

**GEKIGA INTO ENGLISH:**  
**Translating the Words, Images, and Culture of**  
**Yoshihiro Tatsumi's *A DRIFTING LIFE***

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This project report examines how the editorial process of a graphic novel can turn conventional practices of editing text in English in entirely new directions, not only incorporating traditional text-editing techniques, but also applying these familiar principles to meet the rhetorical and spatial demands of a visual narrative. This process is explored in depth by detailing the editorial process used by Drawn & Quarterly, a literary comics publishing company, in bringing Yoshihiro Tatsumi's Japanese-language graphic novel *A Drifting Life* to an English-speaking audience, particularly with respect to the visual, textual, and cultural differences that must be respected when translating a graphic novel from Japanese to English, and how the different reading and comprehension needs of the two audiences have affected the physical, visual, and textual structure of the book.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO COMICS, GEKIGA, AND A DRIFTING LIFE

*“If people failed to understand comics, it was because they defined what comics could be too narrowly! A proper definition, if we could find one, might give lie to the stereotypes and show that the potential of comics is limitless and exciting!”<sup>1</sup>*

–Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

Since the late 1960s, the comic-book publishing industry has progressed at a rapid clip, quickly maturing beyond the multi-panel strips and serialized works that defined it in its infancy. It has burgeoned into an industry that is at once a powerhouse of business, with the factory-floor fervour to produce thousands of titles per month from creators around the world, and a prominent medium for the author/artist storyteller, working either as an independent or as part of a team. As this corner of the publishing universe has developed beyond what was once regarded as its limitations, so have its needs and methods of production. New artists and authors are cropping up from around the world, and the comic book and graphic novel publishing industry has expanded beyond large corporations to include smaller, independent publishing houses with focused mandates and methodologies that match the intent and execution of their more traditional counterparts. One such independent publisher is Drawn & Quarterly Publications in Montreal.

Though it is a relatively small company, Drawn & Quarterly has made a prominent mark on the industry, publishing independent and artistic comics and graphic novels from around the world, all with an extremely high – and seldom seen – level of quality. They have done so by maintaining a strong aesthetic mandate: each book’s physical appearance, from its cover and binding to the style in which its interior is laid out,

reflects the nature of the work itself. As a result, every book in their stable has a unique look and feel that eschews the conventions and more traditional perceptions of what a comic book or graphic novel should be. It is this focus on quality that has consolidated Drawn & Quarterly's strong reputation as a groundbreaking publishing house.

In Spring 2009, Drawn & Quarterly will be publishing Yoshihiro Tatsumi's graphic novel, *A Drifting Life*. First published in Japanese, the 820-page book is an illustrated memoir of Tatsumi's life as a writer and artist working in the post-war Japanese manga and rental-book industry. To bring such a work to an English language audience, a myriad of editorial techniques have been applied, turning traditional text editing principles and practices in new directions, and applying said principles as needed to satisfy the unique spatial, rhetorical, and illustrative demands of the book. The purpose of this project report is to further illustrate the strength of Drawn & Quarterly as a publisher by examining how the company has incorporated and advanced the definitions of the traditional editorial process, exhibiting a superior commitment to editorial work while respecting the cultural, visual, and narrative integrity of the original book.

From May to August 2008, I interned at the Drawn & Quarterly office in Montreal. In my second week I was given the initial draft of the English-language translation for *A Drifting Life* and was tasked with completing the first editorial check. Working together with Drawn & Quarterly publisher Chris Oliveros, Tatsumi editor-in-chief Adrian Tomine, and translator Taro Nettleton, I quickly became involved in the project on a personal level and have stayed with the company to see its production through to the end. The translation and editorial process, which I have documented in this report, took four months from the first editorial check and through to the working first draft of the English-language edition of the book.

## **2: A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMICS AND COMIC-BOOK PUBLISHING**

*“Certainly, the more one studies graphic narrative, the more apparent it becomes that the medium deserves to be examined as a powerful art form in its own right, albeit one that has experienced a sometimes difficult and contested evolution.”<sup>2</sup>*

–John Bell, author of *Invaders from the North: How Canada Conquered the Comic Book Universe*

Comic books, as a medium, have frequently been denied the benefit of the doubt. Culturally, they have been targeted and persecuted as a degenerate art, a potentially corrupting medium that threatens to irrevocably damage the youth of the world. From their inception, comic books have had no shortage of detractors. As comics have developed over the last century, organizations have formed to keep the industry in check with assumed social and political ethics of the time, trials to threaten or condemn the purveyors of the medium, and even, right after the Second World War, makeshift book burnings in American schoolyards. Despite all of this, comic books have affected our culture in innumerable ways, changing how we read and comprehend literature, and facilitating the worldwide transition to a more visual culture.

### **2-1: Development of a North American Industry**

Evidence of the early origins of comics can be seen around the world, in such ancient forms as Egyptian hieroglyphics and traditional Japanese Narrative Scrolls. William Hogarth, an eighteenth-century engraver, painter, and cartoonist, is acknowledged to have pioneered western sequential art through his politically satirical engravings, which were titled “modern moral subjects.”<sup>3</sup> Following Hogarth, Rodolphe

Topffer, a nineteenth-century Swiss cartoonist, is one of the earliest known creators of modern comics. His first work, which was produced through autography, “a variation of lithography that allowed him to draw on specifically prepared paper with a pen,”<sup>4</sup> was a thirty-page illustrated narrative titled *Histoire de M. Vieux Bois* (*The Story of Mr. Wooden Head*), published in 1837 (and published in the United States as *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck* in 1842). In North America, the first newspaper strips appeared in the 1890s. Though an exact date is difficult to identify, “its origin is most often associated with Richard Felton Outcault’s *Hogan’s Alley* (later *The Yellow Kid*), which debuted in New York City’s *World* newspaper in 1895.”<sup>5</sup>

However, it is Maxwell Charles Gaines (aka M. C. Gaines) who has been widely credited with pioneering the form of the modern North American comic book in the 1930s. Gaines, a salesman with an American printing company, Eastern Color Press, developed the comic book as a means of driving the company’s sales during the Depression. Using pulp magazines and novelettes as inspiration, Gaines produced a ten-cent, sixty-four-page magazine that reprinted, in one volume, many of the Sunday newspaper comic strips that had previously been published by Eastern Color Press. After the success of this project, Gaines partnered with Jack Liebowitz, the co-owner of National Allied Publications, to create All-American Publications, and under this new banner they began to publish original stories in the comic-book form. Several successful superhero icons were developed under the All-American brand, but it was National Allied Publications’ *Action Comics* No. 1, published in April 1938, that changed the industry forever. It was this issue that introduced the world to Jerry Siegel and Toronto-born Joe Shuster’s creation: Superman. Soon after, *Action Comics* were selling at a rate of close to 500,000 copies a month. The following year, National Allied Publications, the precursor to the modern day DC Comics, created a separate syndicated *Superman* strip. “By 1940, *Superman* comics were selling 1,250,000 copies per month, and the daily strip was appearing in three hundred cities. Newspapers were following the comic books’ lead.”<sup>6</sup>

In just a few short years, Gaines' modest endeavour had turned into big business, and the so-called Golden Age of comics had begun. By 1941, gross revenues for the comic-book publishing industry had reached upwards of \$12 million, with seven to ten million comics moving off the shelves each month.

Once superhero comics had made their mark, the narrative structure of comics began to evolve. As the characters developed into recognizable icons, their stories diverged from the newspaper strip format, where each strip was a single, isolated tale, and narrative arcs that continued through several issues became commonplace. As these stories became more widespread through the early 1940s to the end of World War II, characters were given enough additional space to become more than simple archetypes, and readers were provided with the opportunity to understand and empathize more with the heroes they came to admire.

While many American titles had also found success in Canada prior to World War II, the War Exchange Conservation Act that took effect in December 1940 effectively altered the parameters of the industry. It restricted the importation of all non-essential goods from the U.S. into Canada – including all pulp, newsstand magazines, and comic books. However, it was this sudden cessation of imported materials that helped pave the way for the development of a national Canadian comic-book industry. “Working independently of one another, four publishers rushed to take advantage of the vacuum created by the sweeping economic legislation. One company, Maple Leaf Publishing, was located in Vancouver; the other three – Anglo-American Publishing, Hillborough Studio, and Commercial Signs of Canada – were all based in Toronto... The voracious appetite that Canadian kids had developed for funny books was about to be assuaged by new heroes.”<sup>7</sup>

The sudden boom in the Canadian comic-book publishing industry showcased a sense of independent Canadian nationalism that had not yet been seen in comics. Several monthly titles, such as *Better Comics*, *Big Bang Comics*, and *Lucky Comics*, were quick

to assert themselves in the marketplace, along with several soon-to-be-iconic characters of Canada's Golden Age. The most notable of these was Adrian Dingle's "Nelvana of the Northern Lights, the first Canadian national superhero."<sup>8</sup> Like all things, though, the Canadian Golden Age was temporary, lasting only until 1946, when American titles once again made their way across the border.

## **2-2: The Evolution of Comics in Europe and Japan**

The comics industry in Europe was decidedly different from that of North America in its development. Whereas North American comics were seen as evolving and separating themselves from their newspaper origins in terms of size and content, eschewing independent week-to-week stories in favour of longer multi-issue narratives, European comic supplements were never entirely removed from their association with newsstand magazines.

European comics also incorporated longer narratives that spanned several instalments as early as the 1920s – almost twenty years before North American comics did. A perennial favourite, Herge's *Tintin* is considered to be "one of the most popular comic book series in Europe,"<sup>9</sup> and an early example of proper Belgian comics and a predominance towards extended narratives in European comics. It is also an example of a BD, or *bande-dessinée* ("drawn strip"), strictly a Franco-Belgian form at the time. Another watershed *bande-dessinée*, Rene Goscinny and Albert Uderzo's *Asterix le Gaulois* (*The Adventures of Asterix*), first appeared in October 1959 and is still in production in 2008, at which point thirty-three books in the series had been released. Though more popular in European countries than in North America, *Asterix le Gaulois* has become a world-renowned example of the *bande-dessinée* and has been translated into more than one hundred languages since its creation. Unlike North American comics, though, European weeklies also continued along the path of the ongoing story, with characters and events continuing in each successive newspaper comic supplements as they would in a separate

monthly publication.

In the first half of the twentieth century, boys' adventure comics were the most successful in Britain. The paper shortages caused by the First and Second World Wars led to a ban on the creation and publication of new comics, which allowed for existing series, namely the 1930s creations *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, to dominate the British comic marketplace.

Concurrent with the evolution of comics in both Europe and North America, manga ("whimsical pictures") was quickly taking over the Japanese publishing industry. Illustrative narrative techniques had long been a part of Japanese culture, but it was the development of the manga style in the years following World War II that defined the contemporary comics environment in Japan. Currently a multibillion-dollar industry, manga has become an identifying style of both illustration and storytelling in Japanese comic books. However, the manga periodicals and book-rental shops that grew to prominence in the years following the Second World War were the force that changed the face of the Japanese publishing industry.

Manga rental shops worked like today's video rental stores, offering a wide selection of both books and manga that could be rented for a small fee. As manga shops grew rapidly in number and developed a strong post-war presence, they formed the basis for the intense competition and growth that the manga industry underwent after World War II. These shops also led to the alternative subsets of manga that began to emerge in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The four-panel strip, a cornerstone of manga preceding and immediately following the war, began to fade from prominence through the evolution of periodicals such as *Manga Shonen*, which had a nearly unrivalled readership among the country's youth, and further diverged in content through publications such as *Shadow Detective Book*, *City*, and *Skyscraper*. Manga quickly developed beyond simplistic comedy strips and into extensive narrative works. The most prominent creations of the post-war years came

from Osamu Tezuka, a manga legend who, it has been said, wrote and illustrated more than 150,000 pages throughout his decades-long career. Tezuka's work is still popular today, and collections of his work have found a strong North American audience as well as a readership in Japan.

### **2-3: Fear of the Unknown**

As comic-book publishing continued to evolve and face challenges around the world, so too did the public's perception of the medium. More and more children began to take an active interest in comics, and as a result, many parents, schoolteachers, politicians, and community leaders across North America took notice of what children were devoting their time and money to. Fearful that the nation's youth would be swayed into a life of delinquency and degeneracy by the vivid depictions of sex, crime, and violence in so many of the popular comic books that were aimed at teenage audiences, American politicians and educators founded several organizations aimed at suppressing the emerging comics industry. One of the more prominent of these organizations was the National Organization for Decent Literature.

Founded in 1939, the NODL was created to continue the work started by the Vatican with the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in the mid-sixteenth century: to "not merely keep Catholics from patronizing evil literature, but to keep it out of the community so that it will not be accessible to any, Catholic or non-Catholic."<sup>10</sup> In very little time, M.C. Gaines found his comics appearing on the NODL's list of banned materials, specifically *Sensation Comics* No. 1, published in January 1942, which introduced the world to Wonder Woman with her first comic-book cover. The character was in conflict with the NODL's "Code for Clean Living" due to her sexually charged appearance and the themes of sexuality presented in each issue. Specifically, the NODL targeted the revealing nature of the Amazon warrior's outfit and her weaponry: a golden lasso of truth, and bracelets of submission.

