

SPENCER DEW

## Five Frames for Adrian Tomine

### 1. Sublimation

“I think I just analyze everything too much,” says Scotty, the diminutive, young, and uncomfortably innocent protagonist of “Bomb Scare,” collected in Adrian Tomine’s third book of stories, the 2003 *Summer Blonde*.<sup>[1]</sup> His is a condition shared by many of Tomine’s characters, an impulse to overanalyze in reaction to an increasingly confusing world. Relentless theorizing, fantasy, and willed denial are all defensive tactics employed by these characters, actions ultimately ineffective in covering a deeper, aching lack, a sense of constant loss and dread at the idea of continued change. Scotty, for example, wishes he could stop the world from changing altogether, just “freeze” reality “four or five years ago.” “It wouldn’t be like hitting ‘pause’ on the VCR,” he says, “I mean, everything would still be moving around... It’s just like... Everything stays basically the same. No aging, no dying, no big changes.” Scotty has specific reasons for such a dream – shifting social dynamics at school, belated onset of adolescence, his mother’s newly active dating life, etc. – but, as is typical of a Tomine character, Scotty’s analysis remains blind to key causes and concerns, opting instead for quick refuge in sublimation. As other players in other stories warp their impulses such that they kick over coffee tables instead of facing up to their own self-hatred or make crank phone calls instead of addressing severe anxiety, so Scotty, imagining a world magically free of

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change, is acting in denial of the problem. His fantasizing is already a defeated stance. For all their monologues and theorizing, Tomine's characters remain trapped in patterns they can't name, suffering through feelings they don't have the determination to honestly face. They give up, slouch on, read their scripts and suffer through their uneasy, constricted lives. They talk, occasionally or obsessively, about radical alternatives, but even as they imagine time's stopping, it just speeds by, all around them, leaving them feeling ever more impotent and alone.

Adrian Tomine has written three books of stories (*32 Stories*, *Sleepwalk and Other Stories*, and *Summer Blonde*), a collection of miscellany (*Scrapbook*, *Uncollected Work: 1990-2004*) and one novel (*Shortcomings*), all emerging from his long-running, irregularly published comic book, *Optic Nerve*. While his work has been lavishly praised – including comparison, in the *New York Times*, to the writing of Philip Roth – sustained critical treatments have yet to be written.<sup>[2]</sup> I want to attempt, here, to offer some avenues into certain major themes of Tomine's work, to suggest some lines for approaching this important literary oeuvre.

## 2. Erasure

*"I left that night, on my own again. The future was a blank page."*<sup>[3]</sup>

The final scene of *Shortcomings* plays out in one page, across eight panels. In the first, Ben Tanaka, the protagonist, plagued by "weird self-hatred issues" and "relentless negativity," sits alone in a cab, looking slightly shell-shocked, dazed.<sup>[4]</sup> He's leaving behind his ex-girlfriend and his only platonic friend, flying back to the west coast to his old life and a new, irrevocably altered existence. We know this from the narrative, but Tomine here gives us only silent images, relying on his skill as a draftsman to convey the subtlest of emotions, to frame familiar objects and actions in a poignant, even painful light. Ben passes through airport security, his jacket receding, via conveyor belt, into the x-ray

machine. The lower two-third section of the page is composed of six nearly identical panels, all of Ben, his chin in his hand, looking out the window of the plane. In these pictures, the world erases into void. First the airport, with its service machines and waiting planes, disappears, then the skyline of New York City fades away, until, finally, even the clouds are passed, and in the final panel Ben, his expression identical to that five panels back, stares through the window at a pure whiteness, the whiteness of a blank page.

While, in his earliest work, Tomine celebrated the myth of the fresh start, the ideal of freedom as something that could be bought with a one way ticket – “thrilling uncertainty,” as the narrator of the four-panel story “Train I Ride,” phrases it – mature Tomine is nothing is not ambiguous, forcing his readers to adopt the analytical approach of so many of his characters, to think through multiple and contradictory implications and emotions associated with an idea.<sup>[5]</sup> Even the old, worn idea of starting over acquires a tragic tinge in Tomine’s hands. Moving on, in Tomine’s world, can’t occur without loss, recognized or not. In “Sad Job,” for instance, the main character works at an auction house, makes his living by sorting through boxes of diaries and photographs, helping “strangers cart away their purchases and watches unwanted memories fade into obscurity.”<sup>[6]</sup> Such traces, like the patches on a wall from which pictures, taped in place for decades, have finally been removed, are of major concern for Tomine. Everything bears behind it a wake; everything, if adequately considered, can be a vehicle for nostalgic reflection, even regret.

