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Doomed Hybrids: Three Cases of Fatal Mixing in the War Comics of Tezuka Osamu

Ben Whaley

“Are these people Japanese? Are they foreigners?” This is one of the initial utterances made by Kimiko upon awakening 40 years in the future in Dr. Tezuka Osamu’s (1928–1989) war comic¹ *1985 e no tabidachi* (1985, *Start to 1985*).² In this story, Japanese World War II orphans Kazuo and Kimiko time travel from the recently defeated and now occupied Japan of 1945 to Tokyo 40 years in the future. For the main characters, the central shock that trumps even the mountainous skyscrapers of 1985 Tokyo, and prompts Kimiko’s aforementioned line, is a crowded city street filled with their fellow Japanese citizens. In true Tezuka style, the Japanese passersby are all depicted with a host of patently presentational features, including blonde hair and larger-than-life eyes. They also appear healthier and more prosperous when compared to the orphans (Fig. 1). With a panicked look on his face, the shaggy-haired Kazuo quickly responds, “This place is filled with weirdoes -- let’s get out of here!” (Tezuka, 2007: 236).



Fig. 1. War orphans Kazuo (left) and Kimiko (right) time travel to Tokyo 40 years in the future in *Start to 1985*. The pair race through the streets, fleeing the crowd of seemingly racially mixed neo-Tokyoites (Tezuka, 2007:236).

It is clear that what startles the young heroes is a vision of the future in which the formerly homogeneous population of Japan has steadily become mixed with the blood of the occupying enemy, resulting in a citizenry that now cannot be easily demarcated as “Japanese” or “Western.” It is unclear whether 1985 Japan has in fact become racially mixed, or if it merely appears

this way because of an overabundance of dyed hair and Western-style clothing. Regardless, Kimiko and Kazuo’s gut reaction to simply flee the crowd is worthy of discussion. While Tezuka likely never intended for his war orphans to evoke Japanese eugenics discourse of the 1920s, *Start to 1985* and many of Tezuka’s other war comics, tonally harken back to the prewar social debate over blood as a substance capable of either stimulating or subverting the Japanese race and culture.

In particular, echoes of the *junketsu* (pure-blood)³ position championed by Katô Hiroyuki (1836–1916), an imperial adviser and administrator at Tokyo University, are clearly observed in Tezuka’s narrative. Katô argued that the intermarriage of Asians and Caucasians would give birth to a completely new hybrid category of person whose, “political and social status would be unclear and perplexing” (quoted in Robertson, 2001: 6). In addition, it was believed that this miscegenation would, over the course of several generations, result in a Japanese society that was “dangerously differentiated” and categorized by “blood anarchy” (quoted in Robertson, 2001: 6).

By holding a generally conservative view towards racial hybridization, *Start to 1985* introduces a softer variation on this “pure-blood” racial philosophy that can be traced through several of Tezuka’s war comics. I term this unique reaction to racial mixing as Tezuka’s “aversion to the hybrid.” Tezuka’s aversion to the hybrid can be defined as an unwillingness to accept mixing in myriad forms, and an accompanying narrative prejudice towards hybridized characters. Beyond simply portraying mixing as a strange and fearful phenomenon, Tezuka presents the reader with scenarios wherein hybrids (and by extension, their families) suffer great anguish because of their mixed existence. Furthermore, in the narratives examined in this essay, the only escape for a hybrid from their adverse, liminal condition is ultimately death or rebirth.

“Hybridity” refers most basically to a “making one of two distinct things,” yet the process can also consist of a “severing of a single object into two” (Young, 1995: 26). Throughout this essay, I utilize the term “hybrid” to refer to the individual manga character or characters that exhibit mixed characteristics (such as “blood,” consciousness, etc.). In addition, “mixing” is used to describe the process in which two or more of these distinct elements meld and coexist within an individual corporeal entity. I have chosen this over a more descriptive term such as “racial mixing” because Tezuka often depicts multiple varieties of mixing occurring simultaneously in his war comics.