The comic-book industry continued to thrive into the Second World War, despite increased pressure from organizations such as the NODL. The Nazi menace provided an antagonist that appealed to an even larger readership, and publishers took advantage of the situation by producing tales of Superman, Captain America, and other superheroes fighting Hitler and the Nazis for the good of the world.

In the aftermath of the war, however, comics once again found themselves on the defensive. In a 1948 radio panel discussion, New York drama critic John Mason Brown labelled comics “the lowest, most despicable, and most harmful form of trash... their word selection is as wretched as their drawing or the paper on which they are printed.”<sup>11</sup> But, as sales of comics continued to rise, several more titles emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s, many focussing their narratives on tales of crime, horror, or romance, to catch the attention of readers through shock and curiosity. Writers and artists like Will Eisner, whose comic *The Spirit* began to experiment with darker imagery and a “curious moral neutrality of the noir hero,”<sup>12</sup> attempted to take comics into more adult realms, themselves understanding the potential of the medium and hoping to attract a more respected audience who had already grown up reading comics. By March 1949, fourteen states were preparing laws designed to regulate the sale of comics to children and minors, worried that these titles would glamorize crime and depravity.

The continued success of horror and romance comics led to the formation of a special committee of the House of Representatives whose mandate was to decide whether or not these comics should be considered immoral, offensive, or potentially dangerous. “The witch-hunt psychology was starting to spread, and comics were right there in it.”<sup>13</sup> With the threat of communism and the McCarthy hearings taking over American society in 1953, the sense of fear and disgust tarred the writers, artists, and publishers of comic books. It soon became a point of contention for someone to admit to working in comic-book publishing. Attacks on the industry increased, thanks in no small part to Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist and author of the 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent*. “Comic

books are definitely harmful to impressionable people, and most young people are impressionable... I think Hitler was a beginner compared to the comic-book industry.”<sup>14</sup>

In response to Wertham’s campaign, and while it was in process, the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) created the Comics Code Authority (CCA) and its seal of approval in 1954, to reassure the public that it was controlling the offensive content in its members’ comic books. In 1955, Operation Book Swap gained momentum among conservative religious groups across the United States and Canada, and the resulting bonfires presented a reversal of the horrors depicted less than two years earlier in Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*: “In the philistine dreamscape of *Fahrenheit 451*, a fascistic government institutionalized book burning, banishing all publications that expressed ideas or had artistic merit. The only volumes left unscathed were those deemed of practical value or those beneath contempt: trade journals, pornography, and comic books.”<sup>15</sup>

The CCA had done irrevocable damage to the North American comic-book publishing industry. While the group held no legal sway, the public’s negative perception of comic books was so strong that many distributors would not accept any titles that did not carry the CCA’s seal of approval. At first the CCA focussed on forbidding crime and horror titles to be distributed, arguing that these titles were damaging to the moral fabric of the country, but the CCA quickly grew into a culturally authoritarian group, going so far as to disapprove of issue number 33 of EC Comics’ *Incredible Science Fiction* because the hero of the science fiction tale was black. The legal push against comics intensified in 1955 to include Canadian distributors of American titles, a push fuelled in part by a murder in 1948 in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, and another in 1954, in Westville, Nova Scotia – both cases reportedly involved comic books as potential motivating factors. By 1956, many North American writers and artists were without work, with worthless portfolios in a climate of public mistrust of the comic medium and those who worked in it. Carmine Infantino, a comic artist and editor who came to prominence during

the Silver Age of comics, a period starting in 1956 with the publication of DC Comics' *Showcase* No. 4 and its introduction of The Flash, and extending into the early 1970s, summarized the situation as thus: "It was like the plague. The work dried up and you had nowhere to go, because comics were a dirty word... If you said you drew comic books, it was like saying you were a child molester."<sup>16</sup>

The climate of fear and censorship in the comic-book industry was not unique to North America. In 1949, the French Communist Party sought to ban most American comic publications, those that were "more adult and violent than the classical European ones."<sup>17</sup> In addition, several Franco-Belgian publishers who had continued to produce during the German occupation faced accusations of collaboration with the invading forces and potential prosecution from French resistance parties. In the end, most were cleared of charges, though many publications did not survive into the years immediately following the war. As a result, the French comics-publishing industry underwent a dense restructuring.

In August 1959, only a few years after the severe persecution of the North American comic-book industry, the Yamanashi Book Renters' Association of Japan targetted several manga artists and publications, citing several depictions of juvenile crime and amoral behaviour, which were considered reprehensible in a predominantly children's medium. The group blacklisted many manga artists, such as Masaaki Sato, as purveyors of filth. Some authors, Yoshihiro Tatsumi included, challenged the threats of the Book Renters' Association and similar groups by creating subsets of manga that would differentiate their work as material exclusively for adult readers. The most successful and influential of these subsets, *gekiga*, emerged at a time when Japan's rental comic-book market was especially susceptible to change.

### **3: EVOLUTION AND REVOLUTION**

*“I knew how to keep it simple... We wanted to give kids a good time and give them something positive to enjoy. We didn’t want to change the world.”<sup>18</sup>*

–Stan Lee, former publisher of Marvel Comics

The comic-book publishing industry in North America began to recover in the early 1960s by shifting the focus of the stories away from crime, horror, and romance titles, and once again embracing superheroes as their bread and butter. Martin Goodman’s Timely Comics, founded in 1939, grew through these characters’ success and became Marvel Comics. A new roster of superheroes, including Spiderman, The X-Men, and The Fantastic Four, emerged onto the field alongside up-and-coming industry talents like Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. However, by the tail end of the decade, a new trend was beginning to take shape on the heels of the hippie movement in the United States. It had the potential to become enormously popular and to subvert the established industry icons. It was the underground comix scene.

#### **3-1: The Spark**

In 1965, technological advancement in the offset printing process changed the structure of the industry, allowing for small runs of tabloid papers to become economically feasible. Across North America, several small independent groups began releasing their own publications. The *Los Angeles Free Press*, the *East Village Other*, and the *Berkeley Barb* debuted one after the other. Within months, several more independent artist-run publications followed. The origins of the movement remained in San Francisco, but publications of this nature quickly spread across the United States, as far as Chicago,

Detroit, and New York.

These independent publications differentiated themselves from mainstream comic-book publishing by providing an outlet for expression and experimentation through counterculture ideas. They rejected many of the taboos enforced through the Comics Code Authority and the national political and religious groups that had risen to prominence in the last few decades. By 1968, underground comix had gained momentum, though their impact was still small overall. The opportunity for free expression for many artists and writers while simultaneously subverting the established codes of ethics that had been enforced until now by the moral right, and they used the spelling “comix” to differentiate their work from that of the mainstream:

“Zap Comix was the spark that brought together a nucleus of artists and publishers in San Francisco in 1968. Within five years, there were more than 300 new comic titles in print and hundreds of people calling themselves underground cartoonists. Print Mint, Rip Off Press, and Apex Novelties couldn’t print comic books fast enough to satisfy their customers. Even after their popularity peaked in the mid-70s, many of these artists continued to produce highly personal and potent work. Their unrelenting insistence on complete artistic freedom revitalized the comic medium, and broke it loose from the repressive Comics Code Authority. Comics, long stereotyped as kid stuff, aggressively reclaimed their adult audience with explorations of provocative subjects.”<sup>19</sup>

In 1969, following the American lead, several independent Canadian comics emerged on the scene. The first noted underground comic was *SFU Komix*, published at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia. In the four years that followed, many more underground Canadian titles were published, including *Flash Theatre*, *Bridge City Beer Comix*, and *The Time of the Clockmen*. Similar to the American underground comix, though not as widely successful, the Canadian titles “explored the major preoccupations

of the counterculture, namely, drugs, sex, rock, and radical politics.”<sup>20</sup>

The late 1960s and early 1970s brought a similar underground scene and counterculture rebellion to British comics. While some of the American underground comix and alternative magazines were regularly exported to the U.K. and the rest of Europe, similar publications developed on local soil. Of particular note was the French publication *Metal Hurlant*, which brought to light many European artists in much the same way that *Zap Comix* did for the Americans in the underground scene around San Francisco. However, unlike the American underground comix and their success overseas, the European alternative publications had “little impact in the U.S. Despite the success of the American version of *Metal Hurlant*, translated into American English as *Heavy Metal*, few other anthology periodicals have appeared in the U.S. market.”<sup>21</sup>

Several American artists rose to acclaim through the underground comix scene: Robert Williams, S. Clay Wilson, Robert Crumb, George Metzger, and Art Spiegelman, to name a few. Their work, and the works of many others from the late 1960s to the mid-'70s, came to define the culture of the time. They changed the direction of the comic-book publishing industry, not only proving the viability of small-press comic runs, but also instilling a need to break from the norm and to challenge the medium and the industry to be more than simple tales of heroics that entertained and placated the mass audience. A particularly strong example of this, Spiegelman's *Maus*, a graphic memoir of his father's life in Poland during the Second World War, was first published in 1972 as a short tale in Apex Novelties' *Funny Animals*. Since then, it has been republished several times as a graphic novel, and it even won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992.

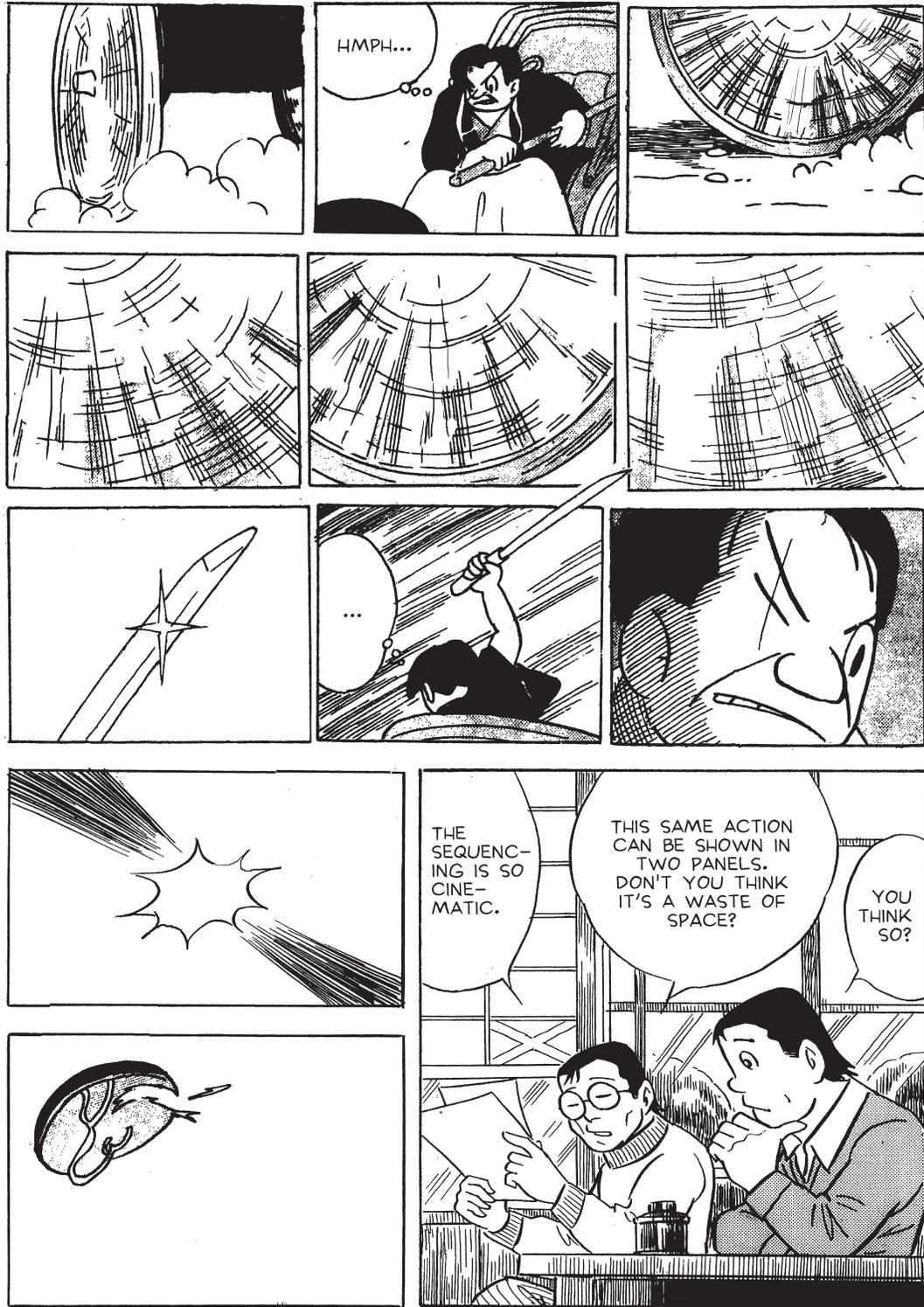
### **3-2: Of Gekiga and Graphic Novels**

In 1958, Japanese manga was facing its own crisis of maturity. Gekiga, a term created in 1957 by Yoshihiro Tatsumi, and translated literally as “dramatic pictures,” was introduced “to describe the darker, more realistic style of cartooning that [Tatsumi]

and his peers were pioneering.”<sup>22</sup> Perhaps best described as a style or subset under the umbrella term “manga,” gekiga was Tatsumi’s answer to the concerns that gave rise to the American underground comix scene and emergent graphic novelizations – the need to create a means of dividing the market into traditional manga on one side, and more adult, experimental gekiga works on the other. It was equal parts an attempt to broaden the readership of gekiga artists’ work and a means to discourage youths from buying titles that might contain offensive or obscene subject matter.

