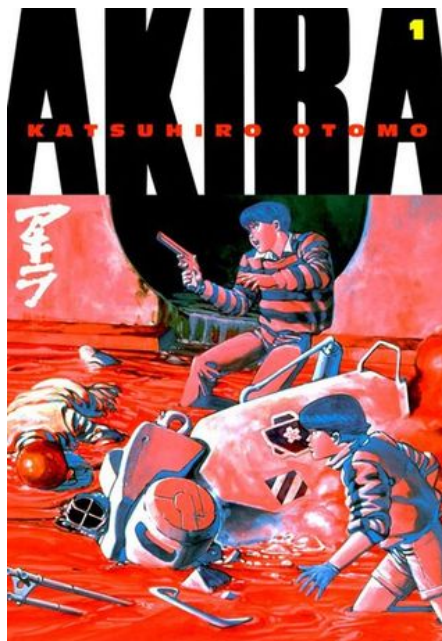




Akira, Vol. 1

Katsuhiro Otomo , Yoko Umezawa (Translator) , Linda M. York (Translator) , Mary Jo Duffy (Translator)

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The science fiction tale set in 2019 in Tokyo after the city was destroyed by World War III, follows the lives of two teenage friends, Tetsuo and Kaneda, who have a consuming fear of a monstrous power known as Akira.

Akira, Vol. 1 Details

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From Reader Review Akira, Vol. 1 for online ebook

Jedi JC Daquis says

If you are reading this review, there might be a possibility that you may have watched the movie and probably thinking if it is just a condensed version of the manga. So I'll start my review with that. Bear in mind though that Akira has six volumes, thus I don't know the whole scope of the similarities and the differences.

So, is the manga the same with the anime? Yes and no. The manga is way more extensive than the movie. Key plot points in the comics are also there in the movie so that the latter does not deviate that much from away the source material, but I feel that you are missing too many things in the film. There's a lot of interplay between the characters that you haven't seen in the movie, though the core elements are still there. Like Kaneda and Tetsuo are BFFs, Kei is a sort of love interest to Kaneda, you have the "children" and their look-out-for-each-other vibe.

Bike bros. Kaneda and Tetsuo's relationship and actions towards each other are pivotal to the story.

Book better than the movie? I can hardly say after reading just volume 1 of six. But I reckon that both have their own merits that make them a great on their own. But if a gun is pointed at my head and asks me to choose one, I'd say the movie. Like I said, it's an unfair judgment given this early.

Dov Zeller says

I can see why this is a classic, and it has a lot going for it in terms of style, pacing, art and sheer epic-ness of story. On the other hand, the manic intensity just gets exhausting and old and it is very hard to care about the anti-heroic (to a fault?) protagonists, Tatsuo and Kaneda, who are pretty creepy and dull.

I've never been interested in material whose drama is exclusively to be found in frenetic activity. I need at least something else to draw me in besides fast motorcycles and exploding heads. I would say my favorite manga-type series I've read in the last few years is Urasawa x Tesuka's Pluto (Urasawa's adaptation of Tesuka's Astro Boy), which is emotionally engaging, full of suspense, with carefully orchestrated drama, and a rich and complex set of characters. That's more the kind of thing I'm looking for.

So, I doubt I'll read the rest of Akira, but I'm very glad to have had the experience of reading this first book in the series. An important book in the history of manga if not one that I fully appreciate.

Brian says

Wow. Amazing read! Crazy thrill! Sci-fi action with smartass teens. A government cover up after WW3. Kids evolving with superpowers and numbered, this covers number 42. I have no doubt Stranger Things found inspiration from this. A young lady at work recommended this to me. Worth every penny. I read it in three sittings, and found it a bit confusing. I plan to read it again in one sitting, which I recommend doing.

Andy Karlson says

What I learned from this book: Psychokinesis is rad, but don't do drugs in a vain attempt to control your burgeoning powers: it'll only make things worse.

This ...I can't even call it a comic book--its 6 books take up more than a foot of my shelf space--this epic tome is almost too much to write about. It encompasses at least two Apocalypses, it grapples with huge themes and issues, leaves the reader to do much of the heavy lifting, demands multiple readings, and is just insanely detailed and beautiful. Often such carefully rendered art smothers its subjects and themes, but not here. While not as lush as the film, it goes so much further and deeper that it is hard to compare the two. This is a must read for anyone interested in comics, and further than that, for anyone invested in the questions: "What are we capable of?" "What are we doing?" and "What will save us now?"