With such a setup, it’s no wonder that characters who are far from happy with their lives are nonetheless deeply reluctant about the idea of change, the act of leaving the familiar behind, no matter how unpleasant that familiar reality is. In one iconic final panel, from “Smoke,” Tomine’s silent image gives harsh commentary on this situation as smoke snakes up from a mailbox wherein a well-deserved break-up letter has been, in desperation, set aflame. The girl who wrote the letter – and who then immediately regretted mailing it – is an example of a Tomine template. She is cute, trendy, and imprisoned in a broken, even abusive relationship because she’s likewise trapped in a deeper

dissatisfaction with herself. Tomine character sometimes consider the fact that “people stay together out of habit... or indifference,” but the truth is usually that what keeps people together in these stories is terror – freedom equals fear for these folks.<sup>[7]</sup> Several panels before the end of “Smoke,” gleeful that she’d successfully managed to destroy the letter, the girl runs to her boyfriend’s building and buzzes his apartment. “Can’t you ever call before stopping by?” he asks through the speaker. Her hunched form slouches away, and the view cuts to that final scene, a blunt, angled view of the smoldering mailbox lingering, darkly framed, menacing.<sup>[8]</sup>

Tomine is a master of the economy of negative space, his visual style relying frequently on partial views and silent passages wherein the images themselves require such decoding that they slow the pace of a story’s progression, enforcing a certain rhythm to the reading. In several cases, too, the parting image of a story, the final shot, is, literally, no image – a blank, black panel. Such panels may signify silence, denial, unconsciousness or even death, but there is never a clear, complete meaning. The final frame of “Dine and Dash,” for instance, wherein an old man’s beaten body is dragged to the middle of the highway and abandoned by a waiter, resonates as much with the blind rage and willed denial on behalf of the waiter as it does with the situation of the other, more immediately doomed, man. “Pathetic old *shit*,” the waiter says, channeling all of his own anxieties about his place in the world: “Who’s gonna miss you, anyway?”<sup>[9]</sup> The final panel thus offers, after the viciousness and rapidity of the assault, a brief respite – a respite, moreover, from the wider, judgmental world.

In “Six Day Cold,” the blank panel is even more of an interpretive challenge, a fulcrum for the story from which the course of the characters could go several distinct ways. “Six Day Cold” starts with a man vomiting in the street. This sick man, Paul, is met by a friend, Ellen, who insists on helping him out and who, it is revealed via flashbacks, is actually his ex-girlfriend. In and out of fever dreams, Paul replays scenes in which he and Ellen fight over the idea of “working” at their relationship. “I think you want out but you’re scared to say it, so you’re gonna make me do it,” says Ellen at one point, in a conflict that escalates to the silent descent of her toothbrush,

dropped into a trashcan.<sup>[10]</sup> The story weaves in and out of the present, with Paul, sapped of strength, standing in the hallway, staring at Ellen as she prepares to sleep. “It’s just strange... You sleeping out here,” he says. The story segues to scenes of his dreams – a forest, a snowstorm, a radio that doesn’t work. Sweating, he is swallowed up, whole, by the flurry, enveloped in white, erased. Then he wakes, in blackness, alone.<sup>[11]</sup> Tomine continues the story with consummate attention to moments of innocent banality – confessions of crushes, the early explorations of desire – and with a skill that infuses domestic actions with emotional tension, suspense. Paul watches a pot of soup begin to boil as dawn smears itself against the kitchen windows. His shoulders are angled as if he is bearing a great weight, and his eyes stare off at an incline, into an inscrutable future. This is followed by a square of darkness, a final piece of space and time, a panel of narrative that, precisely by conveying no new narrative information, pushes the story to a new level, deeper, more engaging, a panel that, in its blankness, draws us, as readers, into the situation, making Paul’s moment, his indecision, his suffering, also very much our own.