Tatsumi’s work disrupted the established manga culture of post-war Japan by infusing his storytelling with a variety of unique techniques. Heavily influenced by the film industry and the influx of American cinema, Tatsumi and his peers used gekiga to experiment with the physicality of manga, expanding on the origins of the style by moving beyond panel-based works that relied on humour and a minimum of dramatic movement. They created works that relied predominantly on a heightened level of movement and/or tension that would be sustained over multiple panels, often repeating images and quickly moving back and forth between angles in a scene so as to heighten the suspense and drama by drawing out a character’s actions, almost as if quickly cutting between camera angles or scenes in a film.

In subject matter, Tatsumi’s early gekiga works pre-dated the underground comix movement in the U.S., but they dealt with similar themes and examinations of character. In the 1960s, Japan entered a period of intense economic growth. Accelerating development and success in business began to take over people’s lives. It was this element – the personal lives of the country’s citizens, which was being ignored in the face of economic progress – that caught Tatsumi’s attention: “In place of one-dimensional heroes and villains, there were people: faces in a crowd, seemingly plucked at random and then examined down to their darkest, most private moments.”<sup>23</sup>



\*Figure 1: A Drifting Life, page 376.

The excerpt above illustrates the quick cutting between angles and perspectives that Tatsumi experimented with in early gekiga works.

Chronologically following the development of gekiga in Japan, Will Eisner, creator of the 1940s comic *The Spirit*, sought to change the perception of comic books in North America. He was not the first to take comic books into a form more resembling the size and structure of more traditional books, but he was the first to give the new format a name. *A Contract with God* has been frequently cited as the first book to be described with the term “graphic novel” to distinguish it from a mere comic book. Published in October 1978, *A Contract with God* presented more mature subject matter, storytelling style and physical presentation than most comic books had previously done. Since then, publishers of many contemporary titles have adopted the term and modes of production, to present a more mature and serious product, and to add another layer to the industry rather than taking anything away from what had gone before.

In 1977, expanding on the precedent set by Eisner, the Ontario artist Dave Sim embarked on one of the most ambitious and significant comic ventures ever created. Sim titled the work *Cerebus the Aardvark* and created a three-hundred-issue graphic novel narrative that explored “not only the comics medium, but also other facets of popular culture and society at large, not to mention Sim’s personal life.”<sup>24</sup> Completing its run in March 2004, *Cerebus the Aardvark* has become “the longest-running original comic in Canadian history.”<sup>25</sup>

A decade later, the British duo of writer Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons unleashed what is widely recognized as one of the most important achievements in comics history. From September 1986 to October 1987, the twelve-issue *Watchmen* series was released by DC Comics, and the collection continues to be published to this day as a graphic novel. As a deconstruction of the superhero genre, *Watchmen* was designed to question the nature of heroes in an evolving society, subverting the concept of superheroes by placing them within a carefully crafted alternate history of the United States. In content, *Watchmen* deftly illustrated the maturation of the comic-book publishing industry by tearing down preconceived notions of what a superhero or a

comic could be, in a dark and dense tale. The impact of the series has been far reaching, earning the distinction of being one of the few graphic novels to garner mainstream critical and commercial acclaim.

### **3-3: The Emergence of a Visual Culture**

The continued evolution of comic-book publishing in the U.S. and around the world has helped to introduce several new modes of comprehension into our cultural fabric, particularly in regard to how we read, understand, and accept comics, books, and magazines as both textual and visual. In North America, comics have paralleled the rise of cinema and television to cultural centrality. From the introduction of mainstream comics in the 1930s and continuing through the evolution and proliferation of magazines, children's books, and the Internet, all of which are increasingly reliant on a creating a strong relationship between text and visuals in order to appeal to an ever-expanding and sophisticated audience, it's no longer viable for us to be simply textually literate; rather we must also be multiliterate, employing visual literacy with the same importance as textual literacy.

As our culture continues to expand, we are absorbing aesthetic trends that dictate elements such as fashion and design that may be exotic to us from around the globe and incorporating them into our own unique cultural experience. Utilizing our abilities for pattern recognition in the evolution of a more prominent visual culture, comics have helped to instigate widespread social change by engaging our ability to fluently read a story with both images and/or text as the narrative structure. The counterculture aesthetics of the underground comix scene fuelled a departure from the restrained art styles of the Golden and subsequent Silver ages of American comics, allowing the public perception of comics to expand and offering new visual narratives. Similarly, the experimental, almost filmic styles found in many gekiga titles marked a break from traditional manga, compelling the genre to move forward. With increased visual,

cultural, and narrative storytelling potential through the dialogues between images and text that are presented in our image-heavy social structure – whether foreign or domestic in origin – the nature of how we read, write, and edit must change as well.

Over the last three decades, evolving technologies in print production and image quality have made it possible to experiment further, and with the Internet providing users with easy and immediate access to a global village of information, the need has arisen for print products – particularly comic books and magazines – to offer something more than what the Internet can provide. As suggested by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in their essay “Narrativizing Visual Culture,” “The visual... is ‘languaged,’ just as language itself has a visual dimension... The visual is simply one point of entry, and a very strategic one at this historical moment, into a multidimensional world of intertextual dialogism.”<sup>26</sup>

The comic-book publishing industry has continued to grow in recent years through the creative and experimental advancements of mixing text and images to tell stories, the quality of the illustrative work, heightened production values, and the increasing demands of a steadily maturing readership. The industry has found a strong foothold in another medium that shares a similar need for visual literacy – the North American film industry. The critical and popular success of many films based on superheroes and graphic novels has bolstered sales and interest in comics for nearly twenty years. Interest in superhero films began to take shape in 1989, with Tim Burton’s *Batman*. Though its sequels failed to live up to the quality or impact of the first film, and interest in films based on comics dropped off for a while, a more recent comic-film explosion has proven to be one of the most financially lucrative movements in contemporary film. The *Spiderman* and *X-Men* trilogies have consolidated Marvel Comics’ reputation as a major Hollywood studio contender. Christopher Nolan’s 2008 film *The Dark Knight* became the second-highest grossing North American film of all time with an estimated \$528 million in box office revenue, behind only James Cameron’s 1997 film *Titanic*. The high interest in adapting comic books and graphic novels to film shows no

signs of slowing down, with *Watchmen*, previously thought to be unfilmable due to density of its layered, multi-tiered story, set to premiere in March 2009.

The alternative comics scene has also had its share of successful film adaptations, two of the most recent being the 2005 adaptation of John Wagner's *A History of Violence*, directed by Canadian David Cronenberg, and the 2006 adaptation of Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*, by director James McTeigue. The latter grossed more than \$132 million worldwide, despite the controversy surrounding Moore's desire to have his name taken out of the film's credits due to the disappointing manner in which Hollywood had treated his work in the past. Several other films based on alternative or underground works – *Ghost World*, *American Splendor* and *Crumb* for example – achieved widespread critical success and have developed strong cult followings.

The underground subculture of the 1960s and '70s gave way to a more literary style of comic in the 1980s, one that focussed on the quality of writing and detailed, sometimes convoluted narrative arcs that even crossed over from series to series, as in Marvel Comics' many iterations of the *X-Men* franchise. This trend that has continued into the current marketplace. Despite the continued dominance of Marvel, DC, and the superhero books, many more independent publishing houses have emerged in the North American marketplace.

Several small, independent comic publishers have been given the opportunity to grow and carve out their own niches in the industry through indie or import titles, allowing for a greater variety of books on comic-book store shelves. In 1976, Fantagraphics Books in Seattle began publishing *The Comics Journal*, a magazine devoted to reporting on the comic-book medium from the perspective of "arts first." *The Comics Journal* went on to become a respected trade publication and a valuable resource for the comic-book publishing industry. With comics demanding more respect as a literary medium in the 1980s, Fantagraphics Books established itself as an advocate for the integrity of comic books and graphic novels as a legitimate literary medium. In the years

since, several independent comic-book publishers such as Fantagraphics Books and Top Shelf Productions have found success in the medium.

Due to the growing success and vitality of the comic-book publishing industry around the world, respected trade publishers such as Pantheon Books in New York and Jonathan Cape in the U.K., as well as more art house publishers such as Chronicle Books in San Francisco, have all begun acquiring and publishing graphic novels, either incorporating them into their company mandate or creating a special niche for them. Even DC Comics has created a separate imprint, Vertigo, to publish more author-artist-driven works. In Canada, however, this corner of the sky belongs to Drawn & Quarterly Publications in Montreal.

#### 4: CHRIS OLIVEROS AND DRAWN & QUARTERLY PUBLICATIONS

“In most cases, the best graphic novels published over the past 25 years reflect the... unique vision of each respective cartoonist... Quite frankly, the talents of an Art Spiegelman or a Seth... could not have been nurtured through the traditional channels of publishing.”<sup>27</sup>

–Chris Oliveros, owner and publisher of Drawn & Quarterly Publications.

Moving beyond the counterculture works of the 1960s and ‘70s, and the renewed interest in mainstream superhero titles that dominated the ‘80s and ‘90s, independent comic and graphic novel publishers have been free to produce works of a more artistic and serious nature – titles that confront political and sociological issues like *Palestine* and *The Fixer* by Joe Sacco; or that depict a view of history seldom seen, like Jason Lutes’ *Berlin* series; or that take readers on a personal journey through places that few people will see first hand, like Guy Delisle’s *Burma Chronicles*. Since the 1980s, independent comic book publishers have become instrumental in creating and feeding a demand for comics and graphic novels, both mainstream and alternative in content, within the public sphere.

##### 4-1: Chris Oliveros, Adrian Tomine, and Yoshihiro Tatsumi

In 1989, Chris Oliveros, a bike messenger and an struggling occasional cartoonist who had never worked in publishing, put together an anthology of underground and alternative comic artists’ work. The anthology, titled *Drawn & Quarterly*, set the stage for an aesthetic and conceptual drive that would help him in developing Drawn & Quarterly Publications. Conceptually, the *Drawn & Quarterly* anthology was heavily influenced by Art Spiegelman’s *Raw*, an alternative comics anthology published by Spiegelman and his wife, Françoise Mouly from 1980 to 1991. “The first issue of *Raw* was a big inspiration for

me,” said Oliveros in a 2007 interview with the *Montreal Mirror*. “When it came out, I was about 15 and it was like an epiphany... It was the first time I discovered that a comic could be about more than just superheroes.”<sup>28</sup> Throughout the 1990s, Oliveros accumulated a highly respected collective of writers and artists, including Chester Brown, Seth, Joe Matt, Chris Ware, Lynda Barry, Jason Lutes, Gabrielle Bell, and Joe Sacco. These artists and many others in the Drawn & Quarterly stable have become influential and recognized names in the comic book publishing industry.

By 2008, Drawn & Quarterly had become the largest comic-book publisher in Canada. The company continues to emphasize alternative and foreign titles, publishing books such as the African-based *Aya*, from the Parisian creative team of Marguerite Aboutet and Clement Oubrierie; the Finnish artist Tove Jansson’s successful *Moomin* series; and Rutu Modan, born in Tel-Aviv, whose book *Exit Wounds* has won wide acclaim for both the artist and Drawn & Quarterly.

With more than fifty artists from Canada and around the world on its list and a yearly output of more than twenty titles, Drawn & Quarterly has quickly become one of the more important comic-book publishers in the industry. The books are distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books, based in British Columbia, and foreign rights to many titles have been picked up by more traditional literary publishing firms around the world, including “Jonathan Cape and Faber & Faber in the U.K., Rizzoli in Italy, Podium in the Netherlands, and Mondadori in Spain.”<sup>29</sup> On October 19, 2007, Drawn & Quarterly, with the assistance from a grant from The Canada Council for the Arts, opened the first and only publisher-run storefront in Canada. Located in Montreal’s Mile End district, three blocks from the company’s main office, the Drawn & Quarterly bookstore has been designed from the ground up to emphasize the company’s commitment to promoting alternative, multicultural literature. As Oliveros describes it, “It is very much a curated selection... There’s no other bookstore in Canada that looks like this.”<sup>30</sup>

In 2003, one of Drawn & Quarterly’s artists, Adrian Tomine, approached Oliveros

with the idea of publishing the collected works of Yoshihiro Tatsumi. Tomine, a writer and artist since the age of sixteen, Tomine began publishing his *Optic Nerve* comic as one of Drawn & Quarterly's ongoing comics series in 1994. Since then, eleven issues of the series have been released, along with several collections of both his earlier works and his more recent *Optic Nerve* stories. The most recent compilation, *Shortcomings*, was released in Fall 2007 to extensive critical acclaim.