The Tezuka corpus is replete with examples of hybridized characters. Indeed, even in some of Tezuka’s oldest and best-known series lay frank discussions about discrimination, racial conflict, and ethnic identity, drawn in equal parts from Tezuka’s own life experiences and his boundless imagination. While Tezuka’s works of the 1950s largely recoded these real-world is-

sues in the form of human-robot (*Astro Boy*), interspecies (*Kimba The White Lion*), or, rival fantasy kingdom relations (*Princess Knight*), the same cannot be said of the works produced during the final two decades of Tezuka's career. Indeed, it was only beginning in the early 1970s that Tezuka brought racial issues to the forefront of his manga, doing away with genre-specific allegories and instead directly referencing specific nations, ethnic groups, and global conflicts, in what would become his most artistically experimental and narratively ambitious works.

This essay's analyses center on three specific instances of Tezuka's aversion to the hybrid war comics that share the common speculative link of how hybridization challenges conceptions of human subjectivity. First, in *Jô o tazuneta otoko* (1968, *The Man Who Visited Joe*) an American Vietnam War captain receives multiple organ transplants from an African American soldier, thus becoming a racial hybrid. Next, in *O jigen no oka* (1969, *The Hill of Zero Dimension*), both consciousness and gender are mixed, as a young Japanese male is possessed by the spirit of a deceased Vietnamese female. Finally, *Aieru: Minami kara kita otoko* (1970, I.L: *The Man From the South*) presents a scenario where sexuality becomes mixed, as a heterosexual male American sergeant is forced to have same-sex relations with his commanding officer.

The Man Who Visited Joe (1968)

The Man Who Visited Joe (hereafter *Joe*) is the story of Captain Willy O'Hara, commanding officer to African American Joe Robbins during the Vietnam War. At the beginning of the comic, O'Hara is wandering the "dumpy" streets of Harlem, New York, desperately searching for the home of the deceased Joe Robbins for reasons unknown. Through flashback, it is revealed that a blast on the battlefield claimed the life of Robbins and nearly did the same for O'Hara, ripping his body apart and rupturing his gut, liver, and colon in 16 places. The captain's life was saved because of the multiple organ transplants he received from Robbins. The result is that O'Hara now lives his life in shame as a racially mixed hybrid.⁴

The army general has revealed information about the operation to Joe's family in a personal letter included with the official death certificate. It is now revealed that O'Hara's mission is to burn this letter (the sole piece of evidence that he is a hybrid) and thus be able to once again "live as a white person" (Tezuka, 2007: 42).

The first theme that must be addressed is the requisite anguish of living as a hybrid. O'Hara's self-hatred is completely understandable within the context of the comic, given the character's unwavering portrayal as hating blacks. As the son of a prominent Alabama family that owned dozens of

slaves, we are first introduced to the captain's overt racism as he barks orders at the colored soldiers in his unit with lines such as: "You [damned blacks] are here to die off instead of the whites" (*Hakujin no kawari ni shinde iku*), "You're my bulletproof vest" (*Ore no tamayoke*), and "You're my dog" (*Ore no inu*) (Tezuka, 2007: 35).

Thus, once O'Hara is told by the general that he has African American organs in his body, he contemplates suicide. Lamenting that he can never again return home to see his intended bride Millie, O'Hara asks to die as a Southerner rather than live with the "shame of being black" (Tezuka, 2007: 40).

While race is a socially constructed concept, racism includes the privileges or prejudices given by society because, most often, of skin color and outward appearance. It is useful to note that for O'Hara, race is denoted solely by blood and any discussion of race precludes consideration of visual characteristics or any intermingling of ethno cultural habits. This is evidenced by the fact that while O'Hara cannot possibly look or feel any physically different following his operations, his subjectivity has already been irreparably affected. That is, the mere knowledge that "black blood" courses through his veins is sufficient to complete his psychological hybridized transformation, as he states, "So, this means that I've already ceased to be white, huh?" (*Tsumari, watashi wa mô hakujin janakunatte shimattan desu na?*) (Tezuka, 2007: 40).