### 3. Fantasy

*“His sister, who was a few years older, was walking around in a white bikini with her hair dripping wet. I filed the image away in my mind for later.”<sup>[12]</sup>*

Tomine has repeatedly said that it was his encounter with the work of Japanese manga innovator Yoshihiro Tatsumi which helped open his eyes to the possibilities of the comic book form to tell “realistic, ‘slice of life’-type” stories.<sup>[13]</sup> Tatsumi’s “compact, elliptical short stories... were simultaneously satisfying and open-ended. The stories’ focus alternated between stretches of mundane daily life and moments of surprising violence and sexuality, and both extremes were equally refreshing and unsettling to me,” Tomine writes in an introduction to one of the Tatsumi volumes he has edited. <sup>[14]</sup> Tatsumi’s stories tap a reservoir of grit and horror, offering accounts of odd jobs, urban detritus,

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and assorted perversions and animalistic behaviors – there’s high rise voyeurism, call girls, abortions, canine fetishists, pet scorpions, etc. In these stories, sexual impulses lead to pornography, rape, and, in rapid escalation, murder, suicide, even the occasional captive kept in a pit. Tatsumi presents desire as either crushing, due to the object of desire’s ultimate unobtainability, or, in a few, more optimistic, inverse cases, as healthy in its expression of basic humanity. One particularly disquieting and masterful short story, for example, presents the life of a projectionist, a man hired to screen stag films for groups of men. This life has deadened his desires, reduced sex to a plastic, public act, so it is an epiphany, for the projectionist, when he encounters, scrawled on a public bathroom wall, a rough pictograph of a vagina, an image so raw, so powerful, that he immediately returns home and fucks his girlfriend. One reason this story is so gripping is because of its self-reflective engagement; it stands as an assessment of its own medium. Tatsumi wrestles with the risks and possible failure of artistic enterprise, remaining nonetheless hopeful that art can work, can viscerally grip and inspire. Both the dynamic of dehumanization – of further alienation and distance through the unreal – and the dynamic of a rehumanization – an awakening, through representation, of true emotions and visceral responses – are recognized.

These dual concerns recur throughout Tomine’s work, too, which frequently deals with discomfort at the pretensions of art or the error of overconfidence in its functionality while, at the same time, recognizing the power of representation qua representation, even if the most reliable and direct category of example of representation-as-functional is pornography – mimesis par excellence. With pornography, it is the blunt force of the image which Tomine appreciates, as well as the gaping disconnect between image and reality. The fact that the longing, the desire, can be or become for the image itself, qua image, and no longer for any real thing in the world *represented* by the image, fascinates Tomine and tortures his characters. Likewise, the enshrinement of a subject within image – the act of being represented – infuses an otherwise undesirable subject with a new aura and allure. Take the case of Ben Tanaka, from *Shortcomings*. Back when he was with his Japanese-American girlfriend, he found her boring,

getting his titillation, instead, from a collection of blonde-on-blonde DVDs. But once the girlfriend becomes an ex-girlfriend, and once he finds out she has posed for a series of sensual retail fashion shots, the situation changes. Ben masturbates to a postcard reproduction of these images, simultaneously crushed, enraged, and overcome with longing. He stares at his old familiar sheets behind the blissful face of his ex-girlfriend, the photographer's camera offering a point-of-view shot from her new lover's perspective. Indeed, this switch of perspectives is key to the arousal: Ben wants what he does not, cannot have. In the recognition of this dissatisfaction is a temporary satiation, a fleeting release from a pain that continues to linger.

In Tomine's work, the encounter with porn is conveyed with typical subtlety and slant: the "click click" of the keyboard followed by the "fft" of a tissue being pulled from its box, to site a scene in "Summer Blonde," one panel of which shows a section of a computer screen and an angled slice of image upon it, a woman on her hands and knees on a bed, her eyes looking back, over what, by implication of the angles, would be her raised ass. In another panel we see the eyes of the man at the computer, bleary, bagged, his whole body awkwardly arranged in an ill-fitting short-sleeve shirt and thin tie. Even the blinds over the window convey a sense of shame, tightly angled shut. On the screen, the cursor is ready to scroll the image down. "Fft."<sup>[15]</sup>