Great stuff, deep and broad as the ocean.

EisNinE says

Akira: And A Boy Shall Rule Them All... Badly. A Boy Whose Head Contains A Supernova

'Akira' and 'Lone Wolf and Cub' were among the first complete manga masterpieces to be published in English, and despite the mirror-imaging, were very similar to their original tankobon incarnations. Katsuhiro Otomo's SF-classic 'Akira' -- as well as it's equally brilliant predecessor, 'Domu' -- revolutionized Japanese comics. It introduced realistic, incredibly detailed artwork that merged a far more subtle manga stylization with European influences, incorporating aspects from the art of 'Metal Hurlant' regulars Moebius, Francois Schuiten, and Enki Bilal. The importance of 'Akira' is difficult to express, but it certainly rivals US contemporaries 'Watchmen' and 'The Dark Knight Returns', and it ran far longer than either title, giving it an epic scope and grandeur that exceeds both of those seminal works. If it was a decision between: Katsuhiro Otomo, 'Domu' and 'Akira'; Frank Miller, 'Batman: Year One' and 'Batman: The Dark Knight Returns'; or Alan Moore, 'V for Vendetta' and 'Watchmen'; I'd say that Otomo created the best and most influential works of the 1980's. That ignores some huge titles, like 'Love and Rockets' and 'Maus' and 'Raw' and 'Weirdo' and 'Yummy Fur' and 'The Incal' and 'Les Cites Obscures', etc... but I'll stand by it, with all due respect.

All that hyperbole crosses without friction to the film adaptation... perhaps the best anime -- and animated -- film ever made. But Otomo wrote and directed his debut when he was only around half-way through the manga. The 6-volume, 2200+-page series is not just 'worth checking out' for fans of the anime, it's essential. The film contains less than 15% of the super-epic that inspired it, but the art, the characters, the basic plot, and the light-speed pacing will all be unmistakably familiar.

On a Technical Note: While I prefer the original right-to-left orientation for translated manga, Kodansha is still using the Dark Horse translation that appeared before Japanese formatting surprised the hell out of US publishers by catching on. It's only as big a deal as you make it, in my opinion; obsessive-compulsive types are out of luck, but anyone who has recovered from the mind-blowing shock of confronting a left-handed doppelganger in the bathroom mirror will do just fine. My preference for R-to-L has to do with preserving the artist's original vision... does that sound right? Something like that, anyway. As far as accessibility, flipping the art is probably easier for weak western minds and eyeballs. I'd rather watch a film reflected in a mirror than I would one played in reverse.

Domu: Otomo's Pre-Akira Masterpiece

Otomo's first masterpiece is overshadowed by the grandeur of Akira, but both the art and the story display the full-range of his creative powers. In an apartment mega-complex with thousands of residents, the suicide rate has risen dramatically. An old man with terrifying psychic abilities has become senile, and is now indulging his deadly and selfish whims, manipulating the residents like puppets and sending some to their deaths.

The families of the victims are baffled. The police investigating the deaths don't know what to make of it all, but as they follow the bizarre trail of clues, they get closer to a killer they're incapable of stopping. But when a little girl moves in with her family, the old man is suddenly confronted by someone determined to stop his malevolent games, a child with powers that might exceed his own. The town-sized apartment complex becomes a battlefield between two psychic juggernauts, and the old man's malicious games unleash a storm of telekinetic fury that threatens to kill hundreds of innocent people.

Otomo was far ahead of his time, and his genius for graphic storytelling inspired an entire generation of young mangaka. Domu holds up remarkably well, and deserves to have a much wider audience; unbelievably, this is somehow *out of print* in North America. I don't know what the fuck Kodansha is thinking, but they need to publish a new edition and promote it. If you haven't read Domu, stop whatever you're doing and run blindly around the countryside screaming the title until someone finally tries to pacify you with a copy. If some asshole shows up with 'Appleseed', add projectile vomit and urine to the routine. Accept no substitutes.

An Excellent Review of 'Domu: A Child's Dream' That Should Convince You Of Its Brilliance

More Art-book Reviews

More Comic-book Reviews

More Novel Reviews

Sam Quixote says

“KANEDAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!”

“TETSUOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!”