The issue of blood mixing and miscegenation is further emphasized by Joe Robbins's relatives at the comic's conclusion. After O'Hara successfully procures the general's letter from Joe's ailing mother and burns it, the relatives taunt him, stating that tens of thousands of African Americans donated blood during the war which was in turn used in hospitals and for battlefield transfusions (Tezuka, 2007: 43). In this way, *Joe* ends with the familiar speculative fiction trope from *Start to 1985*, in which an upset to the established racial hierarchy is imminent as the threat of the hegemony becoming overwhelmed by hybrids looms large.

Tezuka presents a scenario whereby the only escape for a hybrid from his/her pained existence is death or rebirth. Upon leaving the Robbins home, O'Hara is shot and killed by four African American gangsters (Fig. 2). In contrast to Joe's familial relatives, who speak honorific Japanese to O'Hara, thus reflecting a stereotype of African Americans as (at least linguistically) subservient towards whites, the gangsters gun him down with a brash "You arrogant white bastard!!," emphasizing a different stereotype of African American youth as inherently violent (Tezuka, 2007: 45).

The fact that O'Hara is killed by African Americans is significant. The four gangsters are presented as a mirror image of O'Hara at the beginning of the comic. To them, Capt. O'Hara is superficially defined by his white skin color. The irony that O'Hara in fact shares their same African American

blood and self-identifies as a racial minority is completely lost on the youths as they open fire. As O'Hara emerges from the Robbins household, three black shadowy lines stain his face, visually emphasizing his mixed blood (Fig. 2—upper right). The final frame of the comic is a completely black panel, symbolizing both death and an ambiguity over which race emerges triumphant in this war comic.



Fig. 2. Capt. O'Hara is gunned down by four African American gangsters upon leaving the Robbins home at the conclusion of *The Man Who Visited Joe* (Tezuka, 2007:45).

The Hill of Zero Dimension (1969)

The first and last image the reader is presented with in *The Hill of Zero Dimension* (hereafter *Hill*) is a large hill covered with dense ash gray grass. Behind the hill is an endless field bathed in thick fog and nothingness. This hill represents limbo, the border between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

The main character of the story is a nine-year-old Japanese boy named Yamaoka Toshio (nicknamed "Toppô" by his family). Every time he listens to a specific record, the symphonic poem⁵ "The Swan of Tuonela" by Finnish romantic composer Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), he bursts into tears, raving uncontrollably about a mysterious "big dead tree" and a "white stone wall,"

much to the bafflement of his mother and older brother (Tezuka, 2007: 112–113).

Toppô's older brother (unnamed in the comic -- I refer to him simply as "Nii-chan") becomes troubled by his younger brother's strange behavior, specifically referencing the fact that he is crying like a woman: "Were you crying? You're a womanly guy, aren't you?" (*Naitetan ka? Onna mitai na yatsu da na*) (Tezuka, 2007: 112). In order to gain insight into this strange phenomenon, Nii-chan and Toppô visit an unnamed professor ("Sensei") for answers. Sensei explains that Toppô's brain is being stimulated by the special sounds present in conductor Eduardo von Berne's rare recording of the "The Swan of Tuonela." After being made to listen to the piece while hooked up to what looks like a polygraph, both Toppô's consciousness and gender begin to mix with his past self and he is able to successfully articulate to Sensei that his true home is Lienta, a small village on the border of North and South Vietnam, and that he is, in fact, a young girl named Run-Gem.

Contrasted with Capt. O'Hara's one-dimensional blood mixing, Toppô represents a more advanced hybrid, where not only ethnicity (in this case ethnicity transmitted via consciousness) but also gender is mixing together within the host. We also see an evolution of Tezuka's standard aversion to the hybrid, as now both the hybrid him/herself (Toppô / Run-Gem) and the hybrid's immediate family (Nii-chan) are caused great pains by the situation. While Toppô's unhappiness at being a hybrid is largely confined to an assortment of yelps, shrieks, and tears as he recalls the horrors of his past life, Nii-chan's disgust has a more gendered motive.

