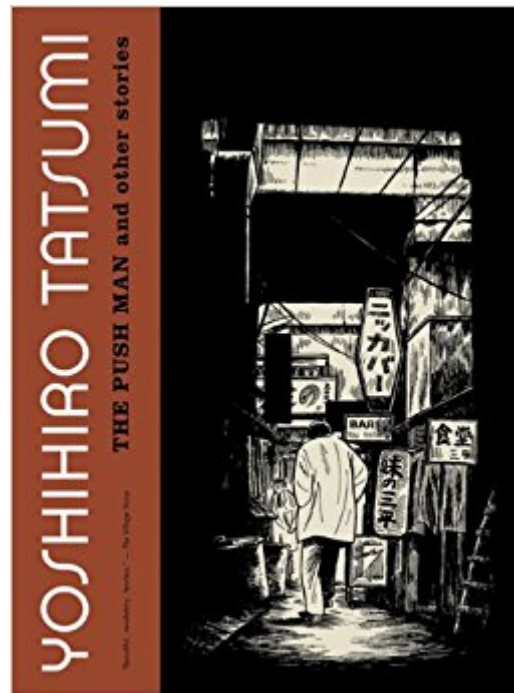




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# The Push Man And Other Stories



## Synopsis

Thirty years before the advent of the literary graphic novel movement in the United States, Yoshihiro Tatsumi created a library of comics that draw parallels to modern prose fiction and today's alternative comics. The stories collected in *The Push Man* are simultaneously haunting, disturbing, and darkly humorous. A lone man travels the country, projecting pornographic films for private individuals while attempting to maintain a normal home life. The lives of two men become intertwined when one hires the other to observe his sexual escapades through a telescope. An auto mechanic's obsession with a female TV personality turns fatal after a chance meeting between the two

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Tatsumi's brief, disturbing stories, originally published in 1969, have a tone somewhere between contemporary short fiction and EC Comics' old "shock" comics. Each hinges on some kind of prurient or sexually twisted situation: a man's bedridden lover turns out to be a physically mutated sex slave; an office worker puts on his girlfriend's makeup and clothes and has an affair with another woman; a man who disinfects telephones for a living calls a prostitute, but can't think of anything to do but pull out his disinfection kit. Produced over a short period of time, the stories are variations on a theme of social maladjustment. Tatsumi draws marvelously evocative settings, and his stories flow with dreamlike ambiguity, speeding toward the inevitable tragedies at their ends, but his characters appear practically identical. This reinforces both the repetitive nature

of his themes and Tatsumi's view of the common man's continuing struggle in a merciless world of menial jobs, impotence and abortions. Tatsumi is known as the "grandfather of Japanese alternative comics," and this is the first in a proposed series of authorized English-language collections of his work. His work anticipates American alternative comics, making it clear why American cartoonist Adrian Tomine, who edited this collection, was attracted to the work. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** Tatsumi has drawn groundbreaking comics in Japan since the 1950s, but Americans have had few opportunities to view his work. As the first in a proposed Tatsumi series edited by admiring alternative comics artist Adrian Tomine, this volume of stories from 1969 starts to make amends. Tatsumi works in a powerfully straightforward manner that eschews manga's quirks in favor of naturalism. Combining the Japanese words for drama and art, he called his style *gekiga* to set it apart from the more commercially pitched *anga*. The latter shows much about Japanese culture, but *gekiga* reveals the nation's psyche as Tatsumi depicts men living lives of quiet frustration--powerless, often sexually impotent, confined by social propriety. In one story, a factory worker mangles himself to collect an insurance payment so his girlfriend can buy a nightclub. Another portrays an auto mechanic fixated on a glamorous TV star. Others feature a sewer cleaner, a porn-film projectionist, and a "push man" who crams commuters into packed subway cars. It took American comics decades to begin tackling subject matter approaching the gravity of Tatsumi's. These 35-year-old stories are the precursors of today's serious graphic novels. Gordon Flagg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Before I read the book, I had no idea who Yoshihiro Tatsumi is. He has been called "the grandfather of Japanese alternative comics" and he certainly deserves it. *The Push Man and Other Stories* is a collection of short stories previously published in Japanese, now translated and reformatted for the western audience by Adrian Tomine. In each story, Yoshihiro Tatsumi looks at a different facet of Japanese society. The main character is always a man filled with restrained angst, going about their daily jobs, ending with a solemn note. Every tale is filled with some form of sexuality -- sex, abortion, prostitution, etc. In the story "The Push Man", we're introduced to the pusher, whose job is to get commuters into packed trains by pushing them in. One day, he helped a lady whose clothes were torn from the pushing. They spent the night together and she invited him to her place the next day.