The link between desire and dissatisfaction is addressed by porn both in its accessibility and infinite replaceability. Porn is something you can hold in your hands, yet, simultaneously, it has the potential of remaining ever-fresh. In two ways, then, it is superior to real sex for many of Tomine's characters, who find actual sex either insurmountably difficult to achieve or impossible to maintain excitement over. In "Summer Blonde," the creepy loner Neil, who works for a local free paper, arranging "the classifieds and the hooker ads," obsesses over a girl he'll never have and, in the meantime, turns to voyeurism, stalking, and porn.<sup>[16]</sup> Yet in that tale, the character who is getting the most tail, Carlo, is turned off by repetition in sex, the lack of variety: "For me, ten times is pretty much the limit. After that... I'd just as soon jerk off. I'm serious. Actually, it's more

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like after five times I start to get *bored*, and after ten I start to get... I don't know... *disgusted*... It's just so great when you get a new one for the first time."<sup>[17]</sup> This philosophy (or pathology) is shared by another character in the same volume: "Every girlfriend's attractiveness fades with time... you know, the 'newness' wears off eventually, and when that happens, the relationship's over, at least in *my* mind."<sup>[18]</sup> Porn solves this problem, preventing a freeze on desire.

At the same time, porn also offers a manifestation of nostalgia, a means, via representation, of freezing time. Hillary Chan, for instance, in "Hawaiian Getaway" gets off by sneaking out of her bedroom and taping the sounds of her roommate having sex with his girlfriend, a literal recording of a moment that will remain always lost, from which she will always be excluded but in which she can now, using it as pornography, participate. Hillary and her roommate had fucked once – before the "newness" of the activity faded for him – and, masturbating with her headphones on, she is indulging in a nostalgia that is both pang and salve, a presence of pleasure yet a simultaneous awareness of loss. In Tomine's conception, pornography is always an absence, a lack, and thus his characters swarm toward it, drawn to that which feels easy and familiar, blind to the fact that it heightens their misery. There is Martin, in "Alter Ego," who, chasing a memory of a high school crush, makes out with his old obsession's sister, who is currently in high school herself. Not only does he destroy several relationships along the way, coming across as senselessly selfish, he's left suffering far more profoundly than when he began, forcing himself to suspend disbelief in the face of a pathetic and nauseating fiction: "Martin tried to imagine it was Samantha he was kissing, but Jenna's teeth clipped against his, and her tongue tasted like the onion rings and coffee milkshake she'd had for lunch."<sup>[19]</sup> Likewise, the girlfriend in "Long Distance" realizes the brokenness of her relationship when she caves to her boyfriend Gregg's demands to "talk dirty" over the phone. Relentlessly pressuring her, Gregg Fed-Exes an envelope of suggestions, "four hand-written pages of stupid, ridiculous things I would never say normally." The girl begins to read, her eyes weary, lined. She recites the script, patently false, and he, on the other end, "falls silent."<sup>[20]</sup> With pornography, orgasms may

come, but the satisfaction they bring is only on that level, fleeting and physical. Such orgasms leave the world depleted and more sordid in their wake, erasing something of preexisting reality, if only a sense of potential, an illusion of purity, innocence, or authentic connection between individuals.

Tomine's stories also occasionally indulge in a fantasy of lashing out, of violent manifestations of rage, and this, too, turns sour, in brutal fashion. Even when, as in "Fourth of July," it is the protagonist, driven senseless by the radical changes wrecking his life, who inflicts this violence, it is always terrifying, an uncontrollable force. In "Pink Frosting," for instance, a man leaving a bakery is almost hit by a car, but his reaction – narrated in an over-analytical, impotent, internal monologue – is to take satisfaction in the fact that his "anger is justified." He throws a bottle at the car, shattering the taillight, and calls the driver a "faggot," a response hardly related to the incident itself, but vented from some deeper source. "It's the rare chance where I feel perfectly entitled to react," he thinks, "... And I'm excited by this." Of course, he's immediately knocked down, beaten, humiliated. He's struck dumb and submissive by "pain and disbelief," suffering the standard wages of violence in Tomine's world, reinforcing the dominant opinion among his characters, that the best path is that of silence, avoidance, even invisibility.<sup>[21]</sup>

#### 4. Invisibility

*"Martin spent his high school and college years trying his best to be invisible."*<sup>[22]</sup>

An artist invested in exploring the dynamics of voyeurism, Tomine presents a worldview defined by anxiety at the idea that everyone else is always looking at and scrutinizing the individual. Crowds are oppressive. In the early one-page comic "Noise Filter," a fragile-looking man lives in the city, works a cubicle job, and is awash in the urban populace. He, however, has a strategy, a means of dealing with the intrusion of the crowd into his private

existence. He wears a walkman, though, as he explains, “I don’t even *like* music. In fact, I’ve never even put batteries in the thing. I just wear it so I don’t have to talk to people.”<sup>[23]</sup> His headphones become a means of protecting his own autonomy, erasing the world around him to some degree, allowing him, at least, to ignore those people who try to speak to him.