What begins as Nii-chan's earnest concern for his younger brother's well being, as evidenced by the line, "Sensei!! Do something for Toppô. He's freaking out" (*Sensei!! Toppô o nantoka shite yatte yo. Ki ga hen ni nacchatta*), quickly gives way to reveal a deeper fear (Tezuka, 2007:121). As foreshadowed by his earlier response to his brother's crying, the locus of Nii-chan's concern is that Toppô has begun using the female gendered Japanese pronoun *atashi* in his speech, and that he is beginning to define himself, at least linguistically, as female. Nii-chan's anxiety over his brother's gender ambiguity is evidenced by his subsequent exchange with Sensei: "Has my brother become Vietnamese? And on top of that, a woman?" (*Otôto wa betonamujin ni nacchattan desu ka. Shikamo onna ni?*) (Tezuka, 2007: 122).

As the comic moves towards its conclusion, Toppô's family is flown by UNESCO to Vietnam. At the airport, Toppô is introduced to four other hybrid children from around the world. One such child, a nine-year-old girl from Dallas, Texas, was temporarily hospitalized by her family after proclaiming herself a Vietnamese boy.⁶ Also present at the airport is famed conductor Eduardo von Berne. Berne reveals that he conducted "The Swan of Tuonela" many times but was never able to render the piece with the proper emotion. At a loss for how to best conduct a work nicknamed "the song of death,"

Berne drank poison and temporarily entered limbo, a place he calls The Hill of Zero Dimension. Upon reawakening in the world of the living, Berne now had the insight necessary to conduct the perfect recording, the very recording that elicits such a strong emotional response from Toppô.

Upon entering the Village of Lienta, Toppô's present consciousness and male gender completely mix with that of Run-Gem, and the Japanese boy's identity is fully subsumed. Run-Gem now speaks entirely in female gendered Japanese, using both the pronoun *atashi* and the female-specific sentence final *wa*. The visual depiction of the character also reinforces the complete gender reassignment. Before arriving in Vietnam, male Toppô is depicted as wearing a boyish black sweater and white shorts, reminiscent of a primary school uniform. Now, Run-Gem is coded female in a checkered sweater and white ascot, and thus visually isolated from Nii-chan and Sensei who both wear Western-style suits (Fig. 3).

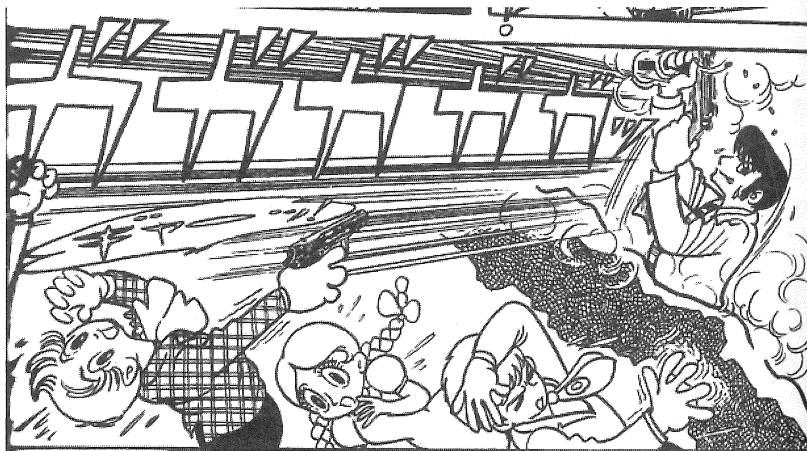


Fig. 3. A feminized Run-Gem (far left) faints after Sensei fires a rifle in the air causing a symbolic death and rebirth necessary to cleanse the hybrids of their deviant gender identity (Tezuka, 2007:138).

As is revealed by Run-Gem, nine years ago her family (the four other transnational hybrid children now personified as father Nan-Gem, mother Chim-Gem, younger brother Pai, and younger sister Min) was killed during a Vietcong raid while sitting peacefully at home. Sensei steps in to quote the “law of conservation of energy” (with the theory of reincarnation thrown in for good measure), stating that since energy can neither be created nor destroyed, Run-Gem’s consciousness must have inhabited the unborn body of Toppô.