The story ends with her sisters pushing each other away to get him. In "Telescope", a disabled guy committed suicide after being paid to watch someone else have sex. In "Test Tube", a sperm donor can't stop thinking about his recipient and eventually forced himself onto her. You can see that there are no happy endings here. The storytelling is masterly. Every story is told in a darkly comic style, short dialogues and cleanly laid out panels. Even without text, the stories will be easy to understand. Yoshihiro Tatsumi has a way of dissecting his characters, providing a very raw look at their hard and unforgiving life. The 16 stories are short. I like short if it means leaving the reader wanting more\* at the end. It's highly recommended but certainly not for everyone. (More pictures are available on my blog. Just visit my profile for the link.)

This first Drawn & Quarterly (lavish, beautiful hardcover) compilation of Yoshihiro Tatsumi's work, edited by Adrian Tomine, consists of 16 short stories, originally published in 1969. Most of them are very short, just 8 pages long, and appeared in a magazine called 'Gekiga-Young'. Two longer stories at the end of the volume are more in line with what we will find in the two later books of stories from 1970 ('Abandon the Old in Tokyo') and 1971-1972 ('Goodbye'). An alternative title for this book could be 'The worst jobs in the world'. This is a list of occupations of the protagonists of these stories (all men): \* Factory worker \* Porn movies projectionist (when porn was yet illegal) \* Garbage incinerator operator \* Massage parlor ad-man (i mean, the guy walking the street with a placard saying 'Massage Parlor / Open 10 AM - 5 PM') \* University lab intern / sperm donor \* Pimp \* Push man (one who pushes passengers into crowded rush-hour subway trains) \* Sewer maintenance worker \* Handicapped & unemployed peeping tom \* Contract killer \* Auto mechanic \* Office clerk \* Disinfectant (one that cleans & disinfects phones) \* Factory worker \* Seal authenticator at an insurance company \* ... and we don't know the job of the man in the last story, 'My Hitler', if he has one. Also, for the women, we get quite a few bar hostesses. As you can see, Tatsumi's work depicts the underbelly of the affluent urban Japanese society of the economic boom of the 60s, dealing with themes of existential alienation and sexual frustration. His focus is always humanist, he's not a Marxist toting party line slogans about the woes of the proletariat. He is direct and physical, yet elliptical and poetic at the same time. I am heavily reminded of Shohei Imamura's movies of the same period, like Criterion's 'The Pornographers' and the box-set 'Pigs, Pimps, & Prostitutes'. Now the bad news. Reading this book in one sitting can be a rather monotone affair. The stories, while good when taken on their own, tend to be very much alike when taken all together. I don't know to what extent this is Tatsumi's fault (being rather one-noted in the year 1969, certainly the 8-page limit didn't help either) or Adrian Tomine's fault (in not choosing two or three

stories that diverged from the common pattern.) Certainly the stories in later volumes are more varied in setting, structure and subject matter, as well as having some women protagonists, too. We must also remember that the natural habitat for this stuff is a bi-weekly manga magazine, not a "graphic novel". Another qualm is the "Westernized" left-to-right format, that plays havoc with the original page layout. Hey, publishers, I've been reading manga in the original Japanese format for years now, and my head have not exploded yet, it's a myth! Despite these shortcomings this is a must read for all Gekiga aficionados, or adult (as in grown-up) comics readers in general. Or, even more in general, for readers of good literature.

Gripping. Like potato chips you can't just have one. Savage, shocking, tender, at times morbidly hilarious. These are incredible short works by a master of story-telling. If you are even reading this review, that means you have gotten this far already. Buy this, borrow this, read these somehow. They will only enrich your life.

Most of the stories in this book aren't nice. After the first couple of stories, you start to feel the wincing in your face as you start a new one. They are very well illustrated and the storytelling is what makes you read every single one of them. It definitely makes me want to read his other work.

This anthology is great. It's incredibly dark, but also thought provoking. It makes you enter the minds of incredibly unsavory people, which is why this book is so special. I highly recommend it. I will be buying the other Tatsumi anthologies.

These are Yoshihiro Tatsumi's stories from 1969, part of a series promoted by another comics artist whose works I always read: Adrian Tomaine. These stories could certainly be about real people, as we are all pretty weird under the skin. The stories are almost shocking in their twisted way, unless you've read some of Tatsumi's work before. Think of the most outrageous human behavior you can imagine, and it'll show up in one of Tatsumi's stories. If you're a fan of Yoshihiro Tatsumi or Adrian Tomaine, you won't want to pass this one up.

Great Book!

Great dark short stories, not your typical manga.

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