A similar trope occurs in “Supermarket,” the story of a girl who works at a grocery and who regularly helps Mr. Lewis, a blind man, when he comes in to buy food. “Generally, I don’t like calling on people for assistance too much. Except with something like this... This would be difficult.” There is an initial sympathy for Mr. Lewis, naturally enough, but Tomine builds, slowly and subtly, a situation of excruciating discomfort. “I’m sure any of the employees here could help me out, but I always come when I know you’re working,” Mr. Lewis says. “It doesn’t bother you that I hold your arm like this, does it?”<sup>[24]</sup> Again, it is in the not-said that Tomine conveys the bulk of his information: the sinking of Mr. Lewis’s face when he finds out the girl is a vegan, the girl’s eyes warily glancing at his hand as he touches her shoulder, promising to “pay you back for all your trouble.”<sup>[25]</sup> The story ends later, away from the supermarket, as she is walking down the street with a boy and sees Mr. Lewis approaching. She signals for silence, whispering “I’ll explain in a second,” her words the only image in the story’s final, black, panel.

## 5. Cringe

*“The tension was unbearable... I wanted to crawl under my seat and hide. It was like being held hostage by some grade school bully....”*<sup>[26]</sup>

Unhappy, unpleasant, selfish, neurotic, annoying, even pathetic people – these are the denizens of Tomine’s world. Yet his work relies on an identification between reader and character, one accomplished via empathy and, in particular, the visceral jolt and tug of the cringe. The gut-deep tingle of shame as we pass silently by the blind man, the apprehensive pause as we watch the gob of spit drop down a

ream of paper in the Kopy Shak's storeroom, the shared embarrassment of avoiding eye contact or responsibility for action as punks in the back of the bus make fart noises and douche jokes – these squirmy, wince-inducing scenes are Tomine's province, structurally essential to the larger stories he tells, the deeper effect such stories have on the reader. As in his presentation of hyper-analytical Scotty, resolutely lacking in self awareness, Tomine refuses to insert ironic distance between the character and the reader. We do not watch these people from far away, smirking at their fallibility; rather, we share their vulnerabilities, the stumblings. Even *Shortcoming's* Ben Tanaka, who is pretty much a jackass, becomes, inevitably, loveable. There is a bravery in this level of earnestness, in handling melodrama as unadorned and organically human, and the payoff is emotional realism of a rare degree.

One area where cringes are frequently inflicted in via the problem of communication, which, for Tomine, means both the inability of people to truly connect and express their feelings to each other and, even worse, the sense that miscommunication is also always judged by the world-as-crowd – the world of anonymous, opinionated others. The character in "Stammer," for instance, carries on a lengthy and hyper-articulate interior monologue, practicing, as it were, the perfect speech with which to introduce himself to an attractive stranger. Meanwhile, she's standing there in front of him, waiting for him to speak, and he's utterly unable to utter the words, finally mumbling a weak "I was just wondering if you had the time."<sup>[27]</sup> He has struck out, and his opinion of himself is thus reinforced by the opinion of the woman, who icily dismisses him, and a more general sense of the opinion of the world. A parallel with, if not the influence of, Tatsumi can be seen, too, in this attitude. His work, consumed with crowd scenes wherein the individual is never able to quite disappear, is never anonymous but is always, painfully, alone, reiterates a basic stance, that "the most people flock together, the more alienated they become."<sup>[28]</sup> In Tomine's work, one doesn't merely fail on one's own, one always also suffers for this failure either in the public eye or in some paranoid perception of the public eye. A character might say things like, "I'm not very good at being alone," but really, in this worldview, being "alone" is

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impossible. Tomine's characters live always surrounded by others, and thus they can be lonely, longing, uncomfortable, anxious, or, perhaps, happy, but these states occur only in relation to others.<sup>[29]</sup> As in Tatsumi's crowded cityscapes, "alone" is not an option.