As a teenager, Tomine "experienced a crisis of faith,"<sup>31</sup> and had begun to doubt his passion for comics. In an effort to rekindle his love of the medium, Tomine explored alternative comics, and in the process he discovered *Good-Bye and Other Stories* by Yoshihiro Tatsumi, published in English in 1987 by Catalan Communications in New York. Tatsumi's compiled short stories showed an unconventional style that combined a potent stark minimalism in both the illustrations and the esoteric writing. In the years since this discovery, Tomine has found success as one of Drawn & Quarterly's premiere artists. His work has been translated into several languages and distributed around the world. In 2003, he journeyed to Tokyo to promote some of his work, and while he was there he managed to arrange a meeting with Tatsumi. Since that first encounter, Tomine and Tatsumi have been working with Drawn & Quarterly to bring more of Tatsumi's work to English-speaking readers.

With the release of Tatsumi's *The Push Man and Other Stories* in September 2005, Tomine assumed the de facto role of Tatsumi editor-in-chief for Drawn & Quarterly. Since then, two more volumes of Tatsumi's work have been released: *Abandon the Old in Tokyo*, first published in September 2006, and *Good-Bye*, first published in May 2008. Each of these titles represents another year of Tatsumi's work, starting with the material he produced in 1969 and working up to his works of 1971 and 1972 in the most recent volume.

Tatsumi was born in Osaka in 1935 and grew up in the shadow of the Second World War. As a boy, he developed an intense passion for manga, heavily inspired by

the post-war work of Osamu Tezuka, such as the fantasy and science fiction pieces *Lost World* and *Metropolis*, and Tezuka's first long-running serial, *Jungle Taitei* (translated as *Jungle Emperor*, but more commonly known in English as *Kimba the White Lion*), which was published in *Manga Shonen* from 1950 to 1954 and enjoyed immense popularity.

In post-war Japan, the rental comic-book publishing industry was booming, and manga lending shops did a brisk business throughout Osaka and Tokyo. Tatsumi and many of his peers were entrenched in the highly competitive manga-publishing scene, often producing works for several publications at once, and on occasion completing more than fifty illustrated pages in a single day for some manga periodicals.

Disturbed by their public attacks on manga in the late 1950s, and unsatisfied with the stagnant, somewhat less creative industry, Tatsumi and several others with the need and desire to nurture the growth of manga as a medium, set out to divide the industry into manga that was meant for children, and that which was meant for more mature audiences. The result was the "Gekiga Workshop."

Though gekiga was a moderate success, it did not have nearly the impact on Japanese culture that the counterculture comics had on American culture in the 1960s and '70s. As the popularity of manga grew, the production became more commercialized. Alternative movements such as gekiga quickly faded into near obscurity, and were later replaced in ideology by the Nouvelle Manga movement. The Nouvelle Manga movement is an artistic movement focussed on uniting Franco-Belgian and Japanese comic authors and artists, to explore the potential for the bande dessinée to move beyond genre-based storytelling, and to assist manga that focusses on social criticism, works that are not often translated, in finding an audience beyond Japan.

Tatsumi, however, is still at work to this day. Though not as commonly recognized a name as Tezuka, he is still known for the impact he has had on manga and continues to produce original work to this day. For the past eleven years, he has worked on a single project, an 820-page graphic memoir detailing his career as a manga and

gekiga artist, beginning with the end of the Second World War and continuing to 1959, when gekiga began to take shape as an independent force in Japanese manga culture. Titled *A Drifting Life*, it will be published by Drawn & Quarterly in Spring 2009, continuing their efforts to bring as much of Tatsumi's catalogue of work to an English-language audience as possible. Though a far more complex and detailed undertaking than any of the three previous Tatsumi books that Drawn & Quarterly has published, *A Drifting Life* represents the continued efforts of Oliveros and Tomine to bring awareness not only to the quality and breadth of Tatsumi's work, but to the impact that his career has had on the history of the manga industry in Japan.

## 5: THE TRANSLATION AND EDITORIAL PROCESS FOR A DRIFTING LIFE

*“And no matter what nationality, most readers will probably be able to relate to the emotions Tatsumi depicts. We may not like them, for some of them are ugly, and some of them are straight out of the collective human id. But we will probably recognize them, and we can probably learn from them.”*<sup>32</sup>

–Frederik L. Schodt, from the introduction to Yoshihiro Tatsumi’s *Good-Bye*

While editorial work has been a part of comic publishing since the 1940s, the specific role or roles an editor normally plays in this medium are decidedly different. There is a conceptual rhythm to most comics and graphic novels that demands an understanding of both a textual and an illustrative syntax when making editorial decisions, because even a small change can alter the denotative or connotative meanings of the work. In addition, significant editorial changes to a comic or graphic novel beyond simple proofreading are often impossible when the finished artwork is drawn and lettered by hand rather than digitally, or when an image moves out of one panel and into another, or panels are drawn to specific and unique shapes and sizes. In these situations, it is difficult or impossible to digitally move panels to accommodate editorial needs. Editing such work would be much like editing a painting.

The English edition of Yoshihiro Tatsumi’s *A Drifting Life* demanded heavy editorial intervention in several areas. Many of these are similar to traditional text-editing functions, but they are unique to this title because it is a graphic work and a translation, and also because Tatsumi has incorporated detailed political, economic, and artistic information to paint a cultural and historical portrait of Japan in the years following World War II.

### **5-1: Translating the Text**

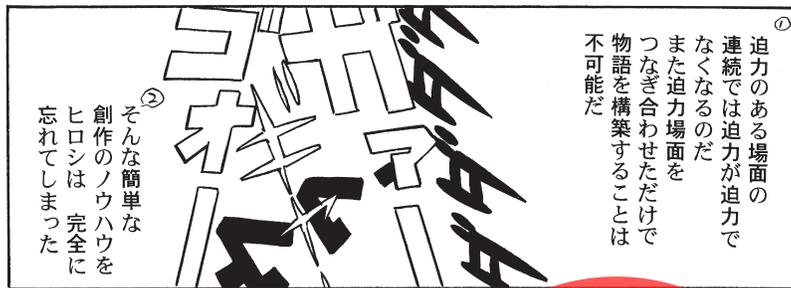
The first editorial demand was the most obvious: translating the text. At 820 pages, *A Drifting Life* is an enormous work that covers a fourteen-year time span – from 1945 to 1959 – and includes rich historical and social information throughout. The translation of a text this long and detailed had to be done in several incremental steps. The first and, one might argue, most important of these was fact checking.

To illustrate the period of time in which the story takes place, Tatsumi placed hundreds of real-life cultural references in the text: the films and music that were popular at the time; incidents and events that shaped the news; novels that inspired Tatsumi's doppelganger in the book, Hiroshi Katsumi, and his peers; Shakespearean references; and of course, examples of manga publications that shaped the evolution of the industry.

It was the task of Taro Nettleton, the translator hired by Drawn & Quarterly for this project, to study every single sign, label, and bit of text in every panel in the book, researching and verifying the accuracy of everything, be it the historical information and discoveries that characterized the cultural transitions occurring in Japan in the wake of the Second World War, or references to the films, media, and other elements of popular culture that were shaping the consciousness of the country's youth through the 1950s.

Nettleton, who lives in Japan, was a PhD candidate with the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester in New York, and was introduced to Drawn & Quarterly by Adrian Tomine. Though all three of Drawn & Quarterly's Tatsumi collections had been translated by Yuji Oniki, who has also translated more than thirty Japanese titles into English, Nettleton had been brought in to the ongoing Tatsumi project during the most recent publication of Tatsumi's work, *Good-Bye*, as an additional translator. Nettleton also translated *Yuichi Yokoyama: Travel*, by the manga artist Yuichi Yokoyama (2008). Following the completion of his work on *Good-Bye*, Nettleton was hired as the sole translator for *A Drifting Life*.

With an overabundance of detail in each of the books' forty-eight chapters, even



Panel 4: "Now Showing:  
PARAMOUNT PICTURES  
Grace Kelly in  
THE COUNTRY GIRL  
Bing Crosby  
William Holden

\*Figure 2: A Drifting Life, page 369.

The image illustrates a movie billboard as presented on page 369 of A Drifting Life. The highlighted text next to the fourth panel is an example of the billboard's information as it appeared in the translated Word documents.

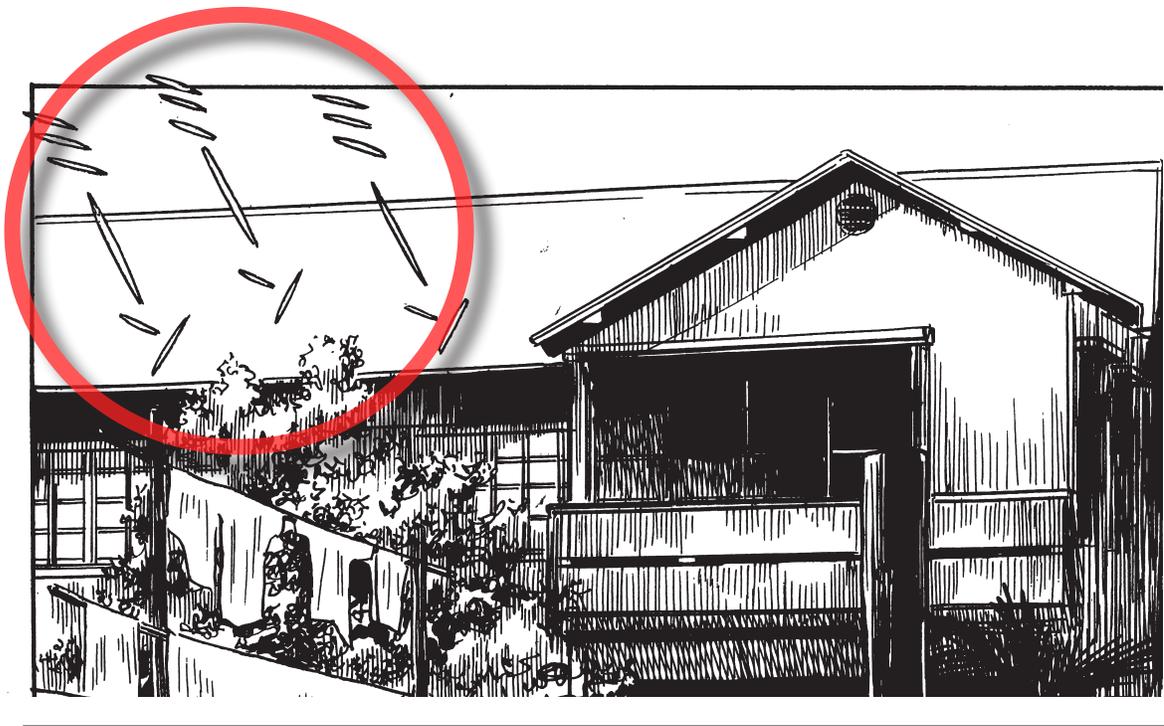
something as simple as the title of a film carried a myriad of challenges. As a common example, foreign films released in Japan are given Japanese titles that, more often than not, have little to do with the original title. As a result, Nettleton was forced to discover the titles of many of these films, mostly English and French productions, by searching the peripheral details – what actors performed in the film, who directed it, when it was released, etc. A glance at the notational references in figure 2 on the previous page speaks to the difficulty of this task.

The next step in creating an accurate translation of the text had to do with dialect. In different parts of Japan unique dialects are spoken – an Osaka dialect, for example, is considered rough and heavily textured, much different in tone than a native Tokyo dialect. The cultural message in an Osaka dialect is that such an individual belongs to more of a “merchant class.” Finding an equivalent English-language tone or dialect to represent an Osaka dialect was deemed impossible without resorting to North American stereotypes (i.e. the Southern drawl, the New York Jew). By choosing not to employ a similar or comparable North American dialect, which would negatively affect the didactic cultural tone of the work, the editor allows the translated dialogue to present the inflections of the various cultural classes through word choice alone, relying on attitude and slang terminology to convey the differences between the social classes.



\*Figure 3: *A Drifting Life*, page 308 (panel 4 isolated in frame).

Finally, a common difficulty in translating comics or graphic novels from any language is the issue of onomatopoeia. Comics and graphic novels often use illustrated and stylized sound effects to emphasize elements of a scene where drawings and dialogue alone do not suffice. This feature is especially prominent in manga, where the sound effects are often illustrated prominently, as an integral component to the artwork rather than an additional artistic flourish. However, the trick with translating sound effects from one language to another is that not every culture has a word to denote a specific sound. The clearest example in *A Drifting Life* is the sound of cicadas buzzing.



\*Figure 4: *A Drifting Life*, page 454 (panel 3 isolated in frame).

