicative aspect of manga aesthetic because of their visual impact when they are used.

While Tezuka had originally gotten his influence from Western comic style, he gradually incorporated elements from his surroundings, evolving the visuals in his work into what is known as manga style today. Originally, his work was dismissed as being "*bataa kusai*" (smelling like butter); in other words, his work was too foreign.[54] However, in a strange twist, this butter-smelling style would later be viewed by American audiences as a style that is distinctly Japanese because of its abundance in manga introduced to the United States. Tezuka's early work was simple, linear, and aimed at children, but it evolved as his audience grew. On one hand, his work reflects his development as an artist, but also the changing opinions of his viewers. His success at revolutionizing the manga medium is not just the result of his genius vision. He still had to keep up with the market in order to sell as the industry expanded around him. While he was never the only manga artist in Japan, he is nevertheless the one that many modern artists turn to for reference. His methods of paneling, simplification, angling, transitions, and overall cinematic flow would shape how manga would be drawn even after his death. Eventually, the Tezuka-inspired manga style of later artists would define the manga aesthetic to

[53] Osamu Tezuka, "Confluence" (1974), in *Black Jack* vol. 1, trans. Camellia Nieh (New York: Vertical, Inc. 2008), 134-135.
[54] Schodt, 49.

audiences overseas, thus beginning the cycle of manga's influence in Western comic traditions. However, as the American comic industry had also been evolving at the same time, manga would arrive in America under much different circumstances than when Western comic strips first arrived in Japan.

Chapter 2

America's King

While Tezuka was shaping the manga industry in Japan, American comics were evolving as well, becoming the massive industry we know of today. However, while Japan featured individual talents like Tezuka, American comics were produced by massive companies, often hiring teams of writers, pencilers, inkers, and colorists to make a single comic. The focus was on the company, not the individual. For several decades in America, comic characters were the property of the company that published them, and artists were kept out of the spotlight. However, as the industry expanded in the mid twentieth century, certain individuals began to step into the forefront. One of these outstanding artists is Jack Kirby, who not only birthed an enormous percentage of the superhero pantheon but also pioneered the "Marvel Style" of art that would define American superhero comics, inspiring numerous imitators and redefining the entire American comic book industry. Kirby worked for several comic companies throughout his lengthy career, although his most celebrated work was done for Marvel. He formed collaborations with other talents, the two most important being Joe Simon and Stan Lee. He dabbled in almost every comic genre, from detective to romance, but superheroes were his niche. However, unlike Tezuka, who always received full credit for his work, Kirby constantly struggled against the industry confines and customs to gain the credit he deserved. Not until late in his life was he finally recognized for his massive contributions to the industry. Japan had Osamu Tezuka. America had Tezuka's contemporary: Jack Kirby, the undisputed King of Comics.

While Tezuka's artwork constantly evolved throughout his career, Kirby's remained quite uniform. Panels drawn early in his career look strikingly similar in design and composition

to those drawn later. This is likely a result of the industry's demand to maintain a consistent style, as well as its constant need to give the public the comics that they want. Industry standards, at the time, offered little room for experimentation, especially on the level of Tezuka's. Also, according to those who knew him, Kirby's primary goal as an artist was to provide for his family.[55] He did not try to be a revolutionary; he just wanted his art to sell so that he could earn his due share of the profit. Despite the practical nature of his work, Kirby nevertheless had a unique vision of what comics should look like, a limitless stream of new ideas for characters and stories, and the work ethic and technical skill needed to make his vision a reality. He was a pioneer in his own right. Throughout his career, he would churn out page after page of solid pencilwork. He was a chameleon at times, adapting his art style to meet his editors' demands. Yet no matter what he produced, it would retain the certain "Kirby-esque" element that made his work stand out. Tezuka, another artist who drew to make a living, made change, boundary-pushing, and adaptation a cornerstone of his career, even though elements of his style remained consistent. Kirby, on the other hand, appeared and his style caused an explosion with its vibrant characters, in-your-face angles, and clear page layouts; his art, although it caused quite a stir with its initial appearance, would become the standard for American comic aesthetic.

In the previous chapter, I analyzed Tezuka's artistic evolution through a close study of three different works. However, because Kirby's art does not reflect a similar pattern of change, I cannot compare the two artists on that respect, despite the fact that both men are responsible for reshaping the comic aesthetic in their countries. Therefore, in this section, I will focus more on how Kirby helped the entire industry evolve. I will start by focusing on the early state of the industry and Kirby's career during the Golden Age, then move to his work for Marvel, which revived the dying comic industry, and finally, I will conclude this section with an analysis of

[55] Mark Evanier, *Kirby: King of Comics* (New York: Abrams, 2008), 15.

Kirby's legacy of imitators. Additionally, I will contrast Kirby's work with Tezuka's throughout because they are contemporaries and, today, hold almost equal status in their respective cultures. I will draw attention to the same stylistic elements discussed in the previous chapters (character design, angling, paneling, and transitions) because these aspects are the most comparable and the most distinct in both media.

In the American comic industry, comic books are produced with the intent to first sell, and then perhaps entertain the readers enough for the company to sell future volumes. Profit is the driving force behind the industry and, consequently, the aesthetic. Thus, after Siegel and Shuster's character Superman arrived at newsstands in *Action Comics #1,* shelves suddenly exploded with the invasion of costumed superheroes. There was money to be made in capes and tights. However, at this time, Kirby was still working in comic sweatshops and churning out various short strips under pennames.[56] At this point in his career, he was still a growing artist, drawing whatever his publisher wanted to see, which ran the gamut from crime dramas to westerns to superhero knockoff strips. More emphasis was put on the amount of comics produced rather than the quality, and there was no set industry style. The medium was trying to shift from newspaper strips to compiled comic books, so the nascent industry was feeling its way along, figuring out what sold and what did not.[57] According to Mark Evanier, when talking about the birth of the comic book, "No one had yet really thought how to design a comic book page in any way other than to replicate the reconfigured newspaper reprints. But then, Jack Kirby hadn't started drawing comic books yet."[58] Superhero designs up until then, including Superman himself, had been drawn in a static manner similar to their comic strip roots. At this point, Kirby was also drawing in a standard superhero style, confined to the limited space in comic strips.

[56] Ibid., 40-41.
[57] Ibid., 40.
[58] Ibid.

Early examples of Kirby's *The Blue Beetle* (incidentally, his first superhero strip) are quite cramped, especially when compared to his later work.[59] The action in these panels is static, the characters have an average appearance, and there are few varying angles to convey senses of awe or terror.[60] However, as Kirby's career took off, he would gain the opportunity to give life to the comic book medium.

Kirby's style of art rose in popularity when he formed his partnership with Joe Simon. The two men worked on superhero comics with both parties participating in the creation and execution of their books. Easily, the pinnacle of their efforts during the Golden Age would be the creation of Captain America, the Nazi-punching, star-spangled hero who would put Kirby's engaging style of art on the map. According to Harvey Kurtzman, Simon and Kirby's version of the superhero "clashed and exploded all over the panels" and that "[other companies' heroes were] static, pale, anemic."[61] But what was it about Kirby's composition and design that made his pages stand out from the hordes of caped heroes?

Kirby's heroes, unlike those drawn by previous artists, actually looked heroic. Earlier artists drew in realistic styles, but their style was *too* realistic for the comics Kirby had in his mind.[62] To Kirby, superheroes should transcend reality.[63] Thus, heroes should be drawn larger-than-life using a combination of detail and exaggeration. The heroic aspects of the characters' appearances should be exaggerated while average qualities should be ignored or omitted.[64] Kirby's heroes tower over normal citizens and have exaggerated musculature which makes them look more impressive compared to average people and past superheroes. These exaggerations,

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[59] Ibid., 44.
[60] Jack Kirby, "Blue Beetle" syndicated newspaper strip (1940), in Evanier, *King of Comics,* 43.
[61] Harvey Kurtzman qtd. in Evanier, *King of Comics*, 56.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Evanier, 215.
[64] John Buscema and Stan Lee, *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 46.

however, are drawn in a detailed manner with just enough simplification to make the images clear. In contrast, Tezuka's superhero, Atom, with his short stature and rounded cuteness, looks like a toy next to one of Kirby's characters. In terms of facial features, Kirby's heroes tend to have much in common: strong jaws and chins, high cheekbones, and an overall hyper-masculine appearance. Villains are also depicted as being extremely tall and intimidating to make them appear like a challenging foe to the hero (and to the reader).[65] However, villains have much more variety in facial features, which are sometimes distorted to appear inhuman. For example, the Red Skull's head is, aptly, a red human skull. In contrast, Tezuka's characters are quite simplified, even in his more realistic work. His characters have large eyes and round, smooth faces. Good characters are drawn in a round and innocent manner, while more evil characters have their "evilness" exaggerated through more angular features. In Kirby's comics, heroes are designed to represent the values of strength and masculinity, while in Tezuka's manga, a character's appearance coincides with his or her personality. Both Tezuka and Kirby implement exaggeration and distortion in their character designs but to different means in their respective media.