But "together" often *feels* impossible. Tomine's lovelorn, heartbroken singles can't quite get a break; they're not just bad at meeting new people, they're bad at keeping up what they already have. Take Mark and Carrie, from the title story of *Sleepwalk*, standing in the night street, bold shadows cut into the scene by the glare of the streetlight and illuminated storefronts. Mark thanks Carrie for dinner, noting that "I probably would've gotten pretty lonely today if you hadn't called." "Well, happy birthday, Mark," she says, and they hug, maybe for a little too long, as Mark, eyes closed, tries to maneuver in for a kiss:

"Hey... What do you think you're doing?"

"Sorry... I... I miss you."

"I miss you too. You mean a lot to me, but..."

"Then why aren't we together? Why are we living these lonely, separate lives?"

"I'm happier now that I've been in a long time, Mark. I called you today because I want to stay friends, but now... I don't think you're ready... I don't want to get into this again. I guess I shouldn't have called. I'm sorry."

"Let me call you tomorrow. We need to talk."

"No. I don't want to get into this again. I guess I shouldn't have called. I'm sorry."

"Carrie, I'm still in lo—"

"Don't say it."<sup>[30]</sup>

The scene is worth prolonged quotation because it is such a prolonged scene – painfully so, but in the most effective sense. We, as readers, become increasingly desperate to look away, to escape, but the awkward and ugly horror keeps playing out. In the story, things continue to get worse for Mark, but the pitch-perfect realism of this scene, both in terms of wording and pacing, content and its framing into art, insures that the moment will linger on for readers as if it were one of their own excruciating memories, the kind

that you can never completely will away into forgetting, the sort you can never totally erase.



Books discussed in this essay:

Adrian Tomine, *32 Stories: The Complete Optic Nerve Mini-Comics*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 1997.

Tomine, *Sleepwalk and Other Stories*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 1998.

Tomine, *Summer Blonde*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2003.

Tomine, *Scrapbook*. Montreal, Drawn & Quarterly, 2005.

Tomine, *Shortcomings*. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2007.

Yoshihiro Tatsumi, *The Push Man and Other Stories*, edited with an introduction by Adrian Tomine. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2005.

Tomine, *Abandon the Old in Tokyo: Stories*, edited by Adrian Tomine. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2006.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Tomine, *Summer Blonde*, 199.

<sup>[2]</sup> Jim Windolf, "Asian Confusion: A Review of Adrian Tomine's *Shortcomings*," *The New York Times*, November 11, 2007.

<sup>[3]</sup> Tomine, *32 Stories*, 51.

<sup>[4]</sup> Tomine, *Shortcomings*, 103.

<sup>[5]</sup> Tomine, *32 Stories*, 45.

<sup>[6]</sup> Tomine, *32 Stories*, 68.

<sup>[7]</sup> Tomine, *32 Stories*, 82.

<sup>[8]</sup> Tomine, *32 Stories*, 73.

<sup>[9]</sup> Tomine, *32 Stories*, 94-5.

<sup>[10]</sup> Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 81.

<sup>[11]</sup> Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 89.

<sup>[12]</sup> Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 93.

- [13] Tomine, *Scrapbook*, 199.
- [14] Tomine, "Introduction" to Yoshihiro Tatsumi, *The Push Man and Other Stories*, edited by Adrian Tomine, (Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly Publications), 5.
- [15] Tomine, *Summer Blonde*, 38.
- [16] Tomine, *Summer Blonde*, 36.
- [17] Tomine, *Summer Blonde*, 46.
- [18] Tomine, *Summer Blonde*, 82.
- [19] Tomine, *Summer Blonde*, 29.
- [20] Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 23-4.
- [21] Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 50-51.
- [22] Tomine, *Summer Blonde*, 11.
- [23] Tomine, *32 Stories*, 27.
- [24] Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 58-9.
- [25] Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 60.
- [26] Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 63.
- [27] Tomine, *32 Stories*, 77.
- [28] Yoshihiro Tatsumi, *Abandon the Old in Tokyo: Stories*, edited by Adrian Tomine (Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2006), 87.
- [29] Tomine, *Shortcomings*, 71.
- [30] Tomine, *Sleepwalk*, 13-14.