The Japanese characters that denote the sound of cicadas buzzing.

This particular sound effect was used on several dozen pages in the book to help invoke summertime and the sensation of heat, and it was also a sound effect that had no comparable English equivalent. If translated directly it would read incoherently as “MIIIN MIIIIIN MIN,” which would be more confusing to an English reading audience

than the original Japanese. In the case of cicadas buzzing, and several other sound effects that had no English equivalent, Tomine decided to retain the Japanese sound effects in the artwork so as to maintain the integrity of the work, but also to give an explanation and perhaps a direct translation in the accompanying appendix.

### **5-2: The First Editorial Check**

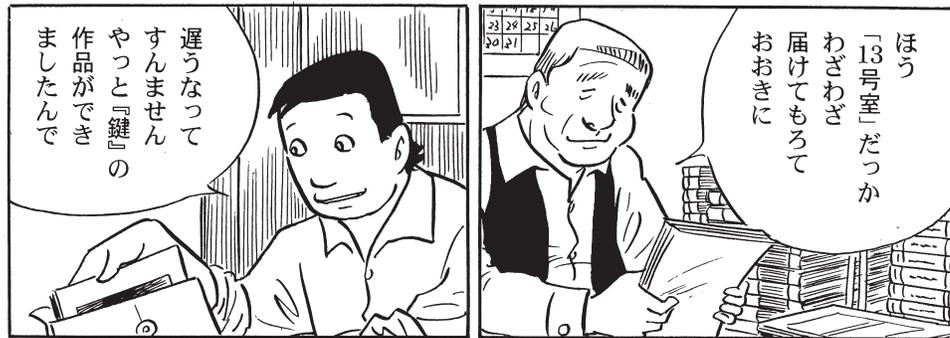
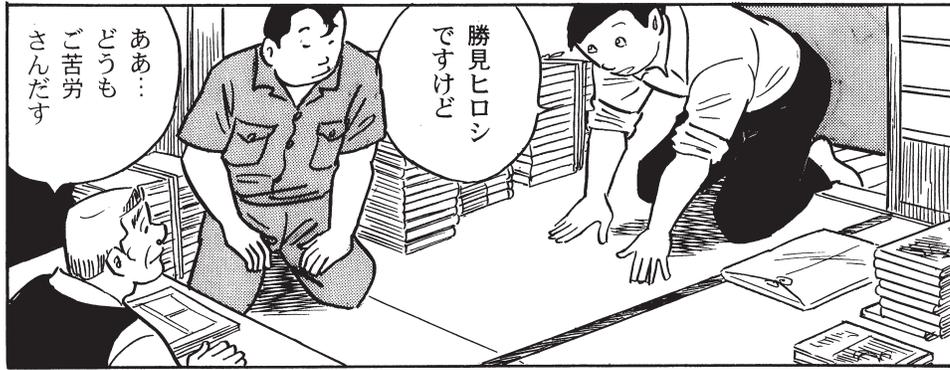
Once Nettleton had completed the translation, the information was compiled into three separate Microsoft Word documents. Volume 1 covered pages 1 to 272; volume 2, pages 273 to 548; and volume 3, pages 549 to 820. All told, there were 448 typed pages of translation notes that needed to be checked. This was the first part of the process that I had been tasked with. The completion of this first English-language check proved to be a three-part process.

The first step, which I found to be the most difficult, especially since I do not speak Japanese, was determining which translated text belonged in which panel. Although Nettleton had translated every page of the text, he had broken up the translation notes into page-by-page blocks, not panel-by-panel ones. Therefore, I read through the translation notes with a photocopy of the original Japanese product beside me, and figured out which text in the translation matched up with the actions or events in the panels on the corresponding page. The task was made more difficult by the fact that it was done without the assistance of Nettleton, who was living in New York at the time. The other complicating factor was the difference in the process of reading and comprehension between Japanese and English, specifically in the direction of reading. Japanese literature and manga are read from right to left, not left to right as with English. While Tatsumi, who does not speak any English, had taken it upon himself to rearrange many of the panels so that the progression would make sense when the reading direction was reversed, there were still many panels that consisted of a conversation between people that had been left in their original positioning – in manga, the dialogue

balloons on the right are the first to be read. These panels had to be considered carefully when identifying which selections of the English translation matched up with the corresponding panels of the Japanese original, so that I did not get confused by any disparities between the translation and the original.

Another notable difficulty in discerning which panels and text belonged together had to do with movie billboards; store signs and banners; comic book, magazine, and book titles; and maps and locations. In Nettleton's translation, these details were lumped together in large blocks of text, again with only page breaks, no panel breaks. To identify the panel breaks on these pages, I took a flexible approach to the translation proof, beginning in whatever manner presented the clearest point of entry. On occasion, that meant beginning with the last identifiable sign or billboard and working backwards through the remaining panels, matching up the text as closely as possible.

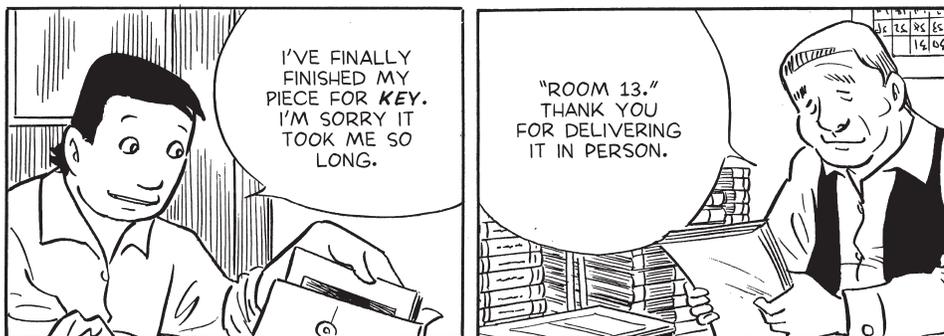
Once this first task had been completed, the next step was to go through each page and decide which panels still needed to be rearranged or "flopped." Flopping is the process of copying a single panel onto a separate Photoshop document, creating a mirror image of the original panel, and pasting the reversed image over the original. Ordinarily, flopping is avoided wherever possible to retain the original illustrations, but in panels where more than one person was talking, it was sometimes unavoidable. In these instances it was a necessary evil to accommodate the habits of English-language readers. While it may sound simple, there is much more to flopping than simply turning the image around. Comics and graphic novels are characterized by a certain amount of illustrative syntax. This illustrative syntax is apparent in the flow of one panel into another, whether on the same row, from one row to the next, or even from page to page. All the images on a page function in tandem with one another as a spatial and literary narrative, and if the physical positioning or direction of one panel is altered in any way, the change can affect the flow of the story, the aesthetics of the surrounding panels, or as in certain extreme cases, affecting surrounding pages.



\*Figures 5 & 6: A Drifting Life, page 590 (panels 4-6 isolated in frame).

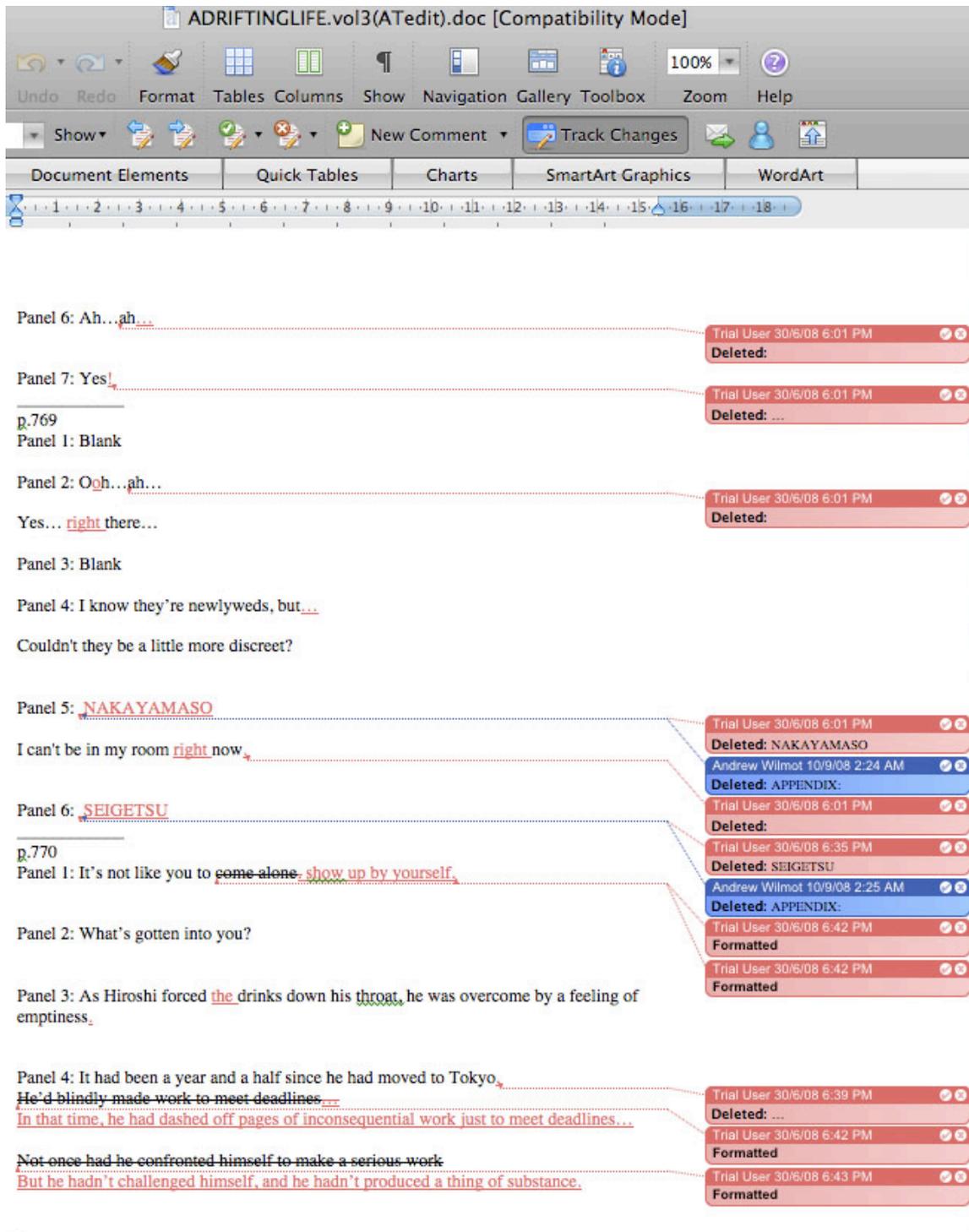
Top image: the original Japanese.

Bottom image: the “flopped” English version.



The need to flop panels at this early stage occurred several times throughout the book, usually because conversational flow in the translation contradicted the images as they appeared in the original. The top image on the previous page is the untouched original. Hiroshi, the character on the right of the first panel, is the first to speak, introducing himself to a prospective publisher – the white-haired man on the left. To correct the conversation flow for an English-speaking audience, the top panel had to be flopped so that Hiroshi, now on the left, was visibly the first to speak. However, the two subsequent panels also needed to be flopped in order to maintain the continuity of the images in respect to the background details and the lines of sight for each character. Had the two bottom panels not been flopped from their original direction, the page would still make sense on a purely textual level, but the lack of continuity in the details of the images would have disrupted the carefully arranged composition of the page, adversely affecting the illustrative syntax. This is a relatively simple example; the necessity for more detailed and difficult flopping became apparent when the working first draft of the English-language version began to be constructed. Because of the size and scope of the project, as well as the immense variety and relative simplicity of design in the environments and backgrounds throughout the book, there was little concern about having to flop a panel or series of panels in one part of the book, only to have that same environment appear as a mirror image at a later point. The primary concern was the more immediate visual and textual needs of each scene.

The third and final step in completing the first check was to read through the story from start to finish, ensuring that the English translation read as a single cohesive narrative, and simultaneously checking the translation for grammatical and structural errors. At this point, less concern was paid to the historical and cultural accuracy of Nettleton's translation, which was to be dealt with in the next step, and more to the basics of the language used. Because this was only a link in a chain of editorial passes by several people, all changes were tracked in the actual Word document. That way,



\*Figure 7: A Drifting Life, sample of the translated Word document.

The red and blue boxes on the right side track all editorial changes made on the first proof of the translation.

Nettleton, Tomine, and I were able to work with the document more efficiently, and to keep the various stages of editing visible on one document.

Finally, any significant problems were noted in a separate editorial summary, which listed all outstanding questions on the translation. These questions were to be sent back to Nettleton once the initial editorial passes had been made. For example, in a number of instances, I discovered that a single dialogue balloon on a page had been missed in the translation, or, in the most blatant situation, page 70 had been overlooked in its entirety. Once this editorial pass had been completed, the Drawn & Quarterly offices in Montreal sent the translated document and my subsequent editorial notes to Tomine in California, where, as editor-in-chief of the project, he would go over my work and complete his own editorial pass through it. He would make certain that there were no further questions or concerns on the translation of certain cultural and historical details, and that Nettleton's translation fit stylistically with that of the three previously published Tatsumi books.