Additionally, Kirby's comics utilize color to distinguish characters. The color-based costume is a superhero convention that Kirby adapted into his own work. Because of the stylized features, even his most dynamic characters are drawn quite similarly and would be hard to distinguish without their colorful costumes. American comics are frequently published in color, so artists create color schemes by which their characters could easily be identified. While Captain America was not the first hero to wear red, white, and blue, he became such a prominent figure during the Golden Age that those colors represented him specifically. The star on his chest and the pattern on his shield are also iconic, which, in combination with his color scheme, form

[65] Ibid., 47.

the perfect costume for such a patriotic figure. His nemesis Red Skull's color scheme represents communism through the red, and to make him appear even more evil, Kirby draws a swastika on his chest. Additionally, the contrast between his red face and his maroon outfit is visually jarring. Red Skull looks evil, while Captain America looks good.

Color is one of the most obvious differences between manga and American comics because while American comics are frequently published in color, manga is published in black and white. While Tezuka's characters are iconic in Japan, they are known for their designs rather than their colors. In fact, one could say that Black Jack stands out because of the lack of color in his design. Some pages of Tezuka's manga were published in color, but his characters are known for their appearances rather than their colored costumes. While in Kirby's art, color schemes are used to distinguish between good and evil, Tezuka's work uses black and white as a code, a simple but effective application of visual contrast and symbolism. Tezuka also uses screentones to give depth to his art through grayscale and patterns. Kirby's use of color is not unique to his work, as all superhero comic books were printed in color; it was an expected part of American industry aesthetic. What makes Kirby's characters stand out from the other superheroes is the way in which they are drawn; however, his bold drawings and bold colors went hand in hand. The color was an additional means of identification, but Kirby's characters, and his style of drawing as a whole, are instantly recognizable even when printed in black and white.

What made Kirby's art truly unique during the 1940s was his tendency to draw characters from a range of angles. Unlike other artists, Kirby became a master at depicting the most action-intensive shot in every panel. This developed as a way of compensating for the limited space within panels. To the American comic artist, panel space is a precious commodity, so artists like

Kirby learned to master the art of showing the most action within the borders.[66] Every panel Kirby drew made a statement to the reader in a loud, clear voice. In a sample from *Captain America #3,* Kirby utilizes different angles in order to make characters look more impressive and squeeze the maximum amount of visual impact from each panel.[67] By showing Captain America running from a ground-level "worms-eye view," he looks taller and heroic. However, using this same angle for a panel of Red Skull looming overhead with a bomb in his hand creates a sensation of terror for the reader.[68] In both cases, the angle makes the character look intimidating. Tezuka also uses this angle to a similar effect, although in *Tetsuwan Atomu*, he uses it to show a character's smallness in relation to his surroundings. Kirby's art focuses more on conveying action, thus he does not create tension through the use of repeated close-ups on facial expressions and objects like Tezuka does in his later manga, such as during the war scenes in *Hi no Tori.*

Kirby also draws the characters in a way that captures the character's pose in the most dramatic way, even when the viewer sees the scene from straight-on. In every panel, Captain America is drawn in a way that shows the most movement. For example, when Captain America throws the bomb back at Red Skull, the reader sees his arm extended, his body thrown forward, and his legs spread apart, extending into the panel below.[69] The reader can tell, from the angle and the positioning, that he did not just toss the bomb; he threw it as hard as he could. Additionally, Kirby's characters frequently burst out of panel borders as if the constraints are not enough to contain their intended greatness. By using these dramatic poses, especially when coupled with a low angle, Kirby makes a clear, simple statement to the reader, moving the story

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[66] Aarnoud Rommens, "Manga Story-Telling/showing," *Image and Narrative* no. 1 (August 2000):4., http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/narratology/narratology.htm (accessed December 9, 2010).
[67] Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, "Captain America #3" *(*1941), in Evanier, *King of Comics*, 52-53.
[68] Ibid., 52.
[69] Ibid.

forward while simultaneously creating an emotional response. While Kirby makes his statement with a single, powerful image, Tezuka instead shows a scene from a wide range of angles, especially in *Hi no Tori* and beyond. Both techniques succeed in visually conveying a sense of drama and intensity, but Kirby's method is fast-paced while Tezuka's slows down time. Indeed, Tezuka relies more heavily on the variety of angles rather than one single viewpoint in order to give a larger scope of a scene. This technique, however, would not fit into Kirby's fast-paced version of storytelling. However, both artists create dynamic pages that directly involve the reader. Kirby's ability to convey the most emotional impact in a single panel is only part of what makes his art unique.

What allowed for this range of angles was a change in the size of the page which in turn also led to more developments in paneling. As was the case with Tezuka's manga, the larger panels offer more space for complex images. While comic strips at the time were contained in one row of small, square or rectangular panels; comic books had much more space at their disposal to shape into a page-based format. Thus, Kirby's work made an art out of paneling, contributing to the overall aesthetic of the comic pages. In the sample of *Captain America*, Kirby uses a wide range of panel shapes: rectangular, angled, and even round, as shown in figure 9.[70] *Captain America* was released in 1941, well before Tezuka began to publish *Tetsuwan Atomu*. However, these two pages of *Captain America* contain panel shapes that would not appear in Tezuka's work until much later. Both artists worked to transform the same static model, but each one did it in different ways and at their own pace. Kirby likely used these panel shapes to make the pages more visually intense with sharp angles and slanted lines. Calmer scenes, where Captain America shows concern for his sidekick Bucky, are placed in round panels.[71]

[70] Ibid., 52.
[71] Ibid., 52/4.

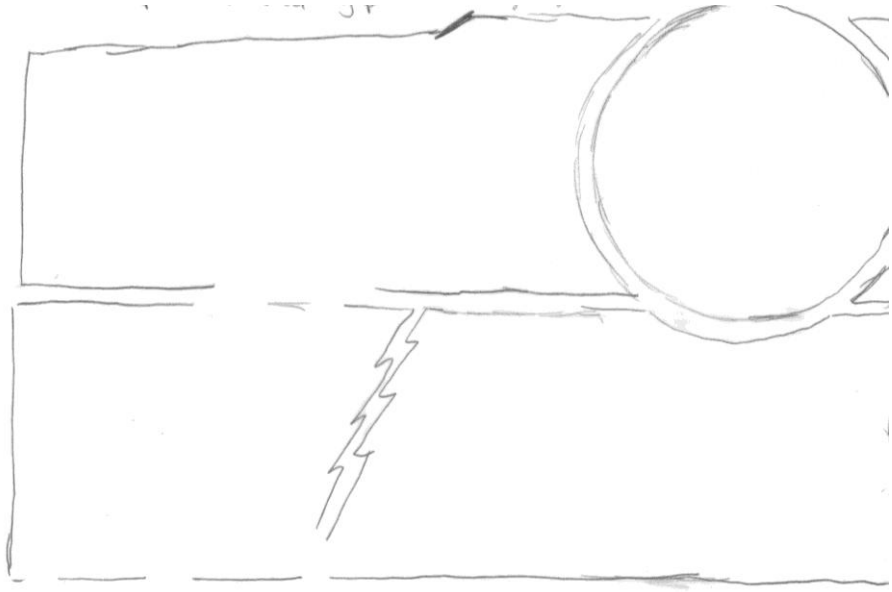

Figure 9. Panel tracing by author (Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, "Captain America #3" in Evanier, *King of Comics*, 52/3-6).

Also, the panels are different sizes, with the most important scenes taking up the most space and fast actions placed in smaller panels. The panels flow into each other, thus clarifying the movement of action from image to image. Additionally, the varying sizes and shapes make the page more visually interesting. When Tezuka began to use angled panels, he used them to convey chaos and intensity or to lead one image into the next. Kirby used these panels for similar means, giving the reader a visually intense page coupled with an easy-to-follow pattern of images. Despite the numerous differences between the two artists, there were strong similarities as well.

However, Kirby's early paneling contains elements that are not seen in Tezuka's manga, such as when Kirby changes the shape of the gutter. Panels five and six are separated by a slanted, lightning bolt-shaped gap.[72] In the first of these panels, Captain America helps Bucky to his feet, and then in the second, the two are shown running after Red Skull. The slanted line

[72] Ibid., 52/5-6.

connects the two panels, and the lightning bolt emphasizes Bucky getting his second wind; the lighting represents a flash of renewed energy. Also, the shape is visually engaging. Additionally, the floor from the first panel connects with the floor in the second. The lightning bolt does not fully separate the panels, thus connecting the two panels in space and in time. In *Hi no Tori*, Tezuka would also connect panels through the gutter by blasting characters through the gutter into previous panels. In this case, Tezuka alters the linear flow of time by transporting characters into the past. However, Kirby uses this connection to carry the action forward, speeding it up rather than slowing it down. Overall, Kirby's page layout aesthetic is geared towards a fast-paced, dynamic, and action-oriented storyline while Tezuka's panels stop and start the flow of time as the creator sees fit. Both the panels and the gutter are used in order to make the pages visually engaging and entertaining to the reader.

