



Apollo's Song

Osamu Tezuka , Camellia Nieh (Translation)

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Better to have loved and lost...

The gods with their poetic justice, can be unrelenting. Just ask the young cynic Shogo, who sinned against love. Electroshock therapy was only meant to bring him face to face with his own violent misdeeds, but instead landed him in the court of a stern goddess.

If the encounter was a hallucination, then it's a hallucination that starts to encroach on reality in this unforgettable tale penned by manga-god Osamu Tezuka and inspired by Greek myths of divine unforgiving. Sharing with his longer work *Phoenix* the themes of recurrence and retribution as well as the spirit of high invention, *Apollo's Song* explores the meaning of love and the consequences of its absence.

Shogo's mother is a bar hostess, his father could be any one of a dozen of her regular patrons. Growing up, he learns nothing of genuine love and tenderness, and when he witnesses his mother in the nearest approximation of which she's capable--lustful embrace--he receives a merciless beating soon afterwards. Shogo comes to hate the very notion of love. But goddesses, who are neither the Buddha nor Christ, do not excuse misfortunes of upbringing.

Apollo's Song reaches Olympian heights of tragedy as the story proceeds from a boxcar bound for a Nazi concentration camp to a dystopian future where human beings are persecuted by an ascendant race of their own clones. Will Shogo ever attain redemption, or, like the human race itself, will he have to relearn the lessons of love forever? Is it better to have loved and lost if the heartbreak must recur eternally?

Love, propagation, nature, war, death--Tezuka holds his trademark cornucopia of concerns together with striking characterizations, an unfailing sense of pacing, and of course, stunning imagery.

Though marked by a salty pessimism, this unique masterpiece from Tezuka's transitional period is also unabashedly romantic--and, at times, profoundly erotic. Combining a classic tale of thwarted love with cognitive ambiguities reminiscent of the work of Philip K. Dick, *Apollo's Song* is guaranteed to plumb new depths of the human heart with each rereading.

Apollo's Song Details

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From Reader Review Apollo's Song for online ebook

Brian Sobolak says

My first manga. I liked some of the pictures and enjoyed the creativity of the story, but felt too much of the text was banal (bad translation?) and learned I didn't much like seeing what the characters looked like.

I'll try 1-2 more manga books to see how I like other others, but I was disappointed that I didn't like this more.

Grant says

Definitely darker than average Osamu Tezuka material, not for kids, I had the sense a sci-fi movie or two might have been inspired by the final "sub-story". Go in appreciating his imagination and you probably won't be disappointed. If this was a novel, and it was supposed to be "real people", I would have gotten tired of the twists, but as it's manga, I'm OK with it.

-- says

Tezuka's place in the history of modern pop culture is hard to overstate (both in Japan and abroad, given the reach Astro Boy had), which is what led me to Apollo's Song. Unfortunately, I couldn't really get into it. Tezuka had stated that Apollo's Song was a response to/reflection of changing societal moods in Japan in the 70s, so I'm not surprised that it didn't land as well with four decades later and half a world away. The variety of vignettes is nice, but I didn't find myself connecting to any of them emotionally. In a manga entirely about the meaning and experience of love, that was a significant roadblock.

Kat says

It was hard trying to rate this book. I quite enjoyed some of the vignettes, some ideas were interesting, and the art was good with some really impressive moments. But that was outweighed by a thoroughly unlikeable protagonist, a lot of heteronormativity and other uncomfortableness, and it not actually having much to say about love.

Quang Khuê says

Cái bác làm bìa b?n ti?ng Anh c?a cu?n này r?t n?i ti?ng nhé :D

Michael says

A boy who hates love (his mama was neglectful, and a prostitute) is cursed to continually find his true love, only to have either her or himself die shortly after realizing their true feelings.

Tezuka fits three variations on this theme into 530-odd pages, and some readers might not like the "life sucks, and then just when you think it's gonna get good, it gets 1000x worse" theme of it, but Tezuka does a great job assembling the story, finding different twists on the lead characters and keeping everything engaged. And he really draws out some of the sequences, so you can't expect the final death as readily as you'd expect to.

Tezuka's art is expressive and animated, and the storytelling is very strong. He works in medical aspects, sci-fi, war and deserted island themes to keep things fresh, and all of the characters are believable. Not a cheerful book, but a good one.

Marissa says

Tezuka's exploration of sex and romance is definitely interesting and I enjoyed the multi-layered structure of the narrative, but the take away moral of the book as a whole is more than a little cheesy. Also, this is yet another book groaning under the endlessly bogus weight of Freud and his Oedipus Complex Theories, which is kind of irritating.

Peacegal says

This book was...different. The story centers on a teenage boy who, abused by his floozy of a mother, develops a pathological hatred of love, or, more appropriately, sex. He has begun to act out his rage by slaughtering animal couples, and it is this behavior that sends him to the asylum in which our story begins.

First, the good. I appreciated that the storyline treats animal cruelty and killing for the pathology it is, and the act of harming animals is always taken seriously. There's no talk of "sport" or "boys being boys" here. In the best vignette, Shogo dreams of visiting a mysterious island in which all animals live harmoniously. After Shogo thoughtlessly kills a rabbit, the animals take their revenge until the boy promises not to kill another land animal. Shogo still fishes for food, so it's clear the author wasn't "all the way there." Nevertheless, I think he was definitely on the right track—especially when one considers the date this book was published.