Until this point, much of the work that had been done on *A Drifting Life* was preparatory. With the translation and the first proof complete, the next step of the editorial process was in the hands of Tomine. His purpose, at this point, was twofold: to stylistically edit the manuscript, improving its readability by finding solutions to some of the more cumbersome Japanese-to-English aspects of the translation, and to match this text to the tone and voice of the three previous Tatsumi books published by Drawn & Quarterly.

### **5-3: The Second Editorial Check**

Once Tomine's stylistic edits to the translation had been digitally tracked onto the same Word document and e-mailed back to the Drawn & Quarterly offices in Montreal, the next step was for me to do a second check of the three documents, again looking for any grammatical mistakes in Nettleton's original English translation and also

checking the changes that Tomine had suggested in his separate editorial notes, not to mention what he had already inserted into the three translated Word documents. Many of Tomine's suggestions and changes related to the readability of the text in terms of the cultural, historical and pop-culture references throughout the book. In some cases, it was necessary to clean up the translation to exclude some of the more detailed information, to make the book more accessible to an English-reading audience. This tactic was not used in names of famous individuals, but more for obscure information that would not necessarily be important enough to be included in the appendix. For example, the translation of the two panels on page 323 read as follows:

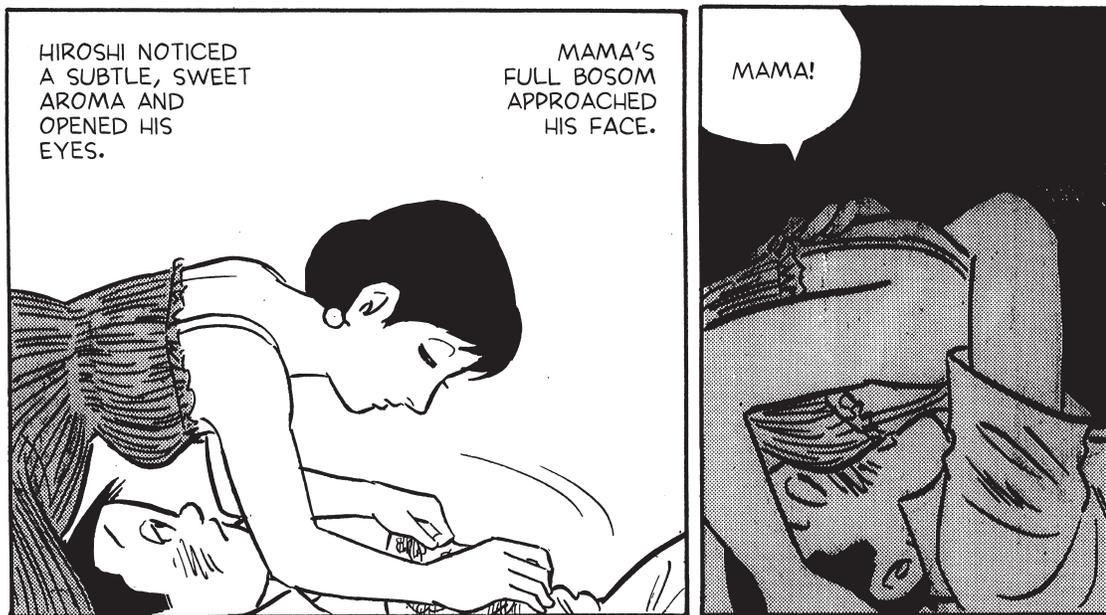
**Panel 1: On September 26th of that year, "Toya Maru," a Japanese ferry that traveled between Aomori and Hakodate, sank in the Sea of Japan. It was the worst disaster in history to occur there.**

**Panel 2: The ferry capsized under torrential waves caused by Typhoon 15. It is estimated that 1,155 people aboard were killed or went missing. Sadly, only 159 were rescued.**

The issue with this narration was not the name of the ferry that sank, but with the title of the typhoon, "Typhoon 15." In much the same way that North America names its hurricanes each year, Japan names its typhoons. On September 26, 1954, Typhoon No. 15 – Marie – struck, sinking the Toya Maru ferry. However, rather than an explanation of the relatively unimportant nomenclature of the event in the narration or in the appendix, Tomine's editorial suggestion was to alter the first sentence of the second panel to read: "The ferry capsized under torrential waves caused by a typhoon." The change was subtle, but it was practical in keeping the narrative moving at a steady and comprehensible pace, as were many other changes of this kind that followed.

Occasionally, nicknames and slang terms caused difficulty in the translation by

creating potentially awkward or uncomfortable moments for English readers. These elements were noted separately in the compiled editorial summary as requiring a second pass by Nettleton to try and find ways to work around these problems without adversely affecting the readability or cultural intricacies of the work. The most obvious example in *A Drifting Life* is in Hiroshi's first genuine romantic tryst: Mama. "Mamasan," a title usually given to the matrons of geisha houses, has come into common cultural use to refer to bar hostesses. This wouldn't be an issue were it not for the Oedipal theme that blatantly but inadvertently presents themselves in the following example:



\*Figure 8: *A Drifting Life*, page 513 (panels 6 & 7 isolated in frame).

Another critical grammatical issue addressed in the second proof related to proper titles. Per Tomine's instructions, titles of all books, magazines, manga anthologies, and films were to be italicized, whereas all short stories, comics and comic strips, and songs were to be put in double quotation marks. The difficulty with this step was purely a cultural one: Nettleton had translated all of these elements throughout the book in the same manner: in quotation marks. Because so little information about

certain post-war magazines and manga anthologies is today, there was no ready reference to help in discerning which titles needed to be italicized, and which needed quotation marks; this task could be accomplished only by undertaking multiple read-throughs.

After this had been completed, I created another editorial summary for Nettleton, Tomine, and Oliveros. In this document I compiled all notes, questions, and problems remaining from the previous editorial checks and Tomine's own suggestions. This way, all parties could see the progress of the editorial work and the difficulties that still remained.

## 6: TEXTUAL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

“The durability of Tatsumi’s work is impressive... In terms of tone and style, this work shares an obvious kinship with the ‘alternative’ or ‘literary’ comics that began proliferating in North America in the mid-1980s (and continue to thrive today), yet it predates much of that work by as much as three decades.”<sup>33</sup>

–Adrian Tomine, from the introduction to Yoshihiro Tatsumi’s *The Push Man and Other Stories*

With the editorial work in full swing, production on the book continued to move forward. Photocopies of the manuscript had arrived in the Drawn & Quarterly office, sent by Tatsumi’s agent. Because there were no digital files of the work, the first step was to scan the pages into a computer one by one using a large-format flatbed scanner, a process that took weeks. Once scanned, the digital pages were transferred from the scanning computer, via USB memory sticks, to an external hard drive, where they were compiled in a folder labelled “Gekiga Raw Scans.”

### 6-1: Clean-up and Mute Files

One of the largest and most time-consuming aspects of the production at this early stage was the creation of the “mute” files. In comic-book publishing, a mute file is a page that has had all text – original dialogue, narration, and sound effects – digitally removed using Photoshop. Often this task is done in order to prepare an original English-language title for foreign publication. However, in the case of *A Drifting Life*, the purpose was reversed: all dialogue, narration, and sound effects were removed so that the translated English text could be imported into the digital pages, once all the editing had

been completed.

Before a mute file could be made, the scanned images had to be cleaned up. Every page was scanned upside down, in grayscale, and at the scanner's maximum resolution of 600 DPI (Dots Per Inch). To ensure a high print quality, four adjustments had to be made to each page. First, each page needed to be rotated 180 degrees. Second, each image would need to be doubled in size to 1200 DPI; at a higher resolution, the images on each letter-sized page would look cleaner and crisper when reduced to a smaller size for printing. Third, the threshold for each image had to be increased from the standard 128 to 144, which was discovered to produce the cleanest and crispest blacks, converting the grayscale of the scanned page into a high-contrast black-and-white image. And finally, each image's mode needed to be changed from grayscale to bitmap in order to reduce the file to only two colours, a step that was critical to simplify the information, reduce the size of the file and remove the need for halftone screening when printing. Due to the limited capabilities of the scanner, the most efficient way to make these changes for all 820 pages was, using Photoshop, to program a set of Actions that recorded these four steps, and then to apply that set of Actions to an entire batch of files – in this case, those in the “Gekiga raw scans” folder – which would be automatically adjusted as directed, page by page.

Once the actions had been completed, each page was brought into Photoshop and all text was carefully removed from each page, one at a time. In many panels, the removal of the sound effects left a gap beneath the text that needed to be filled by copying another section of the same background and pasting it in place where needed. The new section of background would then be adjusted or redrawn as necessary, but minimally – only enough so as not to disrupt the integrity of the original artwork. The goal with this step was to make the artwork look as if there had never been a sound effect overlaying it in the first place. Once the text was removed, each page was saved in a separate folder called “Gekiga Sanstext.”

## 6-2: The First Draft

With the second check complete, the next part of the process was to produce a functional English-language first draft of the entire book. This would be done by importing the text directly from the three translation documents into the mute panels on the pages in the “Gekiga Sanstext” folder. Before starting, there were several factors regarding style and appearance to be considered.

Tomine, working directly with Drawn & Quarterly, had helped design both a custom font and method of lettering for the previous three Tatsumi books Drawn & Quarterly had published, and this design concept was also to be used in *A Drifting Life*. The font, called “Tatsumi,” has two faces: regular and bold italic. The regular “Tatsumi” font was the default, used for all dialogue and narrative text throughout the book. The bold italic font was reserved for names of books, magazines, films, and manga anthologies.

TATSUMI REGULAR

*TATSUMI  
BOLD ITALIC*

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\*Figure 9: Examples of the two “Tatsumi” fonts used in *A Drifting Life*.

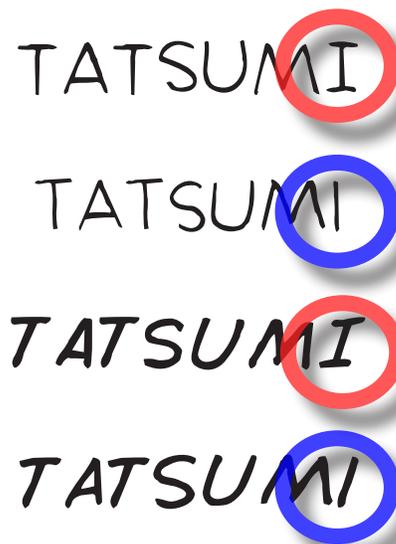
The regular was used for all dialogue and narrative text.

The bold italic was used for all titles of works.

The second element of style that needed to be taken into consideration was the placement of the text in the individual panels. In the previous Drawn & Quarterly Tatsumi publications, the dialogue balloons had been designed with a large amount of white space, as a means of maintaining a strongly minimalist design sense. With these two aesthetic caveats acknowledged, I was ready to begin constructing the first draft.

With one of the three digital translation documents open, I highlighted a selection of text in the Word document – dialogue or narration – and copied it. Next, using Photoshop and the Text tool, I stretched a text box over top of an existing mute dialogue balloon, with all four corners of the box extending past the balloon’s perimeter. With that same tool still selected, I pasted the copied text of the translation into the text box, then manipulated it within the shape of the box so that the dialogue was centred in the dialogue balloon, leaving as much surrounding white space as possible without compromising the readability of the text or hyphenating unnecessarily.

Before deselecting the Text tool, I reviewed the dialogue or narration: first, for any titles that needed to be italicized or put in quotation marks; second, for any last-minute spelling or grammatical errors; third, for one last stylistic flourish: the upper case *I*. For both the regular and bold italic versions of the Tatsumi font, a variation on the design can be selected by holding down the shift key. This does not create an upper or lower case letter, as both Tatsumi fonts are uppercase by default, but it provides a slightly altered version of the letter.



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\*Figure 10: Examples of the normal and shifted variations of the two “Tatsumi” fonts.

The capital “I” of the first and third examples never appears in any Tatsumi book. Instead, only the lower case variations are used.

The purpose of this special character is to retain a hand-drawn aesthetic throughout the book, by using a variation of the font whenever a letter occurred two or more times in close proximity in any direction. The one instance where this practice is discarded is in respect to the upper case letter I. As a lettering design choice, in all Tatsumi books the upper case I is discarded in favour of the more minimalist lowercase version. Therefore, in every segment of dialogue or narration that was copied and pasted into a panel, every capital I had to be found and changed into the lowercase character, to keep the stylistic parameters set by the three previous Tatsumi books.

This process, as illustrated by the examples on the following page, demonstrates how to import dialogue or narration into a fairly conventional page. Aside from the need to flop the final panel on the given example, nothing else severely complicated matters. On occasion, though, the need to flop an image could not be recognized in the earlier editing stages. When directly importing the text into the mute pages, it sometimes became necessary to flop a single panel in order to accommodate basic dialogue or narrative text that suddenly did not fit with the images in the panel. Usually this happened as a result of the translated text being reversed to read left-to-right; the artwork in its original form was drawn specifically to accommodate the Japanese text in its original placement, and as such the text would not fit among the images unless the panel was flopped. In a similar fashion, a panel might have narrative text on the right side and dialogue on the left, and if the narrative text were a preamble to the depicted scene, the panel would have to be flopped for the sake of comprehension. However, the instances where greater difficulties lay with flopping, and where the need could not be discovered until editing through the production of the first draft, were in respect to the details of specific page structures or individual illustrations.