The end of *Hill* presents not an actual death, but rather a symbolic death and rebirth necessary to cleanse the hybrid of its destructive mixed elements. As illustrated in Fig. 4, Sensei borrows an automatic rifle and sneaks up on



Fig. 4. Sexuality becomes mixed as Sergeant Henreid is forced to have “homosexual” relations with his commanding officer (Tezuka, 2007:191).

the children. He fires the gun in the air causing them to faint. Having now “re-lived” their death, this shock is sufficient to reboot their systems. When the children regain consciousness, their mixed infection has been cured and none have any memory of their past lives. The following is Nii-chan’s exchange with Toppō shortly after he regains consciousness (Tezuka, 2007: 139–140).

(T): <i>Koko...doko?</i>	Where...is this?
(N): <i>Rienta mura da. Wakaru kai?</i>	The Village of Lienta. You know it?
(T): <i>Wakaranai ya.</i>	No, I don’t.
(N): (<i>Hotto</i>) <i>Naotta...?</i>	(Phew) You’re back

Nii-chan’s exchange with Toppō reaffirms that the racial and gender normative status quo has been successfully restored: That is, that the pure Japanese ethno-racial identity has triumphed over the undesirable Southeast Asian one,⁸ and that this Japanese youth will once again behave within socially prescribed gender roles. Indeed, with Toppō’s singularity no longer under siege by hybridity, it seems that all will be well for the Yamaoka family.

I.L: The Man from the South (1970)

Tezuka’s series *I.L* (1969–1970) is described as a “fairy tale for adult readers” which focuses on contemporary social problems from a fantasy angle. The series features a mysterious shape shifting woman as the titular protagonist. By entering into a magical casket, I.L is able to take the shape of anyone she chooses. She uses this unique talent as a business, changing her shape in order to complete clandestine missions for various paying clients.⁹

In crafting *The Man From the South*, Tezuka drew inspiration from the real-life My Lai Massacre of 1968, in which hundreds of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians (primarily women and children) were tortured, raped, and killed by a U.S. Army unit. This self-contained episode revolves around I.L’s interaction with Vietnam War deserter Sergeant Bob Henreid. Under his captain’s orders to “shoot what moves and burn what doesn’t,” Henreid raped and murdered five non-Vietcong civilian women during the war (Tezuka, 2007: 177). Upon being charged with war crimes, Henreid fled before he could be prosecuted, and has spent the last four months living alone on a small, uninhabited island.

Henreid writes to I.L asking for her help, and the narrative begins with her arriving on the island. Sergeant Henreid reveals that his plan is for I.L to assume the form of his five murder victims, so that he can parade them into the American courtroom one-by-one, and proudly display them “brimming with life,” thus acquitting him of any wrongdoing (Tezuka, 2007: 180).

I.L initially refuses Henreid’s request, saying that she has felt his emo-

tions and determined him to be “suspicious” (*ki ga hen*) (Tezuka, 2007: 182). However, it is revealed that Henreid has stolen I.L’s magical casket and tethered it in the middle of the forest, effectively preventing her from leaving the island. Thus, I.L has no choice but to strip naked, enter the casket, and assume the form of Henreid’s first Vietnamese victim Min Da.

As I.L emerges from the casket, she appears not in the form of a living, breathing Min Da, but rather as a zombified walking corpse. It is unclear whether I.L has intentionally taken this form to frighten the sergeant or if he has endowed her with this physicality by only being able to recall Min Da’s mutilated cadaver in his guilt-ridden mind’s eye. Regardless, the sight of the bullet-ridden corpse is sufficient to send Henreid fleeing for the sanctuary of his log cabin.

Throughout the horror movie-esque pursuit that ensues, Henreid empties clip after clip into the steadily advancing corpse, eventually decapitating her with his rifle. Throughout this altercation, Henreid exhibits no discernible remorse, choosing instead to exert force in an attempt to re-victimize the nightmarish image, rather than accept any sort of responsibility for his past atrocities. Henreid’s panicked screams of “Why won’t you just die!!” (*dôshite shinde kurenên da!!*), further emphasize that a fight or flight mentality is the character’s sole modus operandi (Tezuka, 2007: 187).