The transitions in Kirby's Golden Age work are also geared towards this purpose, conveying the action forward in an intense, yet quick and linear fashion. While the arrival of comic books gave strip artists the luxury to fill entire pages, conventions from comic strips still remained. One of these conventions is the use of strictly action-to-action, subject-to-subject, and scene-to-scene transitions. Unlike Tezuka, who expanded into moment-to-moment and aspect-to-aspect transitions in order to create visual and temporal effects in his panels, Kirby continued to use traditional linear transitions. In a fast-paced, action-oriented comic, these transitions are necessary for maintaining the story's energy. Rather than stall the story with a sequence of images of the same scene, Kirby uses each panel to move the story forward in time. This type of transition remains a fundamental part of the Kirby-era American comic aesthetic, which emphasizes clarity and impact above all. Throughout Kirby's career, his transitions would remain the most consistent. After examining one of Kirby's comics, McCloud concludes that

only the three linear transitions are used. Indeed, this linearity would be a staple of American comic flow; McCloud's analysis of other American comic artists yields very similar results.[73] Both Kirby and Tezuka take the same source material (Western comics) and manipulate it to meet their individual artistic visions as well as the expectations of their respective industries. However, Kirby's strictly linear transitions are a clear distinction between traditional American comics and manga and would remain so throughout his career.

Working on the art and story together with Simon, Kirby was able to put his aesthetic for comics on the map. *Captain America* gave Kirby the chance to exhibit his talent for angles, page composition, anatomy, and intense storytelling, and best of all, the comic sold well. With Captain America, and his other successful superheroes produced during the Golden Age, Kirby was able to take comic strip traditions to a new level and establish his foothold in the comic book industry. His work was fresh and thrilling, yet he did not deviate too far from medium standards in order to make his profit. While Tezuka shaped the Western comic strip into modern manga through constant experimentation, Kirby did not have the creative freedom to do so within the American industry. Instead, he filled the existing boundaries with his vision and made the most out of the space he had.

However, in the 1950s, when Tezuka was just beginning to publish *Tetsuwan Atomu* and spark the manga revolution in Japan, the American comics industry was already slipping. The Golden Age of superheroes was over, and Kirby had to find work elsewhere, drawing projects in other genres. Eventually, he separated from Simon, the man who had helped him with his most successful project at the time. Unlike Tezuka, he was not solely responsible for his success. It was not until he partnered with Stan Lee at Marvel that he tasted success again, and their partnership was the spark that was needed to jump-start the anemic comic industry.

[73] McCloud, 70-76.

By the 1960s, the art for DC Comics, the leading company, still had the mechanical, subdued approach to comics that Kirby despised; however, this stagnancy became the perfect opportunity for Kirby's unique style of art to come to the forefront once again.[74] His art would go on to become the signature style for Marvel comics, thus bringing the once-suffering company to the front of the pack and ousting the comic giant DC. During his time with Lee at Marvel, Kirby was able to produce massive quantities of quality artwork: between 1962 and 1964, Kirby drew 3,130 pages of interior art plus 285 covers.[75] Despite all of the pages he produced, his art would still pack the same punch it had when he was working on *Captain America*. Tezuka was also famous for his high page output, but his art frequently changed; Kirby's remained consistent in its visual clarity, its readability, and its perspective in spite of his enormous rate of production. The only stylistic difference, aside from minor tweaks needed to comply with regulations, is in his character designs. Because Kirby produced so much successful artwork drawn in his signature style during his stint with Lee, his style would become the mainstream face of American comics during the Silver Age.

Kirby's experience working on other projects in the years before meeting Lee did have an impact on his art, especially in his character designs. While his art still implements both exaggeration and realism to convey power, some of his Silver Age heroes, namely the Thing from *Fantastic Four* and the Incredible Hulk, show the influence of monster comics on his character design.[76] Ben Grimm, after being exposed to radiation, transformed into The Thing. With his bulging muscles, rocklike skin, and below-average height (for a superhero), The Thing

[74] Ronin Ro, *Tales to Astonish: Jack Kirby, Stan Lee, and the American Comic Book Revolution* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 86.
[75] Evanier, 133.
[76] Ibid., 122.

does not follow the typical hero model.[77] The Hulk is even less humanlike in design and concept: he is huge, green, and highly destructive. Like Tezuka, Kirby's character design is relatively consistent except for when he adapts it to fit an idea for a new character. As mentioned before, Tezuka's designs, particularly in his early works like *Tetsuwan Atomu*, reflect and illustrate the character's personality; in contrast, The Thing and the Hulk have more personality and depth than previous heroes in spite of their monstrous appearance. In terms of the discord between theme and visual, Kirby's new "monster heroes" have more in common with Black Jack, Tezuka's scarred antihero.

Where the two styles differ the most, however, is in the way in which these "ugly" characters are depicted. Unlike Black Jack, who is disfigured but recognizably human, The Hulk and The Thing do not look human at all. Instead of implementing degrees of simplification and realism like Tezuka, Kirby alters his characters through distortion. The Thing and the Hulk, despite looking like monsters, are still drawn with attention to detail. Additionally, they are still rendered in the same large, impressive manner as other heroes, even if their basic appearances go against the standard superhero look. Instead of emphasizing their heroic features, Kirby emphasizes their more monster characteristics in his visuals. The majority of heroes Kirby produced, however, kept his standard style. During his time with Lee, Kirby would help produce more monster-like characters as well as the more normal-looking heroes of other Marvel staples, such as *The Silver Surfer*, *The Avengers* (complete with a revamp of Captain America), and *The X-Men*. Working with Lee, Kirby was able to expand his style of art to wide range of unique heroes who all exhibit the qualities that define what would become Marvel style.

While Kirby's art had originally deviated from standard comic style, during his years at Marvel, his art would become the pinnacle to which everyone else would aspire. His dynamic

[77] Buscema and Lee, 48.

art, which had made him popular during the Golden Age, had come back into fashion with vigor, thus bringing superheroes back to the forefront of American comics for the first time in over twenty years. His style not only sold well, but it quickly became the "house style" at Marvel.[78] Other artists would study Kirby's art in order to learn his technique.[79] The formation of a "master" source of influence is only found in an environment like the American comic industry. In Japan, Tezuka had executive control over his aesthetic, even though he supervised a plethora of assistants. While artists would imitate or get inspiration from him, he nevertheless owned his aesthetic. In the manga industry, there would never be a set industry aesthetic, so other artists would have the freedom to draw in an anti-Tezuka style if they wanted.[80] American comic production, however, included several prominent artists working under a corporate umbrella. To maintain a consistent industry style that would unify production, Marvel chose Kirby as the artist whom everyone else had to emulate. Kirby's aesthetic, once considered to be exciting, yet too different, had become the face of not only his own work but also the entire Silver Age industry. By having a growing legion of imitators, Kirby's art would become a permanent fixture in the comic art world. Even if he did not draw a page or cover himself, it would still reflect his style if drawn by one of his imitators. Each imitator had his own way of incorporating Kirby's style, but the core elements of angles, anatomy, and composition are still there. What had once been an individual style quickly became the style of an entire industry, starting at Marvel and expanding into other companies.

Artists who began as Kirby imitators eventually established careers for themselves in the industry, thus making Kirby's legacy even more permanent. While Tezuka influenced

[78] Evanier, 133.
[79] Ro, 93.
[80] By this, I mean the more realistic, darker style used in *gekiga* that deviated from the cutesy, cartoon style of Tezuka's early work.

generations of manga-ka, including his contemporaries, his art was never set as the official industry style, even if it did inherently define the look of modern manga. His art was certainly inspirational to others, yet the manga industry did not benefit by creating stylistic Tezuka clones. In America, however, Marvel churned out artists to consciously replicate Kirby's art, increasing the output of good-looking profitable comics. One such artist, John Buscema, was given Kirby comics to study, and his art was considered "horrible" unless he essentially copied and rearranged Kirby's panels, which he admits to doing on occasion.[81] The incorporation of imitators is part of the American comic industry's method for maintaining a consistent style, which also eliminates the need for an individual's constant evolution. However, despite this need for consistency, the industry as a whole does evolve around what the public wants, and at the time, the industry wanted more Kirby.

One project that brought John Buscema, Kirby's imitator, to the forefront was the *Silver Surfer*. Originally, Kirby designed the character and was set to draw the comic; however, Lee selected Buscema to do the art behind Kirby's back. The title character, which was first created without input from Lee, was written and drawn in a way that contradicted the image and story Kirby had in mind.[82] The processes of imitation and ripping off have been staples of the American comic industry since its inception, and Kirby, with his overflowing talent but inability to properly assert himself in the industry, was a prime target. Whether Lee and Buscema's version of the Silver Surfer began as a knockoff of Kirby's original idea or as Lee's chance to express his own vision of the character without Kirby's input, it is still a key example of the impact Kirby's art has on the comic industry. Buscema's interpretation of Kirby's art conveys

[81] Ibid., 92; 113.
[82] Evanier, 141.

elements of the same Marvel aesthetic despite the minor stylistic differences between the two artists.