However, although I liked the author's stance on animal welfare, I did not like the overarching theme of the book. The artist's near-obsession with the breeding process as being central to "love" stigmatizes the childfree, as well as the asexual and the marriage-free. All of the talk of love as expressed by the heterosexual pairing also conspicuously ostracizes gay individuals. And of course, we also have all of the fun stereotypical gender roles. All of that really bothers me. Personally, I also just really dislike illustrations of the interaction of male and female germ cells. I really don't need to fret about all of that any more than I already do.

Svanhvít Björns says

A strange, but enthralling piece of work that tells the story of a cursed soul. The protagonist, Shogo, is a man so unable to understand love that Athena curses him to live countless lives where he will learn to love only to lose it at its apogee. What follows is various tales of love found and lost, teaching Shogo that love is an eternal cycle of bliss and pain.

It is a strange piece of fiction and to some extent twisted. Its greatest flaw is that Tezuka spends sometimes too little time in each period which tends to make the love between the protagonist and his true love a bit forced.

It is otherwise a thought provoking piece that depicts the eternal conflict that is the love between people. Whether it is past, present, or future.

Julie says

not my favorite Tezuka (see: *Phoenix*), but still a good story. Tezuka's well-rounded education as a doctor shows in *Apollo's Song* as he draws from mythology, modern psychiatry and even cardio-vascular training to give his story more dimension. my quibbles include: some the panel transitions aren't as smooth as they should be which I found odd since most Tezuka works have very articulated transitions. ranting about love and broken hearts is not something I like to read, but I suppose every prolific author/artist explores this topic at some point.

Anna says

Dated, melodramatic, and rather toxic gender and relationship tropes made this novel a flop for me. A young man who hates all expressions of love--to the point of killing animals and attacking couples--is cursed to fall in love with the same woman in successive lives, only for death to separate them before their love can be consummated. There follows a string of experiences where he basically forces his attentions on others, or occasionally other people force their attentions on him, and in most cases these persistent unwanted advances lead to something the author calls love (?!? NO !!!). In a few places some of the chapters feel very like stiff, awkward rapey porn ("If you really cared about curing me, you'd French me!" "Oh, your a**hole behaviour and coerced intimacy make my little heart go all aflutter!" / "You hu-manz will now demonstrate the act of love or I will torture you, mwa ha haaa!"). The author was trying to wax poetic about the ennobling nature of love, but shoots himself in the foot by concentrating only on sexual and/or reproductive aspects and using blatantly unhealthy relationship patterns as his examples of glorious romance, with a protagonist who pretty much stays a jerk despite the supposedly redemptive power of this 'love'.

Catherine Schaff-Stump says

Even Tezuka can't bat a 1000 all the time. An unsympathetic protagonist and a lot of dismal sex can't save

this interesting concept.

Pilar Wyman says

Astro Boy or Apollo -- we all love, need to love, to be loved, and I loved this book! enjoy.

It's a graphic novel for adults, with an hysterical opener reminiscent of Woody Allen. If you enjoy odysseys of the heart, and are curious about Manga, you'll definitely enjoy this title from one of the masters of the genre.

Eric says

An interesting exploration of male-female relationships and the distance between people. Pretty disturbing at times as well.

Ivan says

Osamu Tezuka truly is the god of manga. The attention to detail is simply staggering, and he produced his hundreds of thousands of pages of manga over the decades the long, hard way. Sometimes, when reading his work, one simply must stop and marvel at the art, even during the most engrossing of tales.

Apollo's Song, given to me by a friend, is quite epic, whether examined alone or alongside Tezuka's other works. It features, of course, Tezuka's unmistakable comic drawing style, combined with a dark, deep story about eternal punishment. The contrast in the story and its presentation is itself something truly amazing, and it must be seen to be fully appreciated.

What happens to a man who hates the very concept of love? What must he endure in order to open up to the idea that even a troubled, abused fellow such as he can learn to truly love someone? What happens to our tortured anti-hero is nothing short of brutal, and never-ending. How he wound up being the sort of person he became can't truly be blamed on him, yet he receives retribution everlasting for rejecting love itself.

Shogo's journey is at times sweet, at times violent, and at times even peppered with hope, but is always a struggle. This story is a tragedy on a truly epic scale, stretching from the past well into the future, with the only constants being his name, his appearance, his punishment... and the face of one specific woman. The remaining details all change, yet his travels are very much a spiral, leading him downward into the bottomless.

This manga was made during a time when sex education was no longer taboo in Japan, and is not hesitant to take advantage of the new freedom this allowed the medium. This isn't one of Tezuka's family-friendly works. There's blood, there's nudity and enough else you don't want the young 'uns seeing. It's filled with plenty of immensely unlikeable characters supporting two very flawed, but ultimately likable people whose sad story has backdrops as brutal as the Holocaust.

Apollo's Song isn't for everybody. But for those who like solid story and the inimitable crafting and style of

Osamu Tezuka, it's a must-read.
