**Definition:** **manga** from *A/V A to Z: An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Media, Entertainment and Other Audiovisual Terms*

1. Japanese printed comics regardless of genre or drawing style, generally book-length works.
2. A particular style of drawing common to the printed manga and anime generally available in the West.

*Compare anime.*

**Summary Article:** **Manga**

From *Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Literature: The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*

The "man, [man]" of manga has a wide range of meaning: involuntary, without authority or reason, arbitrary, superfluous, and reckless. There is, therefore, something potentially Gothic, or nonstandard, about these pictures ([ga, [ga]] that tend toward both caricature and monstrosity (see monstrosity). Often narrative or declarative in thrust, manga have frequently nurtured a symbiosis between words and pictures that traditionally flowed from the soft, pointed brush ([fude]) that rendered both text and image. Established anciently, this symbiosis survived the separation of word and image that occurred during the modern era and survives today as a salient aspect of postmodern culture in its graphic splendor (see contemporary gothic).

As a term, "manga" gained popular currency from about 1925. But its emergence dates to the Tokugawa period (1600–1868). *Hokusai manga* were playful sketches of miscellaneous subjects done by the ukiyoe artist, Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). But the earliest examples of reckless pictures go back much further, to the graffiti left behind by builders during the Nara period (710–94), or to the well-known scrolls *Caricatures of Animals* (Chōjū giga), attributed to the priest Toba Sōjō (1053–1140). Other examples of picture scrolls, or *emaki*, which tell their story as they unroll from right to left, include the *Hell Scrolls* (*Jigokuzōshi*, twelfth century). It aided the propagation of Buddhism with depictions of various punishments – seas of blood for murderers, endless fire for adulterers, and so forth. Another famous *emaki* is the *Night Procession of One Hundred Demons* (*Hyakki yagyō emaki*, circa sixteenth century), which graphically expresses processions of *yōkai* (evil spirits) taking to the streets on hot summer nights, fatal to anyone not protected by a Buddhist sutra.

Such scrolls were hand-painted and limited in circulation. With printing, reckless pictures became mass-produced and commercialized. To this end, moveable-type printing was tried for a short season during the first decades of the seventeenth century. But it was rejected in favor of the more plastic surface of the carved wood block that kept the calligraphic symbiosis of word and picture (and Japan's interest in Gothic expression) alive and well.

An early example of mass-produced manga for Tokugawa-period consumers were *tobae*, playful caricatures accompanied by short passages and poems. As the printing of text and image developed in a more narrative direction, various subgenres of illustrated fiction (*ezōshi* or *kusazōshi*) evolved. *Nara ehon, aakahon, aobon, and kurobon* were largely reworkings of stories from both the oral (densetsu) and written (*otogizōshi*) traditions, many of them fanciful and supernatural. Ostensibly, these thin, illustrated volumes were written for women and children. But, in truth, their readership was wide, and their subject matter increasingly adult. Indeed, *kibyōshi*, the next genre in this evolution, were witty,
often sexually explicit, highly sophisticated works that circulated within a rather tight-knit group of urban literati. They were eclipsed by the longer, more word-oriented yomihon (reading books), such as Takizawa Bakin’s (1767–1848) highly metaphorical Tale of Eight Dogs (Hakkenden), and by the densely illustrated gōkan, or composite books that were clearly intended for as wide a readership as possible. Serially produced and illustrated by artists such as Utagawa Kuniyoshi (circa 1797–1861), these often violent and moralistic tales were graphically expressive of an "end of the shogunate" (bakumatsu) decadence and of the anxiety of Japan’s "opening" to the rest of the world.

A hiatus comes with the reintroduction of type-set printing at the end of the Tokugawa period. As wood-block printing quickly phased out, the traditional tie between words and pictures weakened. Yet, at a point when type-set modern novels (kindai shōsetsu) were largely stripped of illustration, manga began a quiet resurgence by way of political cartoons done as etchings and lithographs by Westerners such as the Englishman Charles Wirgman (1832–91) and the Frenchman Georges Bigot (1860–1927). These men came to Japan to work as journalists and technically speaking, they resuscitated manga. But the impulse to visualize the grotesque (see grotesque, the) and monstrous had already become a deeply rooted part of Japan’s expressive tradition.

Post-Meiji Restoration (1868) artists, such as Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–89), produced politically oriented caricatures that marked an emerging expression of “people’s rights.” But these critiques of social policy evolved toward pictures of a more desultory sort. Appearing as erotic grotesque nonsense (ero-guro nansensu), the manga of Yokoyama Ryūichi (1909–2001) and others became fashionable during the interwar period. His Fuku-chan kept readers entertained from 1936 to 1971 with its brief dialogues and visual humor. As Japan turned increasingly to militarism in the 1930s, and during the harsh exigency imposed by World War II, repentant manga artists “converted” from their playful ways and liberal leanings and turned toward more serious endeavors, such as providing children with value-rich manga, and making propaganda leaflets for the war effort, covered with monstrous images of the demonized enemy. Manga eiga (an early form of anime or animated film) also emerged at this time.

In the postwar era, the production of manga became thematically freer, highly capitalized, and extremely lucrative. The successful career of Tezuka Osamu (1928–89) exemplifies the way that the visual rhetoric of manga was influenced by cinema, and how manga, in turn, served as an inspiration for both television and cinema (see film; television). Needless to say, photography’s (shashin) role had been a crucial influence on manga from early on. While photography stimulated the documentary, journalistic function of Meiji-period caricature, it also led to the creation of off-set printing (shashin insatsu), a process that had the effect of putting pictures back on the page. Once restored, the text-image symbiosis led to strongly narrative manga, not only the brief-format, episodic work of Hasegawa Machiko (1920–92) (Sazae-san), but also the more extended, cinematic manga of Otomo Katsuhiro (1954–) (Akira) and Masamune Shirow (1961–) (Ghost in the Shell).

Today, numerous niche markets and specialized genres have developed: boys’ manga (shōnen manga), girls’ manga (shōjo manga), young men’s manga (seinen manga), adult female manga (redīsu komikkusu), adult male manga (seinen manga), even manga for the teaching of subjects such as economics and calculus. One niche artist relevant to Gothic expression is Mizuki Shigeru (1922–), creator of the one-eyed Ge ge ge no Kitarō. Having experienced the horrors of World War II, he has focused almost exclusively on yōkai. His return to animism has been viewed as a hopeful critique of modernity, war, and violence.
Others have pushed monstrosity and metamorphosis in other, darker directions. Umezu Kazuo (1936–), the father of the so-called horror manga subgenre, is famous for his *Drifting Classroom (Hyōryū kyōshitsu)*, one of many contemporary Japanese works to embrace postapocalyptic themes. Another is Suehiro Maruo (1956–), whose highly imaginative creations, such as *Mr. Araki's Amazing Freak Show (Shōjo tsubaki)*, are marked by their references to earlier Tokugawa-period transformations. Metamorphosis, transformation, and monstrosity remain a preoccupation of manga, whether the emotional register is horror, romance, or social critique. Such expression is not always Gothic. Yet the ancient and contemporary presence of reckless pictures in Japan forces us to reconsider the meaning and definition of Gothic as a solely modern phenomenon.

**SEE ALSO:** Contemporary Gothic; Film; Grotesque, The; Monstrosity; Television.

**FURTHER READING**


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