The next morning I.L is gone, replaced with a U.S. Army search party led by Henreid’s former captain. They have tracked the sergeant down and are ready to arrest and extradite him for trial. In the following scene, Henreid is forced into his cabin at gunpoint, made to strip naked, and is kissed and fondled by the American captain (Fig. 4). A close examination of the frame reveals that the U.S. captain may have long eyelashes, suggesting that the sexual assault is in fact being acted out by a disguised I.L. Even as powerful as she is, the supernatural shape-shifter is denied any ability to punish Henreid as a woman. Within Tezuka’s cosmology, it is only through physically inhabiting the skin of a man that a woman can reclaim her agency and avenge past wrongs.

While it remains ambiguous, the progression of panels strongly indicates that forced sexual intercourse also occurs. The middle panel of the page has the two naked bodies intertwined in a sexually suggestive pose, as Sergeant Henreid screams “NO!! NO!! CRAZY! NO!” (Tezuka, 2007: 191). The fact that Henreid’s utterance is represented in capitalized English text, and furthermore that this is the only usage of English text in the entire volume of war comics, is significant. I would argue that it is precisely at this moment of forced penetration that Henreid becomes a sexually mixed hybrid.

Tezuka seems to position this specific type of sexuality mixing as one of the most forbidden. Certainly, within the context of the narrative it results in the deadliest consequences. Following Henreid’s transformation into a “bi-sexualized hybrid,” the very next panel ushers in Tezuka’s requisite death

of the hybrid. Henreid's shadowed silhouette is shown suspended from a tree as the affectless narration reads, "After that, Sergeant Bob Henreid soon hanged himself" (Tezuka, 2007: 192). In this way, the hybrid is destroyed without even a word in his own defense or the ability to experience even the most fleeting redemptive coda. Starkly contrasting with the previous comics, in this instance, there is no need for a formal discussion of how the hybrid is adversely affected by his condition. For, in Sergeant Henreid's case, the only escape from such violation is silent and immediate death.

Conclusion

The 2007 *Best of Tezuka Osamu's "War Comics"* volumes end with a disclaimer from publisher Shōdensha.¹⁰ In it, readers are asked for their "deep understanding" regarding representations of characters which may appear "racist" or "prejudiced" when viewed today. Readers are assured that Tezuka held no personal sense of discrimination, and are asked to respect the author's underlying humanism which flows through each of his works.

If Tezuka imparts this underlying humanism as the disclaimer suggests, then why do so many of his war comics dwell on cases of personal failure, wherein a hybrid with racial, gender, or sexual mixing is deeply pained by her own existence and then invariably destroyed? Scholar Thomas LaMarre frames this impossibility of interracial (in his argument "interspecies") harmony as a conscious act of resistance on the part of Tezuka. LaMarre convincingly argues that Tezuka was disassociating himself from the tradition of wartime manga and animation that displayed multispecies cooperation as a metaphor for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the Japanese Empire-led racial liberation of the people of Asia from the white imperialist demons. LaMarre writes, "The impossibility of achieving multispeciesism ... comes from Tezuka's inability to dissociate it entirely from wartime empire" (LaMarre, 2010: 63).

While LaMarre's historical explanation for Tezuka's aversion to the hybrid seems apt, his assertion that interracial cooperation and, by extension, happy endings for hybrids are "impossible" perhaps overlooks developments in Tezuka's later storytelling. One of Tezuka's final war comics, *Middonaito: Ashigara yama no Kintarō* (1986, *Midnight: Kintarō of Mount Ashigara*, hereafter *Ashigara*), tells the tale of 41-year-old Rob Low, a half-Japanese, half-Filipino man born on the island of Catanduanes in the East Philippine Sea during Japanese Occupation. The son of an island girl and a Japanese soldier, Rob's father returned to Japan after World War II, leaving his wife and newborn son behind. With nothing but rudimentary Japanese language skills and the dubious nickname "Kintarō of Mount Ashigara"¹¹ to go on, Rob embarks on a trip to Japan in search of his long lost father (Tezuka, 2007:

89–108).

Enlisting the help of the mysterious taxicab driver Midnight, Rob is successfully reunited with his father just hours before he is scheduled to return to the Philippines. Kintarō, now an aging man running a ramen shop in Tokyo, and Rob share a few drinks and sing a nostalgic island song before each going their separate ways. *Ashigara* presents a unique case study where a racially mixed hybrid is spared from death. While Rob was certainly not freed from the inner-turmoil that living life as a hybrid necessitates in the Tezuka corpus, the comic presents a rare positive ending made possible specifically through transnational, interracial cooperation.