When multiple panels of conversation were brought into the scenario, the complexity of the page dynamics and illustrative syntax became more complex. In a sense, importing the text into the mute pages was a dynamic editorial structure that relied



\*Figures 11 & 12: A Drifting Life, page 393 (final Japanese and English versions).

Note the white space in each dialogue balloon, the italicized font in panel 4, and the flopped fifth panel, done to accommodate the conversation's direction.

entirely on visual acumen and the physical needs of the text. While not all of these complexities were obvious during the first and second checks of the translation, they became apparent when the English text was brought into the working document. Page 763 of *A Drifting Life* (see figures 13 and 14 on the following page) illustrated a prime example of this delicate situation in a conversation between the book's protagonist, Hiroshi (with the toque), and one of his friends, Masahiko Matsumoto.

In the English first draft, panels 1 to 4 have been flopped, even though only one person speaks in each panel. The reason for this can be seen in a careful examination and comparison of panel 4 on each page. Matsumoto's two dialogue balloons differ considerably in size. In the Japanese manuscript, the smaller balloon on the right had less dialogue inside, and the larger left balloon had much more dialogue. When translated into English, the smaller portion of dialogue would now be on the left, but the larger portion of dialogue would not fit into the balloon on the right. The panel needed to be flopped to accommodate the larger amount of text in the second dialogue balloon. But there was a catch – the continuity of the page. When the fourth panel was flopped, the lines of sight in the first three panels were altered. First, to compensate for the fact that Matsumoto's eyes now faced to the right instead of the left, the second panel immediately above needed to be flopped. That way, Matsumoto's line of sight remained consistent from one row of images to the next. Second, there was now a discontinuity in the conversation, as Matsumoto's gaze had shifted, but Hiroshi's had not. To compensate, the first and third panels on the page were flopped in order to “fix” the sight lines between the two characters.

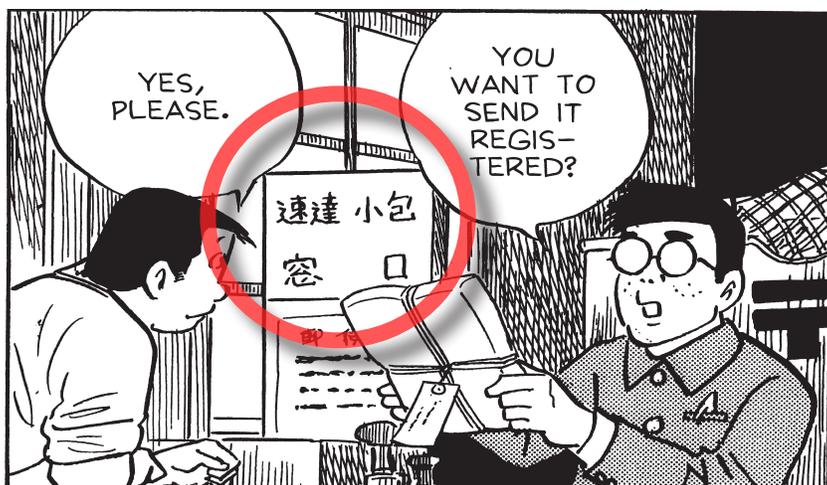
In some instances, an editor may have noted that a panel should be flopped to correct the conversational flow, yet a flop may not have been possible due to other details in the scene. For example, a background detail, most likely text, would be compromised if the panel were flopped. In figure 15 on the following page, the man on the right of the panel is supposed to speak first, asking Hiroshi, on the left, a question about the parcel



he is mailing. Such a flop would seem simple, as this panel is isolated from the flow of the panels surrounding it. However, if the panel were flopped, the Japanese text in the background – which, as part of the artwork, is not to be erased and translated into English – would appear mirrored in the English publication. The situation in figure 16 is much the same, though it is the “Nakayamaso” sign at the far right of the panel that would have been compromised had the panel been flopped. While these examples may seem relatively benign, it is not so much a question of readability as it is of maintaining the integrity of the publication. Unless absolutely necessary, the artwork was to be left intact. Even if that had not been the case, in certain instances it would not have been possible to flop the background text. As with several examples throughout the book, the background text in question was often placed or illustrated in such a manner that it could not be separately flopped. This can be seen in figure 16 on the next page, where the “Nakayamaso” sign is obstructed by the vertical shading strokes.

To correct the flow of conversation in either of these two examples, a slight adjustment to the artwork had to be made – Photoshop was used to redraw the dialogue balloons. While interference with the artwork is usually to be avoided at all costs, this is a procedure only used when there is not other way to correct the flow of dialogue. Each balloon is intact, if possible, except that the tail of each that indicates which character is speaking is shifted so that it points to the other character, and then the dialogue in each balloon is swapped. If the swapped dialogue doesn’t fit in the new balloon, the parameters of the balloon are altered as needed, once again minimizing the collateral effect on the surrounding artwork. Any gaps in the background image left by the shifting of the tails is then corrected in the same manner as in eliminating the Japanese sound effects from the mute files. It isn’t the most elegant solution to the problem, but it solves it without compromising the background details.

The final task in constructing the first draft was to deal with the question of signs, banners, posters, book titles, and the like. When these elements appeared in a frame as



\*Figures 15 & 16: *A Drifting Life*, pages 567 (top) and 778 (bottom).

The circles indicate the Japanese text that prevented these panels from being flopped in order to accommodate their conversational flow.



SIGN: NAKAYAMASO

individual objects or signs, with nothing else in the panel that required translation, the mandate was to copy and paste the direct translation immediately under that panel, as in figure 16 on the previous page: the caption “Sign: Nakayamaso” is a direct translation of the part of the panel that has been circled. When several of these elements appeared in a single panel, a caption would be ineffective. In these instances, the translated segments were noted in a separate file to be made into an appendix for the back of the book.

## 7: THE HOME STRETCH

*“I had a lot of frustration that I wanted to get out in my work, in a way. I wasn’t thinking of my readers. In a way, I succumbed to the idea that my works couldn’t be a big hit anyway so I might as well create the work that I wanted to create and express what I was feeling.”<sup>34</sup>*

–Yoshihiro Tatsumi, author of *A Drifting Life*

With the English text in place, there was now a working first draft of the book for all parties to use as the point of reference for all future steps. The bulk of the editorial work had been completed, but the project was still not quite ready to enter the design phase. A number of steps and editorial tasks regarding the English-language first draft still remained, specifically in respect to the changes that still needed to be made, and the material that simply could not be inserted into the individual pages.

### **7-1: The Editorial Summary**

Compiled as a series of questions, concerns, and inconsistencies noted for Nettleton, Tomine, and Oliveros to address, the editorial summary for *A Drifting Life* had gone through several revisions since the beginning of the project. This version of the summary was intended to be a master copy that would pull together the notes taken from the first and second editorial checks, all of the notes made in Tomine’s edit of the translation, and all notes or problems that emerged during the development of the English-language first draft. The final summary was constructed as a Word document with every notation identified by page and panel, and then written out in full detail. The final summary was given a colour breakdown for ease of reference: all queries or notations for Nettleton to review were highlighted in red; all queries direct from Tomine

Page 6, panel 7: Hurry up and let me take a look, Okimasa! (dialogue edit)

Page 8, panel 3: note – Not sure about the spelling of Tezuka’s first name. Better to leave it as “Osamu”.

Page 21, panel 5: Hey Moron, watch where you’re going! (dialogue edit)

Page 41, panel 8: Use Osamu, not Osmaushi – clarify with Taro that this is okay

Page 46, panel 6: I am delighted to see all your healthy, tanned faces! (dialogue edit)

Page 58, panel 3: “sometime”, not “some time”. (dialogue edit)

Page 62, panel 1: Insert text in panel as indicated in translation. (panel doesn’t have any text in it, but we should use Taro’s translation here, otherwise the following panels won’t make sense).

Page 70: Needs full translation.

Page 76: Check the spelling of the name “Suihou” per Adrian’s suggestion.

Page 125: No translation for first bubble in panel 5.

Page 126: Add in the singing text in panel 3 – unique font required?

Pages 129 and 130 are misnumbered in the corners – go by the file names.

Page 134: no translation for second bubble in panel 3.

Page 149: Replace Japanese text in panel 5, translation underneath.

Page 188, panel 3: Need Taro’s clarification on the line “That’s ‘Home Asahi’” as it is confusing to read.

Page 212, panel 1: Need explanation of sound effect, otherwise omit – ask Taro to clarify if possible.

Page 223 and 224 misnumbered – flip them around. Page 223 missing (not scanned)

Page 225: Rearrange word balloons in panel 4 so that the man selling the materials to Hiroshi speaks first. Do not flip image as it will flip the text on the window in the back as well.

Page 238, panel 2: Missing line of dialogue in translation.

Page 239, panel 1: When your husband comes home... (dialogue edit in bold)

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\*Figure 17: page 1 of the editorial summary for *A Drifting Life*.

to Nettleton were highlighted in blue; and all production notes, specifically in respect to panels or dialogue balloons that needed to be altered, were left black to be dealt with during the production phase by Oliveros and Tom Devlin, Drawn & Quarterly's creative director.

The most pressing issues pointed out in the editorial summary were in reference to the translation. More specifically, several panels or individual dialogue balloons had been missed in the first translation, one entire page had not been translated, and the names of several characters and locations were occasionally spelled differently in a panel or on a page than they had been previously. Either my first check of the translation or Tomine's edit had uncovered many of these. Whereas most of the points drawn out for Nettleton after the first proof were technical points – specific panels and balloons needing work – most of Tomine's notes questioned the historical accuracy of certain events or names, and the viability of some of the more direct translations. Unlike my earlier example referencing “Typhoon 15,” many of these queries were specific to cultural or historical examples, such as magazine titles or certain types of food. On panel 1 of page 343, Tomine requested a more precise definition of “*okonomiyaki*” for the appendix, as Nettleton's translation “Japanese pancakes” did not suffice.

Beyond these translation issues, many of the points raised were production-based: namely, which panels needed minor artistic adjustments, such as shifting an object within an image without flopping a panel to compensate for narrative text that would not otherwise fit; which dialogue balloons needed to be redrawn in panels that could not be flopped, and which dialogue balloons needed to be redrawn in shape simply to fit English dialogue that would not fit in any other manner; and which Japanese text that had been eliminated in the creation of the mute files had to be put back in place. This last point became clearer when we inserted the English text and discovered certain panels where the Japanese text enhanced the artwork, and where an English translation would actually have impeded it, such as the headlines or names listed in a newspaper or

periodical, or a panel with only text in it and no illustrations, such as the handwriting of a letter (see Figure 18 on page 56). Similar circumstances, if translated into English, would have affected the work more on an artistic level, causing unnecessary intrusions into the artwork where a captioned translation would suffice.

Once Nettleton and Tomine had both reviewed the revised editorial summary, it was sent back to me with the changes and corrections noted directly on the Word document. I then implemented the suggested alterations and corrections to the translation into the English first draft as needed. This task required another careful check, this time of the completed first draft. In a specific instance such as the oedipal nature of the bar matron, “Mama,” Nettleton and Tomine decided to use “Madam” instead. Therefore, every instance in the 820 pages where “Mama” was used had to be found and changed to accommodate the new translation. Once these edits to the first draft had been completed, I revised the editorial summary once again to list the problems and questions that had not yet been resolved, and to further delineate the separate tasks that were left to be done, be it translation, editorial, or design, and which party was responsible for their completion.

## **7-2: The Appendix**

As previously mentioned, when possible, any sign, poster, billboard, etc., that appeared in *A Drifting Life* was translated as a footnote under the panel it appeared in. However, in numerous instances this method would not work. On many pages, there was simply too much background signage or information in a panel to fit any translation, even a condensed one, as a caption beneath the panel. Along this same line, many hand-drawn letters, charts, examples of comic strips, and lists of detailed publication information appeared throughout the book. To maintain the integrity of the artwork and the historical accuracy of the examples used, these panels remained unaltered and stayed in their original Japanese.



-Page 570

-Panel 4 APPENDIX:

“Please accept our sincere apologies for the many troubles we have caused with the unfortunate recent incident at our office.

The president returned safely last month and we are currently taking every possible measure to get back on our feet as soon as possible. We will let you know as soon as we have a better idea of when we might start operations again. When our operations are back in order, we would be very grateful to publish your work once again.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Yamamoto  
Director  
Hinomaru Bunko”

\*Figure 18: A Drifting Life, page 570.

The circled panel shows a hand-drawn letter that has been left in its original Japanese for the English translation of the book. A notation below the panel will direct readers to the direct translation of the letter (shown at the right) in the appendix at the back of the book.