Certain elements of Kirby's style would embed themselves deeper into the industry through Buscema's rendition of *The Silver Surfer*. Buscema would continue Kirby's use of detailed exaggeration in his character design, emphasizing the Surfer's superhero qualities. In fact, Buscema would go on to write *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way*, the book used to teach the next generation the "secrets" of the Marvel aesthetic. Buscema would combine these larger-than-life figures with dramatic angles, which is another aspect of Kirby's technique that would remain a crucial part of the industry. He uses a wide range of angles in order to convey a sense of action within the panels as well as to illustrate various moods. Both artists also take care in the positioning of characters in a panel. Positioning, when combined with angles, is a key element to showing movement in panels; characters are rarely centered in the panels. The pages would be dynamic, yet easy to follow; the art would carry the story forward while entertaining the reader. Above all, Buscema would continue the values that shaped the core of Kirby's aesthetic: larger-than-life characters, action that seems to burst from the pages, and a clear, fast-paced flow of action.

However, because Buscema is a different person with his own style of art, his approach to the *Silver Surfer* is noticeably distinct at times from the pages Kirby drew. While his rendition of the Silver Surfer is still quite heroic, it is nevertheless leaner and more realistic than Kirby's bulky depiction of the character. Buscema uses Kirby's angles to show action, but his panels are frequently less crowded, sacrificing energy for clarity. Additionally, American comics at this time began to incorporate close-ups, and Buscema used them to a greater degree than Kirby to show the Surfer's emotional torment throughout the story. While this technique had been used in

manga before, it developed in America without manga influence. Lastly, there was an overall industry shift in paneling methods. While Kirby's *Captain America* incorporated unique panel shapes into the page layouts, these layouts are nonexistent in both Kirby's and Buscema's *Silver Surfer*. While the early layouts were more dynamic and reinforced the flow and the action of the story, these new layouts, which feature standard rows of rectangular panels, are nevertheless clear and straightforward. This is perhaps a necessary result of the industry's need for clarity, but they reflect a deviation from Kirby's Golden Age style. While Kirby's art set the standard for Marvel aesthetic, his imitators would bring their own takes. Some of these changes would alter the appearance of Marvel comics and reflect a change in the entire industry, while others would serve to reinforce values established in Kirby's original work. By the late 1970s, Kirby was growing old and soon, the industry would be left in the hands of his imitators. While the core elements of superhero design, energy, and clarity would remain in the industry aesthetic, the individual differences between his imitators would push the industry forward, evolving it into what it is today. However, as the industry grew around him, even the core of his style would be called into question.

While Kirby's art had at first been novel and exciting, as the industry continued to progress, the style would soon be viewed as obsolete. Eventually, Kirby left Marvel and began working at DC Comics, which had recently implemented a stiffer, more static style with character designs that Kirby dismissed as, "all looking the same."[83] Kirby's style of energetic, high-impact art was falling out of fashion and was being replaced by a style that he abhorred. Kirby was growing old and losing his touch for art, while the industry was hiring new artists with different approaches to the comic medium.[84] According to Ro, "One old-timer…openly told

[83] Ro, 164.
[84] Ibid., 227-228.

people, 'Neal Adams represents the future of comic art. Jack Kirby represents the past.'"[85] Whether or not he could keep up with it, the comic industry was evolving under his feet.

Nevertheless, Kirby had beyond made a lasting name for himself in the industry. Despite his scorn for the new style, prominent figures in the next generation of artists cite Kirby's art as one of their primary forms of inspiration. Kirby's use of angles, perspective, and exaggerated realism made an extreme impact on the American comic industry. Even as the industry changed, pushing the over-the-top Marvel Style to the side, a handful of artists (Steve Rude, José Ladrönn, Walter Simonson, John Byrne, Eric Larson, and Mike Mignola) still display core elements of Kirby's art in their work.[86] Kirby's comics, with their larger-than-life aesthetic, certainly transcended the limits of reality. Kirby himself became a larger-than-life figure, his art style becoming the Marvel style that other artist would first copy, then look to for inspiration. Just like Osamu Tezuka, Jack Kirby defined a national aesthetic and inspired people to draw comics while he was alive and after his death. His contributions to American comic aesthetic still have profound influence on artists in the industry, regardless of what style they chose to draw. Kirby, the King of Comics, certainly transcends reality.

[85] Ibid., 164.
[86] Ibid, 245; 248.

Chapter 3

Transplanted Samurai

In the 1960s, Jack Kirby's art style revitalized America's comic industry. However, the industry continued to evolve and Kirby's art fell out of fashion. The next generation of artists had control of the industry by the 1980s, and they began to change the comic aesthetic into something that would please a contemporary audience while achieving their own visions of the medium. This generation is marked by the rise of individual styles, despite the fact that many of these artists were nevertheless inspired by the Kirby generation.[87] With more freedom to do so in the changing industry, artists began looking outside Western comic traditions for a visual storytelling style that would catch readers' eyes and hopefully boost dwindling sales. Then one artist, Frank Miller, discovered manga which until then had been virtually unknown to American audiences.[88] Miller, with his inspiration from Marvel style, European comics, and manga, would become the first herald of the "manga revolution" in American comics, incorporating bits and pieces from both styles into his signature art and storytelling.

By the 1980s, the comic industry in the United States was still dominated by the team approach to comic production. However, at this time, it was also beginning to shift towards the single writer/draftsman (or small studio) approach, which, as mentioned before, is the primary system of production in Japan.[89] Artists whose work stood out from the rest began to be recognized by the fans for their specific talent. Frank Miller was first widely known for his work

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[87] Jean-Paul Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books,* Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen, trans., (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 168.

[88] American audiences had some experience with Japanese entertainment through the *Tetsuwan Atomu* anime (renamed *Astro Boy*); however, America's *Astro Boy* was highly altered from the original Japanese version, thus audiences likely had no idea that it was even Japanese when it was first introduced.

[89] Until the 1980s, comic author-artists were extremely rare. The only notable exception of this tendency is Will Eisner, who was the precursor to the mainstream comic auteur. Also, while one person has sole control of the production of the comic, this person generally works with a small team of assistants to do smaller tasks. This is the case in both Japan and the United States by this time.

on the superhero comic *Daredevil*, and the issues that he both wrote and drew became fan favorites. His self-produced work was so popular that when he left *Daredevil*, the franchise consequently suffered, proving that the creator, not the character, was responsible for the comic's success.[90] Unlike the pre-Kirby days of the comic industry, fans knew the names of the artists who drew stories best. The industry's realization of this phenomenon prompted a movement towards comic "auteurs."[91] These auteurs, including Miller, would produce the profitable comics and help the company; as such, the industry liked having them around and the system of comic production began to shift so that it could cater to these talents.

Additionally, at this time, regulations on content and format in comics began to change. While the industry in the past had to comply with regulations imposed by the Comics Code Authority (CCA) in the 1950s, the Code was losing its authority over what could be distributed in stores, leading to an increase in mature content in comics. Creators would experiment with darker, grittier, and bloodier styles on titles that were not aimed at children, thus breaking free from the industrial approach to comics. Also, this time period gave rise to the graphic novel, thus providing a new longer, non-episodic format for creators to adapt. Miller and his peers had more freedom to express themselves with their work and experiment with different designs. The house styles, which had been the gold standard for comic book production for decades, were losing favor to the individual styles of the auteur generation. This generation of creators (and their audience) had, unlike Kirby and his contemporaries, grown up in a cultural environment dominated by both superhero comics and television. This background is, according to Gabilliet, the reason why comics produced by the later generation express stylistic influence from not only

[90] Gabilliet, 89.
[91] Ibid., 89-90.

the American comic giants but also televised animation and later manga.[92] These industrial and environmental factors were crucial to the rise of a new American comic aesthetic, which would combine a Western influence with an individualized approach.