That’s basically the extent of my memory of Akira, an anime movie I watched when I was 9. So I was interested to learn that it’s also a critically acclaimed comic that’s hailed as one of the finest the medium has ever created. First published in 1982, the comic predates the film by 6 years though interestingly both were created by one man, the visionary artist Katsuhiro Otomo, who was an astoundingly young 28 years old when this book was first published, meaning he’d written/drawn this epic story at an even younger age! It’s astounding because of how accomplished the style here is and how well Otomo understands the language of comics - but I’ll come back to that in a moment.

Akira is set in 2030, a decade after a powerful new bomb destroyed Tokyo completely, leading to World War 3. Neo-Tokyo is populated with drug-fuelled biker gangs battling each other over turf, one of which our protagonists Kaneda and Tetsuo, two best friends, belong to. During a late-night race they encounter a weird young boy with the face of an old man being chased by shady government types. Tetsuo crashes his bike and is abducted by this secret army force. When he re-emerges, Tetsuo has blinding migraines but possesses incredible psychic powers – what is this secret organisation, who are these weird-looking kids, and what is Akira?

I really wanted Akira to live up to the hype but unfortunately it doesn’t. I’d forgotten the character flaws that were probably in the film but are shown here in all their disgrace. Kaneda, our “hero” is probably one of the most despicable protagonists I’ve read since “Message to Adolf Part One”, a book by another acclaimed manga artist, Osamu Tezuka. And like Tezuka’s main character, Otomo’s Kaneda is a sexual predator. After knocking up the school nurse and completely ignoring her pleas for help in deciding what to do about it, he tries to rape the only other female character in the book, Kei! What is it about Japanese artists and their appalling treatment of women?!

When he’s not being a sexual creep, he’s getting stoned and drag-racing his motorbike through the streets - and we’re supposed to think this is awesome and cool! I realise Akira is a 6-volume story and it’s altogether possible that Otomo’s setting up Kaneda in the first book as this immature prick at the beginning of his arc and ends with him completely changed for the better, but the way the character is written doesn’t make me want to invest any more time in reading the rest of this series.

I think the story’s emotional crux is predicated on Kaneda/Tetsuo’s friendship but I never believed they were very close. You could tell they were pals, but besties? Tetsuo just seemed like another member of the gang. We never see why Kaneda would care so much about him. None of the characters are very well written either. The Colonel character is your regular army officer stereotype, the various gang members act as you’d expect, ie. like punks, and so on. They’re all pretty much one-dimensional.

There also isn’t much of a story. This 360 page book is basically a series of chase sequences between Kaneda and the resistance and the army. But who are the resistance and why are they helping free the experimental old-faced kids? Who are those weird kids? Why is Kaneda holding on to a special pill everyone’s chasing? And if it’s just a pill, why don’t they have more? Pills are mass-produced after all. I never really understood the point of the book or much of the world of the story. Besides the biker gangs and the army, there isn’t much to Neo-Tokyo, it’s just unpopulated urban sprawl with lots of empty highways

and construction zones.

As weak as the story and characterisation was, I was still impressed with the storytelling style. The action is ambitious and frenetic but always clear to follow. It's easy to see Otomo moving on from making comics to making movies later in his career as he has a strong eye for visual storytelling. He knows the importance of providing an establishing shot for a scene, when to focus on a character, when to pull back and include other characters, how to populate a panel perfectly so it's not cluttered, and when to let a scene breathe. He knows implicitly where to put the "camera" for the best effect of a scene and how to represent different kinds of scenes – traditional panelling for dialogue/character-driven slower scenes, and more dynamic layouts/splash pages and so on for pacier scenes like chases and gunfights.

Continuing the idea of Otomo as a visual storyteller, there's a notable lack of narrative boxes in the comic and almost nothing in the way of exposition. This is another aspect of the book I really liked, with the artist letting the reader see the story play out naturally and allowing more opportunities for the reader to engage with the story – pay attention or fall behind! I like that the story isn't spoon-fed to the reader.

It's surprising that someone so young could not only understand but execute such a sophisticated way of storytelling like he has in this book. It's an expertise you tend to see in older artists but underlines how dedicated Otomo was to his craft that he must've started very young to develop so quickly in the way he did. I wish Otomo had had another writer do the script for him, partly to overcome the problems I've mentioned, or at least had an editor who could've tightened it up for him and maybe directed him in a more fruitful direction, because I think Akira has the potential to be the legendary comic others have said it is, but because Japanese manga is almost always long-form storytelling, it was allowed to run to 2000 pages and becomes a bit of a stagnant story to readers like me as a result.