Written nearly 20 years after *The Man Who Visited Joe*, *Ashigara* presents an entirely different take on the hybrid. While a survey of additional later war comics would be necessary to see if a storytelling pattern emerges, at the very least, this comic presents evidence that Tezuka's previously held hard-line views on mixing and hybridity may have softened in his later career.

Endnotes

¹ Tezuka's "war comics" (*sensō manga*) were published between 1957 and 1989 primarily as short to medium-length standalone "one-shot" stories in weekly comic magazines aimed at a young male readership. Publisher Shōdensha has reprinted 17 of these short comics in two "Best of" anthologies (2007). Thematically, Tezuka's war comics all grapple with war in some way, often, though not always, referencing a specific historical or global conflict. Tezuka scholar Ishiko Jun divides Tezuka's war comics into six distinct subcategories, including "Japan's War," "The Postwar War" (stories that describe hidden weapons developed during World War II), "The Vietnam War," "Other Wars" (such as the Korean War or Sci-Fi wars), "The Pain of War" (stories dealing specifically with emotional trauma and war memory), and "Nuclear War" (Ishiko, 2007: 141–149).

² To date, the three war comics discussed in this essay have yet to be translated into English. While a more accurate translation of the Japanese title would be "Departure toward 1985," I use the title "Start to 1985" as it appears on Tezuka Production's official English-language website (tezukaosamu.net).

³ The competing "mixed-blood" (*konketsu*) position was originated by journalist Takahashi Yoshio in his 1884 "Treatise on the Betterment of Japanese Race" (*Nippon jinshu kairyōron*). It held that the mixed-marriage of Japanese males and Anglo-Saxon females would result in a "taller, heavier, and stronger" Japanese race, better suited to compete with Europeans and Americans on the international stage (quoted in Robertson, 2002: 197).

⁴ Racial mixing becomes a central theme in Tezuka's longest war comic *Adorufu ni tsugu* (1983–85, *Message to Adolf*, 2012), in which a document

reveals Adolf Hitler's secret quarter-Jewish ancestry.

⁵ A "symphonic poem" is an orchestral composition in which the content of a non-musical poetic theme or idea is expressed musically.

⁶ With this plot point, Tezuka perhaps unconsciously alludes to the fact that gender mixing, modernly labeled as "transsexualism" is still regarded by many as a social abnormality and is currently listed in the *American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Code F64.0. American Psychiatric Association. *DSM-IV-TR*, 2000).

⁷ The verb *naoru* in this instance more literally implies that Toppô has been "fixed" or "cured" of his ailment, further emphasizing the undesirability of a Southeast Asian ethnic identity within the narrative.

⁸ Here once again Tezuka's narrative echoes a historical trend in the late 1930s of viewing Japanese "pure-blood" as not only inherently superior, but also capable of stimulating development of the "inferior peoples" of South-east Asia (Robertson, 2001: 5). With the opening of the Colonization Ministry in 1939, young, healthy, unmarried Japanese women were recruited to immigrate to the colonies in order to ensure that the "superior blood of the Japanese race would be planted and harvested in the soil of the new imperium" (Robertson, 2001: 7).

⁹ Background information on the *I.L.* series was taken from Tezuka Production's official English-language website (tezukaosamu.net). It is implied that the character I.L. must either feel the emotions of, or see a physical photograph of, her subject in order to successfully shape shift into their form.

¹⁰ It has become common practice for Japanese and Western publishers of Tezuka's works to include such a disclaimer. This practice began in 1990 when Japan's domestic "Association to Stop Racism against Blacks" began leveling claims of racism at Tezuka posthumously because of his cartoony drawings of African natives in works such as *Kimba the White Lion* and *Phoenix* (Schodt, 1996: 63–64).

¹¹ Kintarô of Mount Ashigara (lit. the "Golden Boy" of Mount Ashigara) is a legendary hero from Japanese folklore. He is renowned for his supernatural strength, and tales tell of him fighting monsters and demons, and helping the local mountain folk.

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