Miller is one of the best representatives of this new industry style because he comes from a superhero background, yet also has creative freedom through his auteur status. While his superhero comics are perhaps his most famous works, he has also made a name for himself with his independent graphic novels *Sin City* and *300.* However, in this section, I will focus primarily on his graphic novel *Ronin*, which contains a heavy amount of manga-influenced artwork. In *Ronin,* Miller deliberately juxtaposes a manga-influenced style with a more standard, American one.. He explores the merits of both styles, using elements of both to tell his story. Miller discovered manga through Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima's *Kozure Ōkami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*) and admired the way the manga "ripped away all this glummery that had covered up comic books."[93] The exaggeration sex and violence in Japanese culture, according to Miller, is more realistic than the stylized cleanliness that had dominated American comics for years.[94] However, in addition to the overall dark and gritty tone in *Ronin,* Miller also adapts specific visual elements from manga style

In previous sections, I analyzed each artist's aesthetic by breaking it down into the elements that made each one distinct: character design, angling, paneling, and transitions. However, in this section, I will analyze Miller's aesthetic to identify the elements of Japanese and American styles that he places side by side and explore his reasoning for this visual juxtaposition. Instead of scrutinizing each aspect of his work, I will focus on those where he

[92] Ibid., 168.
[93] Frank Miller qtd. in Joel Meadows and Gary Marshall, *Studio Space: the World's Greatest Comic Illustrators at Work*, (Berkeley: Image Comics, Inc., 2008), 186.
[94] Ibid.

purposely incorporates elements of both. This is because Miller's work does not define a national aesthetic, but rather indicates a combination of the two. Furthermore, I will show how elements of manga style appear in his later work. Miller begins to experiment with manga style in *Ronin*, which features a Japanese protagonist and themes; however, Miller also applies manga visual aspects to his later, non-Japanese works. Through his work, Miller demonstrates the merits of manga storytelling while showing how the style can be incorporated into a Western comic tradition. *Ronin's* overall design revolves around easing manga style into the American comic market in a way that highlights the style's differences while presenting them in a way that readers can digest. His work paves the way (or perhaps opens the floodgates) for the later influx of manga in the American comic industry.

Ronin, which was first published in 1983, tells the story of a masterless samurai (or *ronin*), who is brought from feudal Japan into a technologically advanced dystopia that is Miller's version of a future New York City. In this setting, the Ronin must redeem himself by slaying the demon Agat who slaughtered his master. *Ronin* is "East meets West" in both concept and execution: throughout the graphic novel, Miller uses manga-inspired angles, paneling, and transitions. In one interview, Miller stated that one of his primary influences for *Ronin* was *Kozure Ōkami*, which was Miller's gateway drug into the world of manga.[95] From then on, manga style would become a core element of his work: "I came back from [Japan] full of vim and vigor that I was going to steal this stuff..."[96] However, Miller would not so much copy manga style in *Ronin* as he would incorporate it with his background in American comics. Miller places the two styles side by side in *Ronin*, making it easy for the reader to see the influence of both on his work.

[95] Frank Miller qtd. in Joel Meadows and Gary Marshall, 189.
[96] Ibid., 186.

Before analyzing *Ronin* in detail, I must reinforce that the combination of Eastern and Western styles in the graphic novel is not seamless. Indeed, Miller seems to deliberately juxtapose varied manga-style paneling, transitions, and angles with boxlike western panels and Kirby-esque angles and clarity. He places the two styles side by side as a way of indicating the gap between Japanese and American styles. Even when the Ronin (and the demon) is brought into the future world, scenes depicting his story are drawn with manga angles, layouts, and transitions.[97] In contrast, scenes featuring Casey McKenna, the American protagonist, and other American characters are placed in standard Western layouts. However, the distinction between both styles blurs as the story unfolds and the American characters become more directly involved with the Ronin. The stylistic merging represents the coming together of the two separate worlds. A scene with American characters interacting with the Ronin may have irregular panel shapes or extreme close-ups. For the most part, however, the two styles remain distinct as a way of visually distinguishing between East and West. At the time *Ronin* was published, manga was unknown in the United States, which is perhaps why Miller chose to bank on its exoticism, highlighting the differences between it and Western style by incorporating it into an "East meets West" scenario.

The most obvious distinctions between the two sides of the story are the angles and panel layouts, which Miller uses hand in hand. In the scenes with the Ronin, the variety in panel shapes is reminiscent of Ronin. Because of this, Miller also incorporates manga angles, such as extreme close-ups, in these scenes in order to make the most out of the panel space. He uses these techniques to show a distinct method of storytelling from the Western medium while still

[97] In scenes with the Ronin, Miller also frequently implements an image-based narrative (i.e. conveying action with images rather than words), which is a common element of manga (including *Kozure Ōkami*). However, because this analysis focuses on design and page aesthetic, for the sake of coherency, I am choosing to eliminate an in-depth discussion on this topic. Also, because other American comic artists of Miller's caliber incorporate very similar narratives in their work around the same time, this could be a technique that developed independently in the industry even if Miller adopted it directly from manga for his own work.

creating pages that are engaging and interesting to the reader. In contrast, however, in scenes with the American characters, he adapts a standard method of splitting pages into rows and columns of rectangular panels that emphasize clarity over expression. The manga style is more expressive during intense or action-based scenes, while western styles advance the story's plot. Visually and thematically, Miller's interpretations of the two styles are quite different.

During fight scenes, Miller incorporates manga-style angles with panel arrangements. Miller frequently splits the page horizontally, making the reader view the page from top to bottom. These panels give the reader a fast-paced, glimpse-by-glimpse depiction of the scene. The reader sees the fight as if he or she is involved in the action, and the panels, at times, show close-ups on the combatants' swords, fists, or faces. Miller adapted this technique directly from *Kozure Ōkami* ; indeed, the opening fight sequence of *Ronin* is quite similar in panel format to a battle in *Kozure Ōkami*. The two scenes are compared in figures 10 and 11.

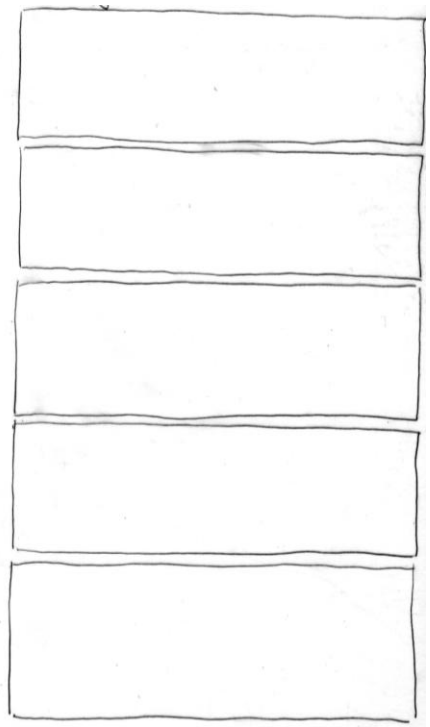

Figure 10. Panel tracing by author (Frank Miller, "Chapter 1," 3).

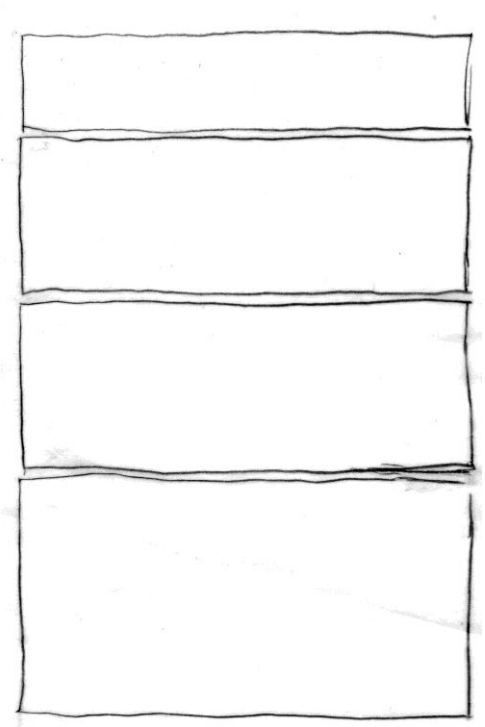

Figure 11. Panel tracing by author. (Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, "The Assassin's Road," 293).

While Miller uses horizontal panels to a greater degree than Kojima, Kojima does rely heavily on them to convey action during fight scenes. Along the same vein, the angles in each of the panels are also comparable, showing the battle from within the action. Additionally, during climactic or high-impact moments in battle, both Miller and Kojima extend the horizontal panels beyond panel borders or across two pages. This slows down time while still conveying a sense of urgency. These panels generally feature wider and farther angles so that the most important moments are visually isolated from the rest of the scene. In order to capture the sense of the battle and emphasize the most important moments, Miller incorporates Kojima's use of wide panels.

In addition to horizontal panels during battle scenes, Miller would also adapt Kojima's sequences of small panels, an aspect that is characteristic of manga aesthetic. As mentioned before, Tezuka uses a series of small, square panels to depict moment-to-moment transitions, such as changing facial expressions. These small panels capture every subtle movement, thus stretching an action that could take a second into a sequence that fills half the page. Kojima also incorporates tiny panels into his manga for the same effect: visually slowing down an important, yet brief action. In *Ronin*, Miller also stretches brief moments through sequences of close-ups drawn in small panels. For example, in one romance scene, Miller splits two pages into a total of twenty-nine panels.[98] The action of Casey reaching for and grabbing the Ronin's page takes four panels alone.[99] By drawing such a short scene in this manner, Miller gives the illusion that the moment lasts longer than it actually would in reality, thus squeezing out the emotional impact through the close-ups. The reader sees the subtle changes from panel to panel, thus the scene's

[98] Frank Miller, "Chapter Four" (1983-1984), in *Ronin,* (New York: DC Comics, 1987), 46-47.
[99] Ibid., 46.

emotions are made clear in his or her mind. In the scenes with the Ronin, manga-inspired panels and angles work together to capture the essence of the action.