The art itself is unmemorable and resembles a lot of generic manga. It also has the problem of the characters looking too much alike. Kaneda and Yamagata looked the same in certain scenes and during the biker fights I couldn't tell which side was which – colour might've helped, assuming the gangs wore gang colours to differentiate between themselves (this is a black and white comic).

I wouldn't dismiss Akira entirely because of its commendably ambitious sci-fi/horror story that was enormously influential and the masterful visual storytelling Otomo possesses, but it's a book that's difficult to like for its characters and often directionless, sometimes rambling plot. Maybe the series gets better in later volumes but based on this first book alone, I'd say this might be one of those rare instances where the movie surpasses the book (I'll have to re-watch it to decide). Either way, I'm not particularly interested in picking up Volume 2 to find out who or what Akira is, so this book fails in delivering perhaps the most important job of a first volume: leaving the audience wanting more.

J.G. Keely says

Like many, I read comics as a child, but I was not avid--never a collector--and it was not until I became an adult and returned to comics that I began to look at what they can be, and the stories they can tell. Whatever avidity I lacked then, I have since made up for, becoming an incidental snob for European comics.

Similarly, despite my familiarity as a child with Japanese anime, it is only in recent years that I have returned to that tradition. I watched Dragonball, Sailor Moon, and Ronin Warriors when they first appeared on American television in the mid-nineties. I recall seeing violent, action-packed films on the weekends on the Sci Fi channel.

This was before America had a concept of 'anime' or 'manga', but I recognized the art style in the 'Special Interest' section of Blockbuster, and began a tradition of renting one of these over-the-top movies each time I had a birthday. I still remember my friends and I waking in horror one morning to discover my mother had put in the tape of our latest blood-spurting Sci fi flick--against our expectations, she enjoyed it--she even took us to see *Ghost in the Shell* during its art house theatrical release.

Yet I drifted away from it in the intervening years, and even when I started reading comics again in college, I didn't seek out manga. To some degree, my disenfranchisement was due to the American fandom, which has made popular a lot of very inane comics and shows. Many of the movies I enjoyed as a pre-teen were juvenile romps which I cannot enjoy now.

Yet there are great comics and pieces of animation coming out of Japan every year, even if they don't always become popular. So, one day as I found myself searching in vain at the tenth comic store for back issues of a late nineties anthology which included a translation of a Franco-Belgian cowboy comic I have grown to love, I suddenly asked myself why I wasn't doing the same thing for Japanese comics--especially because there was a whole wall of them the next aisle over, a luxury an American fan of European comics has never known.

So I began with Lone Wolf and Cub, primed by my love of Kurosawa movies. In terms of Legend, the next choice was obviously either this or something by Tezuka (who will surely follow). Since I had seen the film as a child and made it my first DVD purchase when I got my laptop (one of the few breaks in the long anime hiatus of my college years), the pull of this book was strong.

Otomo is one of those preeminent figures in comics--like Moebius or Tezuka--who both as artist and writer revolutionized the way comics looked and felt, and the ways they told stories. Between his meticulously realized architecture and technology, epic fight scenes, and influential body horror visions, his work seems nigh impeccable. The reader is often struck by the power and beauty of his panels. Additionally, the transitions he chooses are inventive and lend some scenes that subtle, sensory pacing never seen in American comics.

Yet there are odd moments when a head or arm will be the wrong shape or size, and lacking dimension. It is strange in such a detailed work to see such elementary mistakes--the sort of thing I have never seen Moebius do. These errors are few, and hardly compromise the work, but they are somewhat jarring.

The manga has much more plot and complexity than the film, but you don't see it until later volumes. Even though there is often a lot going on--many characters running around the city, all at odd and running into each other periodically--the story sometimes lacks for depth. All the back and forth and action keeps things moving, but it's not always the most direct or effective way to tell the story. The frenetic pace often progresses at the cost of character development.

The characters in the story are not dynamic, changing figures: their mentalities and goals stay the same throughout the series, which is a long time to go without change. We do get moments of confrontation between the characters where their relationship is brought to the forefront, but since we rarely get any buildup to these moments, they tend to feel rather artificial.

In fact, when I watched the film again, I found it does a much better job of developing the characters and their relationships, using a gradual series of meaningful interactions to let the audience know what these characters think of one another, and why.