The solution to this question that Tomine suggested, due to the important historical and cultural information in Tatsumi's book, was to separate all material that would not fit as a caption under a panel, and to compile that information into an appendix at the back of the book. After the English first draft had been completed, the translation documents were once more sifted through, this time pulling out all pertinent information that did not make it into the first draft and compiling it onto a separate Word document, identified page by page and panel by panel in the same manner as the editorial summary. The resulting 52-page document detailed, in point form, every necessary piece of information for inclusion in the appendix.

### **7-3: Proofing the English-Language First Draft**

With the English first draft and the accompanying editorial summary and appendix notes completed, the next step of this project is for Oliveros to proof the pages. This is the first time the book will be read in English, with the text and images in place on the pages. As with the translation proofs, all dialogue and narration will be checked for spelling and grammatical inaccuracies, but a couple of extra elements have been added to the equation.

First, there is the need to check the English text against the translation, to ensure that all panels have been inputted correctly and none have been missed, save for those detailed in the editorial summary. Second, and of equal importance, is to check that all of the narration and dialogue has been inputted in an aesthetically responsible manner, keeping within the boundaries that were set in place before the first draft was started (i.e. all film and book titles in the bold italic font, all short stories, songs, and magazine articles in quotations; enough white space around the placed text), as outlined in part 6 of this report.

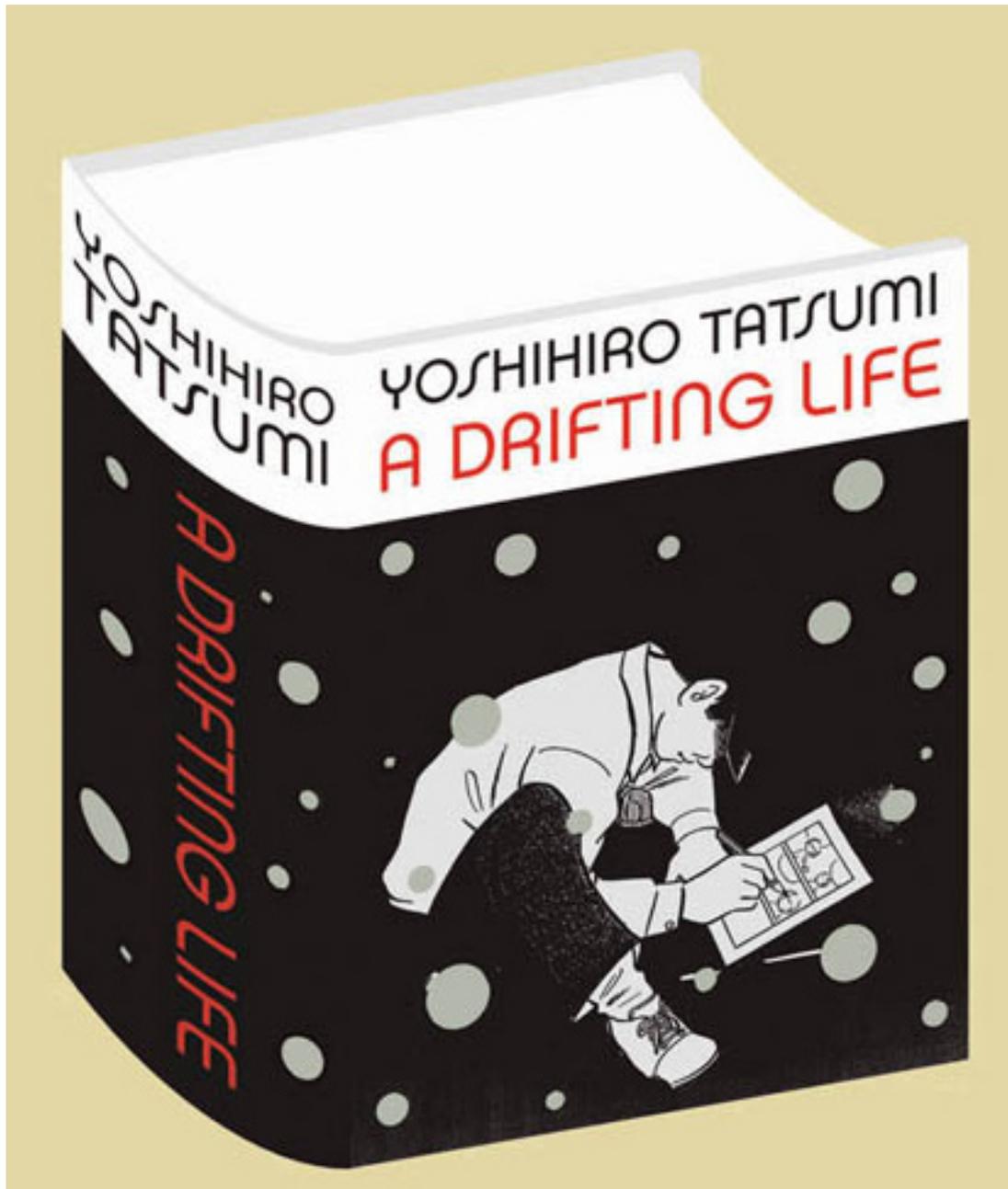
#### **7-4: Production**

After the proof of the English first draft has been finished, the next step will be to take the document out of editorial and into production. First, all of the pages of the first draft will need to be cleaned up in Photoshop. Every single page will be gone through with a fine-toothed comb: eliminating all excess marks in the margins; clearing obvious specks of ink from the interiors of the panels; and making sure that each page is free of all blemishes that can be seen by the naked eye.

To complicate matters, some panels might have been skewed slightly in the scanning process. To correct this, an individual panel will be copied into a new Photoshop document, changed from a bitmap into a grayscale image, and then rotated until the borders can be lined up with the remaining panels. Once that is done, the panel will be converted back into a bitmap and then copied back to the English page, in place of the original skewed panel. If the rotation introduces the risk of altering the in-place narration or dialogue, the text will be copied out into another blank Photoshop document, and then pasted back into the original once the panel has been straightened on the page.

By far, the largest and most time-consuming task of the production at this stage will be the implementation of sound effects. First, in respect to all sound effects that could not be translated because there is no English language equivalent, the original Japanese panels will be copied, cleaned up, and placed into the English first draft. Second, all translated sound effects will be input directly into the panels using a selection of custom fonts, and then placed in the exact same positioning as in the original Japanese document.

Once all sound effects have been put in place and all panels have been cleaned up and made ready for print, the final document will be imported into Quark Express page layout software, where the English draft of *A Drifting Life* will be constructed for the first time, from cover to cover.



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\*Figure 19: an early rendering of the cover for Yoshihiro Tatsumi's *A Drifting Life*, to be published in Spring 2009.

## 8: CONCLUSIONS

“No! I’ll never be done with *gekiga!*”<sup>35</sup>

–Hiroshi Katsumi, from *A Drifting Life*

The editorial process of *A Drifting Life* has been, to say the least, unconventional by traditional literary standards. Although the final steps in both the editorial revisions and production are yet to happen, the translation and editorial work that has been done to this point has already presented many challenges, with respect to both the difficulty and layered nature of the work, and the traditional methods of editing. This is a work that is representational of both another culture and another time, and the visual and textual editorial alterations taken to this point have been made with the utmost care and respect for the content of the original book. Though changes have been made to the original manuscript, none were done without first assessing the ramifications of such alterations or seeking other, less intrusive alternatives.

### 8-1: An Editorial Retrospective

Considering the size and scope of *A Drifting Life*, it was no surprise that the editorial design and implementation was as involved as it was. The process from the initial checking of the translation through the editorial and production phases took four months. It was very deliberate and organized in such a way that multiple parties were able to work on different facets of the project at the same time, and all toward the same end – the completion of the English first draft.

The most difficult part of the process was the first check of the translation. Reading it for the first time and having to discern which text belonged with which panel

was difficult in itself, made more so because of dense cultural elements and points of reference that appeared on nearly every single page of the manuscript. However, it was the work of flopping panels at this stage that presented most of the early difficulties. Specifically, it was the need to engage foresight in the implementation of the dialogue and narration. We had to be able to see ahead of time not only which panels would need to be flopped for conversational comprehension and flow, but also which subsequent panels would need to be flopped to maintain continuity, and this was a detailed process. Some pages had to be read several times in the original Japanese manuscript, as well as in the proposed English- language version. Once production on the first draft had been started, we found that many of the suggested flops were not necessary, yet a great many others, which we had not identified, were necessary. In the latter cases, the necessity to flop was more often than not dictated by the size of dialogue or narrative text that had to fit spatially within the dialogue balloons or white space that had been reserved for narration it. These instances were dealt with as efficiently as possible in the production of the first draft, often by flopping when there was no other alternative. In several instances, as noted in the production notes of the editorial summary, flopping could not help and the only option left was to suggest minor adjustments to the artwork.

Once the early checks had been completed, I found that the majority of the difficulties in producing and editing the book were strictly related to manual labour – specifically, the time it took to place all of the English dialogue and narration into the mute pages and to adjust all of it in accordance with the stylistic parameters of the project. Each page took between fifteen and thirty minutes to complete, so the biggest concern at this stage was the time it would take to complete the 820 pages. With a projected timeline of only a month to input all the English-language text, the completion of the English first draft went right down to the wire.

The editorial work done to this point, both textual and in respect to the visual integrity and comprehensiveness of the manuscript, has helped to produce an accurate

representation of what the published book will look like. There is still much work to do in designing the physical look of the final book, and several pages require more translation work and subsequent editorial proofs before they can be brought into the design phases, but the final artifact has begun to take shape. As a unique product in a growing graphics marketplace, *A Drifting Life* carries a heavy weight of expectations for Drawn & Quarterly, and at the same time, thanks to the process of its publication, it presents a bevy of new possibilities for editorial education – literary, visually, and culturally.

### **8-2: The Changing Face of the Industry**

To this day, the only Wikipedia entry for Yoshihiro Tatsumi is on the English Wikipedia – not even a Japanese one exists yet. Though he is considered to be the grandfather of *gekiga*, the first true alternative comic genre in Japan, his accomplishments have gone largely unnoticed in his homeland in recent years, largely due to the rampant commercialization and high export demand of more traditional forms of manga. *A Drifting Life*, for example, has never before been published as a single-volume work; in Japan, only as forty-eight installments in a manga periodical. Drawn & Quarterly's publication of the book will mark the first time that this work has ever appeared in the manner in which the creator originally intended.

The changing face of the comic-book publishing industry, not to mention the growth of and comparative ease of access to obscure and alternative cultural depths only recently made available to English reading audiences, has been of tremendous benefit for both comic-book publishers and the evolution of editorial fields of study. Foreign works like those of Tatsumi and many other Drawn & Quarterly artists can now find their audiences in a broader world scope, rather than being relegated to a specific societal corner of the globe. With this broader spectrum comes a change in technological demands and production skill sets. Editorial processes in the comic and graphic novel

industry are in the process of evolving to meet these needs, but the subset still requires far more than a traditional literary base of knowledge.

Most manga that sees publication today is translated and produced inexpensively for a wide audience. The market has quickly become saturated with titles that do not represent the best of what the manga industry has to offer. *A Drifting Life*, though, is no simple title. At 820 pages, it is a visual, literary, and cultural behemoth. The work being done by Oliveros and his staff at Drawn & Quarterly to bring this title to an English-language audience is pioneering in its scope. Their attention to detail and high production values are evident in every aspect of this title, as well as they are in every title produced by Drawn & Quarterly. Their work is without peer in the comic-book publishing industry, and it is these standards and their uncompromising methodology that have cemented their status as a world-class publisher.

As the visual component of cultures all over the world becomes more and more prominent, the nature of how we approach editorial functions is rapidly changing. For an editor to succeed in the graphica industry, he or she must develop an editorial sense that can comprehend both textual and visual organization at the same time – an artistic sensibility of sorts. The illustrative syntax that is becoming more and more critical to the production and reception of comic books and graphic novels as a legitimate literary art form has developed into a language all its own, starkly different from that of the purely literary world. Children's books have carried this inseparable combination of image and text for years now, and visual elements have made their way into more traditional novels as well; titles like Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts*, Rivka Galchen's *Atmospheric Disturbances*, and Umberto Eco's *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* also employ images, not solely as aesthetic flourishes, but as integral elements that push the story along in a manner that text alone could not do. Because of the accessibility and abundance of information on the Internet in recent years, even magazines have been forced to evolve along a more visual path. By adhering to more experimental and striking visual conceits,

they can still provide something unique: an experience beyond text-based dialogue, one that represents a changing attitude toward the structure of language and visual presentation through intertextual dialogism, the idea that as we progress and incorporate more social context into our media consumption, we open up a greater forum for dialogue between the various forms of media. And as they have done since the 1940s, comic books and graphic novels represent a significant potential for growth in this area, one that affords our culture the opportunity to evolve creatively and in unexpected ways, to explore elements of foreign cultures that may not have been accessible previously, and to expand our definition of what editorial work entails in the face of a continuously evolving visual society.

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