Another manga paneling technique that Miller incorporates in the scenes with the Ronin is the use of superimposed or layered panels. In *Kozure Ōkami,* Kojima depicts a group's reaction to an avalanche by superimposing small, staggered, and irregularly-shaped panels of the characters' faces over a larger background image of the avalanche.[100] This technique is used to show chaos during a catastrophic event, and this layout calls attention to a scene of this importance. Likewise, Miller illustrates a climax in *Ronin* as a sequence of three two-page spreads that illustrate the clash between Casey's forces and the Ronin.[101] In the first of these spreads, the background image is of the Ronin firing arrows from his horse. Layered over this image is a series of panels depicting the Ronin's arrows striking Casey's men. Additionally, Miller also layers images of Casey's reactions on top of these panels.[102] As the scene becomes more chaotic, the panels are scattered across the pages in a seemingly random fashion. This technique visually conveys the drama in these scenes through its irregular, non-linear layout. This manga technique, like the other ones that Miller adapts from *Kozure Ōkami,* is used to capture dramatic impact and to convey a particular emotional effect to the reader.

To contrast the manga techniques in the scenes with the Ronin, Miller uses Western comic book layouts for the scenes with the American characters to promote clarity and readability. As opposed to the groups of small or thin panels and layered images, these pages feature rows and columns of boxlike panels separated by a distinct gutter. Several pages are split into six square panels, a standard technique for visual clarity in Marvel-era comics (figure 12).

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[100] Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, "The Coming of the Cold" (1970-1976), in *Lone Wolf and Cub* vol. 2, trans. Dana Lewis, (Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 2000), 98-99.
[101] Frank Miller, "Chapter Three" (1983-1984), in *Ronin* (New York: DC Comics, 1987), 38-43.
[102] Ibid., 38-39.

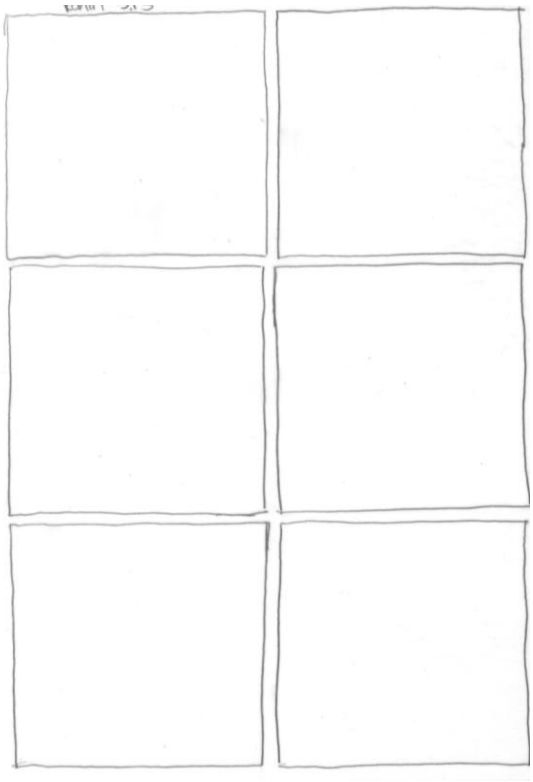

Figure 12. Panel tracing by author (Frank Miller, “Chapter 3,” 13).

The emphasis in the scenes with the American characters is on presenting information and advancing the plot through thematic details rather than showing battles and emotional turmoil. For this reason, Miller presents the information through clear artwork and easy-to-follow paneling. By using two distinct methods of paneling, and consequently angling, Miller not only contrasts American and Japanese aesthetics but also highlights the contextual significance of each style. Manga style is used to convey emotional impact and heighten the drama in the story, while Western styles facilitate the reader’s comprehension of the complex plot through both clarity and familiarity. In other words, Miller combines a foreign aesthetic with something that the readers will recognize, giving them something familiar and more relatable in contrast to the foreign manga aesthetic.

However, angling and paneling are not the only two differences between the manga and Western sections in *Ronin*. In the scenes with the Ronin, Miller begins to use manga-inspired transitions, aspect-to-aspect ones in particular. These instances are rare, but nevertheless reflect his influence from *Kozure Ōkami*. Kojima uses aspect-to-aspect transitions quite frequently, freezing time to show the reader different parts of the scene. While Kojima focuses heavily on the setting, Miller uses these transitions to capture the aspects of the scene *and* the characters within a single moment, stretching the moment to fill several panels.[103] In one scene, Miller uses these transitions to establish the moment where the Ronin tames a horse. A sequence of four panels shows the horse's eye, the horse's hoof, the Ronin's hand clutching a bridle, and finally, a close-up of the Ronin's eye.[104] In Kirby-era mainstream comics, these transitions are rare (if used at all) because they break the linear, rapid flow of action. Occasionally, a comic will cut to a single image of a place to establish setting, yet these panels contain text so that they still carry the story forward. Miller, however, provides sequences of images that solely depict aspects of the scene. These transitions not only establish setting but also convey tension or another mood to the audience; they convey both the physical and the emotional elements of a scene.

Following the pattern of juxtaposition in *Ronin*, manga-inspired aspect-to-aspect transitions do not appear in the scenes with the American characters. Because these scenes focus on clarity and advancing the plot, linearity is more important than establishing a mood, particularly in the earliest chapters where the distinction is made most evident. Nonlinear transitions can perhaps be confusing to readers accustomed to a strictly linear layout because of the way they freeze time. Thus, in the more Western sections, he eliminates them because they could detract from the story's flow. However, Miller uses them in scenes with the Ronin not just

[103] Miller's use of these transitions is reminiscent of Tezuka's depiction of the scene with the wolf in *Hi no Tori* mentioned in the first chapter.
[104] Ibid., 1.

because they are foreign and aesthetically pleasing, but because of the way they boost tension where it is needed in the story.

Throughout the beginning of the graphic novel, Miller strictly separates the two aesthetics. As the story progresses, however, the Ronin and the American characters eventually meet and elements of the two styles of art merge when they do. For example, towards the end of the graphic novel, layouts may combine Western panel structures with layered images. Scenes featuring the American characters may be split into many small panels and can contain extreme close-ups. The distinction is not nearly as obvious toward the end. The visuals mirror the action in the story. Additionally, while Miller makes the distinction between the two styles clear before the merge, there are exceptions to his rules that indicate that he incorporates manga elements into the American sections.[105] Because these instances are subtle and largely overshadowed by the differences, they do not necessarily contradict my contention that Miller intended to keep the two styles separate until the end. Rather, their existence reinforces the notion that Miller uses *Ronin* as a stylistic springboard for introducing manga to the American comic industry and readership.

When Miller uses elements of manga style in the American comic sections, the instances seem to blend into the aesthetic of the page. The aspects that Miller focuses on in the Ronin sections (paneling, angling, and transitions) are the most visibly distinct from standard American style. However, in both the American sections and the Ronin sections, Miller does use close-ups, sequences of small panels, bleeding panels, and transitions resembling (but not identical to) those

[105] The converse of this is also true at times. In other words, Miller's Superhero background at times influences stylistic elements in the manga-inspired sections. The Ronin's design, which is much more realistic than Tezuka's, has much in common with Kojima's depiction of the protagonist in *Kozure Ōkami*. However, his build and face are reminiscent of Kirby's strong and masculine superheroes. Additionally, he is frequently depicted from angles that emphasize his impressiveness. However, while this is a strong instance of the merging of the two styles, the point of this section is to discuss the incorporation of manga in a larger Western context rather than the other way around.

used in manga. These elements, although perhaps inspired by manga, are nevertheless incorporated into Western scenes in ways that make them coincide with their surroundings.

Some of these techniques, namely bleeding panels and small panel sequences, are likely used because they help clarify the progression of the story. Miller uses bleeding panels throughout the graphic novel as a means of easing the transition between two scenes. Most commonly, he uses two-page bleeding images of the scenery to indicate a shift from the Ronin's to the American's perspective. At other times, he uses them to isolate a scene as an excerpt from a larger, "off-camera" occurrence or to continue a scene from one page to the next.[106] In both instances, he uses them to show continuity, thus promoting clarity. This type of paneling becomes more frequent as the story progresses and the two styles begin to blur. When Miller incorporates small panels, he uses them to illustrate a fast-paced, tense conversation.[107] However, when he uses small panels in the manga sections, he usually eliminates text; in the American sections, he accompanies these small panels with dialog. By using small panels on these occasions, Miller clarifies and reinforces the emotional nature of the conversation while simultaneously increasing the scene's pace. Because Miller uses these techniques as a means of subtly enhancing the core, clear nature of these scenes, they blend into the larger context. In a sense, he westernizes elements of manga to ease its incorporation into a Western aesthetic.