Otomo touches on a lot of ideas about power, technology, military force, and personal identity, but often, these notions are communicated through exposition--characters sit down and talk about them. It would have been more effective if there had been shorter character arcs within the story where the personal conflicts

and changes they went through would help to reveal these concepts and explore them more fully.

But that has long been a critique of many of the more lengthy manga (and anime) series: that they end up spending a great deal of time going back and forth with lots of similar instances of combat to the detriment of the story and pacing. There is a real artistry to the combat, which Otomo clearly takes delight in crafting--and the visuals are often effective and engrossing--but he's constantly calling back to these big ideas of philosophy and interpersonal conflict, so the form and function are sometimes at odds.

But for all that, it's impossible to ignore how well visualized everything is, and how complex and multi-layered the society and politics are. This is clearly a work of great intensity and concentration, where (nearly) every panel is the result of forethought and an abundance of ideas. It is no wonder that this work is widely influential because it is so full of imagination that it challenges the reader to think about the medium in new ways, and demonstrates the power of the singular vision of an artist.

R. Kitt says

4.5-5 stars

At 2:17P.M. on December 6th, 1992, a new type of bomb exploded over the metropolitan area of Japan. 9 hours later World War III began.

38 years later became Neo-Tokyo.

Several teenagers (trouble making friends) end up at the old bomb site and one of them crashes into an unknown, wrinkled looking kid with 'special abilities', and then the story gets rather crazy.

Rusty Grey says

3.5 - 3.75 Stars

This is a review of this first volume . As there are only 6 volumes in this manga , I'd be reviewing each volume separately .

Akira is set in Neo-Tokyo in a dystopian world after World War III . It's about two friends Kaneda and Tetsuo who become enemies after an accident gives Tetsuo psychokinetic powers .

This first volume is extremely fast paced and action packed . And the illustrations are quite out of its time . There is a political sub plot , which I feel , will become central as the book progresses . With all these street gangs and police machinations of Neo-Tokyo Katsuhiro Otomo creates a dark semi-noir atmosphere , which is utterly brilliant .

This volume deals with the accident which causes Tetsuo to gain psychokinetic powers and his descent into madness . And how his friend Kaneda tries to stop him from causing any more mayhem . And then there is the sub plot with military people and rebels , about Akira , which is some source of power .

And who can forget Kaneda's iconic bike . Katsuhiro Otomo has entranced me in this cyberpunk world of drug addicts , delinquents , thugs , psychics , mad military men and whutnot . I'm really excited about the second volume .

So now mangas are my new obsession . Because they are so unique and extremely unputdownable . I've watched the movie adaptation of this book . And now it's time to experience the story in black and white .

Roger Bailey says

I had to debate myself about whether I should really rate this book at all. That is because I am not really rating it on its content, at least not on the content as it was meant to be accessed. I am blind and downloaded this book from OpenLibrary.org. They have scanned many books and protected Daisy versions are available for print impaired people. I downloaded it based on a brief glance at the synopsis and didn't realize that it was a graphic novel. I have no idea how well the pictures were rendered in the Open Library scan because I simply could not see them. I had access only to the text and there was not a whole lot of text. I am sorry, but it did not make a bit of sense to me. Maybe I should just refrain from rating it and just remove it from my bookshelves. However, I did make my way through the whole thing even if I made no sense of it and when I finished it I found that I did not like it. So here I am giving it one star. My opinion might be entirely different if I could just see it, but as things stand I just don't like it.

Petros says

VALUE SECTION: 10/10

Analysis: Historical Value 3/3, Rereadability 3/3, Memorability 4/4

Amongst the most classic manga titles of all times, Akira has passed in history as one of the best dystopian/apocalyptic titles of all times, not only because of its detailed artwork but also because of its themes, angst-ridden characters, and grotesque action/transformation scenes.

ART SECTION: 8/10

Analysis: General Artwork 2/2, Character Figures 1/2, Backgrounds 2/2, Readability 2/2, Visual Effects 1/2

I must say I am amazed. The artwork is extremely detailed and dynamic, to the point it counts as a graphic novel and not as a run of the mil comic book. The world is depicted in its most cold industrial form, buildings and machinery are highly detailed, there are various angles from which we see the action, and the violence is bloody and nightmarish. Although the average viewer may find the character figures to look too generic or even hermaphrodite, this does not take away the excitement from the numerous amazing action sequences throughout the story. Also, despite the rather blunt visual effects because of technology restrictions (or the maker's personal choice) the gravity of each explosion and death retains its shocking aspect to the fullest.