In the American sections in *Ronin*, Miller frequently uses close-ups. Close-ups, while they have been used in American comics since Kirby's reign, are nevertheless much more common in manga. As in the manga section, Miller uses these close-ups to highlight emotional changes, particularly in his sequences of small dialog panels. Because facial close-ups have been used before in American comics (not to mention American films and television), they are less

[106] Frank Miller, "Chapter 1" (1983-1984), in *Ronin* (New York: DC Comics, 1987), 47/1.
[107] Miller, "Chapter 3," 19.

foreign than other elements of manga style and, consequently, easier for American readers to digest. While they do not specifically emphasize thematic clarity, they show emotion when the plot depends on a character's reaction to a conversation or event. Miller does not use close-ups as frequently in the American sections as he does in the manga portions, but he nevertheless uses them to a greater extent than in previous examples of mainstream American comics. The fact that he incorporates them to such a degree, while presenting them in a way that coincides with the American aesthetic context, indicates his desire to blend his love of manga with the existing industry standards.

The last manga-like element that Miller incorporates combines elements of Japanese transitions, yet presents them in a way that does not directly reflect manga or Kirby-era aesthetics. This new transition involves a single, large image split into a series of smaller panels, each panel depicting a portion of the large image.[108] Because the image is split, it can be viewed as a whole or as a series of separate parts. This could be viewed as a variation on aspect-to-aspect transitions because each panel shows a separate part of the scene. Looking at each panel separately would give the reader a full picture of the scene, and by splitting the image in such a way, Miller encourages the reader to look at the scene piece by piece. Instead of other aspect-to-aspect transitions, which interrupt the panel-to-panel flow of the story with a sequence of different exposition images, this transition simply lengthens the time a reader would spend on a single panel, replicating the effect of a camera slowly panning across the scene. Instead of breaking the linear flow of the story, these breaks slow it down. Additionally, it is possible to overlook the splits entirely and view the image as a single large panel because all of the splits are connected. The image would flow with the story the same way that a larger panel would. As with other techniques, Miller reworks elements of manga influence so that they can fit inside the

[108] Frank Miller, "Chapter 2" (1983-1984), in *Ronin* (New York: DC Comics, 1987), 48/3-6.

Western sections. He adapts the most foreign part of the technique (the non-linearity) and transforms it so that it fits within a linear story flow, yet he maintains the core purpose of the technique: dramatically showing a scene piece by piece. In doing so, he also makes it possible for a reader to overlook the changes, thus camouflaging the technique within a more standard page layout. Miller caters to his audience while simultaneously melding manga into his storytelling style and, ultimately, the American comic aesthetic as a whole.

*Ronin'*s cultural context, a juxtaposition of American and Japanese characters, provided a thematic basis for Miller's visual distinction in his initial attempt at bringing manga into an American market. As groundbreaking as it was, however, *Ronin* was not one of Miller's most successful works; in fact, its legacy as such a revolutionary work has overshadowed its original publication.[109] Today, it is widely known as a direct forerunner to manga in the United States, but its original publication is largely forgotten by fans. Despite lacking the cultural importance and popularity of Miller's other work, *Ronin* nevertheless set the stage for Miller's artistic voice. Miller's subtle repackaging of manga techniques in the American scenes in *Ronin* hints at the future of the manga aesthetic's success in the United States. While the manga techniques may not have captivated audiences during the story's original run, Miller would nevertheless continue to work manga style into his comics and graphic novels, incorporating elements of manga style to visually convey moods in non-Japanese settings. By using adaptations of manga angles and paneling in *300*, which is set in Ancient Greece, Miller further reinforces the style's foothold within the wider scope of the American.

The most notable instances of manga style in *300* are in the paneling and viewing angles. Like in *Kozure Ōkami* (and *Ronin*), *300* features sequences of small panels containing close-ups

[109] Timothy Callahan, "Frank Miller's Sci-Fi Samurai Epic," Comic Book Resources, http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=18693 (accessed April 3, 2011).

that focus on facial expressions.[110] These panels are used to a greater extent in this work than they are in *Ronin.* Additionally, these smaller panels are frequently layered over larger images or panels and staggered across the page, replicating the sense of chaos depicted in manga and *Ronin.* This layout is not linear, yet Miller uses it in a way that is nevertheless easy to follow. The large panels convey the broader action in the scene, while the smaller panels focus on reactions and emotions, contributing to the battle's intensity on an individual level. Additionally, during the most important moments in battle scenes, Miller uses the Kojima-inspired technique of splitting the page into large, horizontal panels, thus emphasizing the most important action in the graphic novel.[111] Miller's manga inspiration is shown through his wide variety of panel shapes and sizes on each page. During battle scenes, Miller continues his tendency to use close-ups on the combatants rather than just giving the broad picture, thus involving the reader directly in the action.[112] This technique is also a direct connection between *Kozure Ōkami* and *300.* In his work after *Ronin,* Miller continues to experiment with elements of manga style, proving that the comic industry should not be limited to one single aesthetic and that manga style is a different, yet effective means of telling a story.

By removing manga-inspired techniques from their foreign isolation in *300,* Miller establishes them within a Western context and makes manga style a foothold in the American industry. He separates the aesthetic and narrative merits of manga style from its foreign intrigue. Through repetition and reinterpretation, Miller introduces manga to American markets and provides a starting point for later, manga-inspired artists. Because of his auteur status in the industry, Miller had the freedom to experiment with different styles in his self-produced work. In *Ronin*, he capitalizes on core strengths of Japanese and Western styles, emotional intensity and

[110] Frank Miller, "Chapter Three: Glory" (1998-1999), in *300* (Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 2006), 37.
[111] Frank Miller, "Chapter Five: Victory" (1998-1999), in *300* (Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, Inc., 2006), 75.
[112] Ibid., 76.

clarity respectively, and places them side by side, highlighting their differences while showing merits of both. In addition to this juxtaposition, he also begins to subtly rework elements of manga paneling, transitions, and angles so that they can function alongside an American aesthetic. His work is both unique and familiar.

Both Tezuka and Kirby are responsible for developing the core aesthetic of nascent industries; Miller, a generation later, begins the arduous task of bringing one into the other. While it is still too soon to tell if Miller's art will leave an impact as strong and lasting as Tezuka's or Kirby's on comic style, the following decades would bring the manga boom in the United States. Miller would get his wish: American audiences would quickly discover and devour the medium he loved, perhaps more than he anticipated. Both Tezuka and Kirby set the stage for Miller's work, and, in a sense, Miller's work completes the circle of influence between America and Japan because, likes Tezuka, he reshapes an existing aesthetic and pushes the industry in a new direction. However, by doing so, he brings together two industries that are stylistically distinct yet nevertheless mutually influential. Miller may not have singlehandedly sparked the massive influx of manga in the United States and *Ronin* may not have been as popular as it could have been, but through his following work, he built the foundation for the Japanese style's second home.

Conclusion

Side by Side

While Miller's introduction of manga stylistic elements to the American comic industry would spark an overall change in the aesthetic, it was made possible due to a separate shift towards a more manga-like system of producing comics. From its inception until the 1980s, comic artists (including Kirby) were essentially dogs of the industry, working for little credit and little pay. There was no glamour or prestige in being a comic artist for the majority of the 20th century, and the artist's individuality was sacrificed for industry production. However, in Japan, Tezuka not only had complete control over his characters and stories, but also had reached a celebrity status by the end of his career. In the 1980s, the American comic industry began to take advantage of the writer/draftsman approach instead of the industry assembly line. This approach, which led Miller to experiment with manga styles and eventually made him famous, has much more in common with the production of manga in Japan. Unlike Kirby, Miller and his contemporaries gave the comic industry a classier reputation, bringing attention to the potential artistic and thematic merit to the medium. Though not a direct result of manga's influence, this shows that the appropriation of manga styles (or any other type of foreign influence) is possible in a more flexible system of production. Additionally, because Miller and the other comic auteurs improved the industry's image, this likely also paved the way for the public's acceptance of the graphic medium, leading to the growing mainstream popularity of American comics and manga.

In addition to helping the industry shift toward a more manga-like system of comic production (and injecting elements of manga style into the industry style), Miller is also responsible for introducing actual translated manga to the United States. In 1987, four years after

Ronin was published, Miller made a deal with First Publishing where he would draw covers for an English release of *Kozure Ōkami,* thus marking one of the first times that manga itself would be recognized by American markets.[113] This action would not have been possible at any other point in American comic history because of the growing openness towards individual freedom and outside influence. The manga-like approach to comic production is what allowed for these changes in the industry. In his interview for *Studio Space,* conducted approximately twenty years after *Kozure Ōkami* was first released in the United States, Miller commented that, "[*Kozure Ōkami*] would inspire a quite a change in American comics."[114] While the current popularity of manga in the United States is not a directly linked to *Kozure Ōkami,* more likely stemming from the influx of anime into mainstream American television in the 1990s, the English adaptation of *Kozure Ōkami* was nevertheless a huge step towards preparing the industry for how it is today. Considering the extent of manga's influence in the American industry over the last twenty years, Miller's words have never been truer.

At first, it was unknown how an American audience would respond to manga. Early manga published in the United States, including *Kozure Ōkami* and Ryoichi Ikegami's *Mai the Psychic Girl*, were chosen because the art style was neither too Japanese nor too Western in appearance.[115] The texts would be flipped to cater to an audience that reads from left to right. Anime, when it reached the United States, was also altered for television broadcast to remove explicit traces of Japanese-ness (including changing characters' names and replacing kanji with English words). The industry considered these changes necessary in order for the media to sell at the time; however, the industry could not hide the fact that the images flowed differently in *Kozure Ōkami* or that the characters in Pokémon looked nothing like Batman or Spiderman. The

[113] Frank Miller qtd. in Joel Meadows and Gary Marshall, *Studio Space,* 186.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Paul Gravett, *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics*, (London: Laurence King, 2004), 155.

Tezuka-inspired character designs, found in many samples of anime and manga in the United States, are an obvious and well-known difference between Japanese media and their American superhero counterpart, thus propagating the "big-eyed, spiky-haired child" stereotype. The existence of this stereotype, in spite of attempts to eliminate traces of Japanese-ness in American adaptations of manga and anime, goes to show that manga is characterized by its visual differences according to popular opinion.

However, manga's influence in American comics stretches far beyond the incorporation of Tezuka-inspired character designs. While the public's perception of manga style may come from the character designs, manga influence has prompted the use of multiple angles, irregular panels, and nonlinear transitions in traditional American comics. These elements, developed through Tezuka's experimentation on Western comic strips, were the key differences between manga and Kirby's American comics, which emphasized heroic characters, impressive angles, clear panels, and linear transitions. Kirby may have set the standard style for design in the American comic industry, but Miller, a member of the auteur generation, would break away from this standard and enhance his work by creating a hybrid of American and Japanese styles. In *Ronin*, Miller would not only separate the visual differences between the two styles, but also explore the storytelling merits associated with each. Miller's use of manga style in *Ronin* emphasizes the emotional experience of the story, while the elements of American style clarify and convey its plot. The visual elements convey two distinct cultural approaches to graphic storytelling; however, because Miller also managed to adapt manga style into an American context, he shows that the two styles can still be merged. Manga and American comics both evolved from Western comic strips, but diverged into two styles that are visually and thematically distinct. The fact that they can be merged into hybrids like *Ronin*, however, proves

that in spite of their differences they are still two sides of the same coin, two means of telling stories with both pictures and words.

While the two styles are still recognized as different by the public and the fans (and kept separate for the purpose of visual comparison in this analysis), it is clear that these similarities are what allow these media to transcend cultural differences and be consumed within a foreign context. The similarities allowed Tezuka to incorporate Disney and other forms of American influence into his work, and are now contributing to the overwhelming presence of manga in the American industry. When Tezuka began creating his work, Disney's style represented the international face of comics and cartooning. Now, the manga style has taken over that role, impacting the image of graphic narrative worldwide. Because America has such a rich tradition of graphic narrative, however, the sudden prominence of manga influence in the domestic industry has stronger consequences. While there are two separate markets for American comics and manga in the United States, manga has already vastly reshaped the aesthetic of not only American comics, but also graphic narratives produced all around the world. In the modern, internet-based society, manga has contributed extensively to the development of an international graphic narrative culture for popular entertainment.

This global graphic narrative culture is not indicative of any collective industry aesthetic or approach to comic production, despite the strong cultural ties associated with manga. Manga, according to Koichi Iwabuchi, was originally intended to be culturally odorless; in other words, the character designs in particular would not represent any specific cultural background.[116] However, many mainstream manga and anime titles released in the United States (including *Pokémon*, *Sailor Moon*, and *Dragon Ball Z*) feature characters that more closely resemble

[116] Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 26-28.

Tezuka's simplified designs than Batman or Spiderman. These differences in character design have come to define a large portion of the manga visual aesthetic to American fans. Manga style, because it looks so different from American comics, has come to represent Japan within an American context.[117] While manga character design (and other elements of the manga aesthetic) might be associated closely with Japan, they have nevertheless been incorporated seamlessly into not only the American industry, but also the international face of comics. Manga influence, whether subtle or explicit, can be seen in comics produced in Korea, the United States, Germany, Australia, and Brazil; however, a reader anywhere will be familiar with the style of art contained within. While consumers may say that these comics look like manga, the fact is that elements of Japanese style have been reinvented and reincorporated in a modern graphic narrative that is familiar to a widespread, culturally-literate audience. People around the world enjoy the style of art contained within the comic, and are familiar with the visual language. How can something consumed on such an international level be considered uniquely Japanese?

The modern national graphic narrative aesthetic is propagated by a network of individuals involved in the comic industry who seek not to reproduce a particular style but to reshape it and form hybrids that reflect a new, open approach to the medium. At first, Tezuka's manga was also a hybrid. Today, while modern manga style may be in fashion and may sell well, it is by no means the only style influencing modern mainstream comic art. Today's graphic narrative aesthetic is defined by individuals, not a company approach (as was the case for the American industry). In today's graphic narrative culture, American artists have the freedom to take influence from manga, or from anywhere else, and their work can still be appreciated by audiences elsewhere. The degree to which stylistic conventions are incorporated depends on the

[117] Daniel Black, "Cultural Exchange and National Specificity," in *Complicated Currents: Media Flows, Soft Power and East Asia*, edited by Daniel Black, Stephen Epstein, and Alison Tokita, (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2010), 16.6.

artist. This new approach is what leads to the production of Original English Language manga (drawn to imitate the style of their Japanese inspiration), but also to Adam Warren's superhero/manga cross *Empowered* or the inclusion of manga-esque paneling in a Batman comic. It is up to the individual artist to shape the global comic aesthetic through selecting narrative conventions from a wide range of sources in order to tell a story indicative of a larger context.

With this widespread graphic narrative culture, neither manga nor American comics will never be able to fully extinguish one another, even if manga is currently a fashionable staple in the international comic aesthetic. While fans may like the way one looks more than the other, those responsible for creating the works see past these differences in visual style. Even Stan Lee, who worked alongside Kirby during the height of his career, has formed a partnership with popular *shōnen* manga-ka Hiroyuki Takei; at New York Comic con in 2008, they announced their collaboration on a "cross-cultural comics creation" entitled *Ultimo*, which would be serialized in Japanese publications and released in the United States.[118] Instead of merely incorporating elements of one into the other, these two exhibit the purpose of an international graphic language: to learn from each other in a form of cultural exchange. Each aesthetic may be different, but these differences can be carried across cultural boundaries. Additionally, with the way that manga style has been incorporated into the international network, the visual distinctions that I drew between Tezuka's manga and traditional American comics for the sake of comparison may not hold true as the international style continues to evolve. According to Alvin Lu, Vice President of publishing for Viz, states that the world is experiencing, "[a] greater convergence of

[118] Deb Aoki, "NY Comic-Con: Stan Lee, VIZ to Bring Ultimo Manga to U.S.," About.com Manga, http://manga.about.com/b/2008/04/19/ny-comic-con-stan-lee-viz-to-bring-ultimo-manga-to-us.htm (accessed on April 3, 2011).

what we call 'comics' and what we call 'manga.'"[119] The change may bring with it not only a new style of art, but also a new vocabulary of identifying terms.

As an aspiring artist, I am fortunate to have grown up in a climate where I was exposed to both Japanese and American forms of graphic narrative. However, many fans still focus on the differences in visual style between manga and American comics rather than the similarities. While this is a natural way of classifying two culturally distinct media, both media represent not a specific cultural aesthetic but an international aesthetic consumed and appropriated by people all around the world. Examples of this international aesthetic, such as manga's influence in American comics, are right in front of our noses, but at the same time, much more needs to be understood about global comic culture in order for it to be recognized outside critical and production circles. Further investigations can be made into the similarities between the two major styles? Likewise, more research could go into the relation between the text and the images not only in comparison between Japanese and Western, but also between works from other cultures. How have the fashionable comic styles influenced visual storytelling in other countries (for example, manga's influence on Korean comics)? And lastly, how will fans respond if the lines between the two media become more blurred? Only time will tell, however, as the industry will continue to progress through the hybrid work of individual artists. In the meantime, the attitude towards the large manga section and the American comic shelves in Barnes and Noble will continue to be divided, even though the two forms of entertainment are placed side by side.

[119] Alvin Lu qtd. in MacWilliams, 17.

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