CHARACTER SECTION: 9/10

Analysis: Presence 2/2, Personality 1/2, Backdrop 2/2, Development 2/2, Catharsis 2/2

Two prevailing characters, Tetsuo and Kaneda, orphans that grew up together in a world gone crazy. Although having the same background, Kaneda feels only like an edgy, teenage delinquent. He is the leader type that makes others like him and follow him and kicks ass when somebody questions his ego.

But Tetsuo, wow, the guy is one, big, crazy, son of a ... His weak presence early in the film is quickly replaced by an insane megalomaniac, out to get even with the world that was hurting him all his life. He hardly knows whom to blame first; his researchers, his best friend or even his own self. And makes A LOT of damage because of it. Down inside, he is just a normal kid that never got the affection it needed to feel secure and now everyone will pay the price! A cult figure, for a good reason.

I prefer this kind of problematic characters to those lame heavy-dudes of today. Most recent stories with teenagers with issues don't go further than shoveling us a silent-type guy whose woman was kidnapped or village was destroyed and now got ultra powerful and fights evil. Bleah!

Although they are the main two characters there are over 60 more secondary who affect the plot through various other means. The stuck-up military guy that wants to protect the status quo, the curious scientist that challenges the powers of the unknown just to see what they can do, the rebel zealots, the scheming politician, the psychic kids, all of them contribute and criticize the various facets of modern civilization in their own way.

The duration of the story is also not too short or not too long and thus you can see them change along the way smoothly. By the end of it, you actually understand them and like them for what they are. It is true that most of them are rather too simple in personality and seem to think rather 2-dimensionally yet this doesn't make them feel dried up at all since they develop along the way in an interesting way.

STORY SECTION: 9/10

Analysis: General Scenario 2/2, Pacing 2/2, Side Stories/Extra Spices 2/2, Plausibility 2/2, Conclusion 1/2

The theme is the rotten society and the psychological damage it does that causes its own youth to rebel and bring upon its own downfall. Yes, it's a typical theme nowadays and there are a hundred series with a similar premise.

Amoral scientists experiment on little children, in order to harness their psychic powers. Searching in the dark for something they have no idea about, a kid named Akira goes amok, destroys Tokyo and brings about worldwide chaos. The politicians hide their shameful mistake from the public and scientists repeat the same experiment years later on a kid named Tetsuo... and get screwed again.

The story is simple in its premise and despite the mostly straightforward plot, its numerous characters flavor it through several side stories. The duration is as I said enough to let the story unfold smoothly and the conclusion, although rather corny, is satisfactory and solid. But it's more of a story about the psyche of teenagers, not cool graphics or in-depth scenario.

ENJOYMENT SECTION: 9/10

Highly entertaining despite the rather basic premise for today's standards. The pacing is rather slow but never wastes pages and the characters develop along the way, while the action and the mayhem are superbly depicted for their time.

VERDICT: 9/10

Well, it didn't take much consideration. The accused is found ... NOT GUILTY! ... All charges were just slander and are dropped. The accused is free to go. We hope for more of you to be out there.

Nate D says

So apparently I'm doing this manga thing right now. Like many people, I was dazzled by the film version of this as a teen. Now, finally, I'm reading it, and it promises much more (welcome) development. A lot of the tropes are familiar -- post-destruction-of-tokyo, teen rebellion, ill-advised tapping of uncontrollable power -- but this distinguishes itself in a lot of ways:

- Though originally serialized like most manga, it's almost impossible to tell -- the plotting seems that cohesive and fully-thought-out, each episode interleaving with others and progressing the plot with inescapable momentum.

- Well-developed characters. Kaneda is such a jerk, but still a totally engaging lead. I find him pretty believable in that. Kai is pretty great, and I really hope will put him in his place at some point. Tetsuo is not altogether unbelievable even in the craziness of his story. The supporting cast seems memorably distinguished too, even those who only get brief panel time.

- suggestions of big themes: a lot of the context seems derived, like Godzilla and so much else in Japanese pulp, from the lasting scars of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but here it seems distinctly turned towards a cold war allegory of the all-destroying drive to power.

- Otomo's art, which somehow combines a kind of kinetic, gestural character energy with elegant architectural design (advancing even beyond the meticulous apartment complexes of his prior Domu).

On the other hand, I'm honestly not all that into action comics, even if the action here is done very very well (great staging and choreography, well-paced). It's not unnecessary action, exactly, I just wouldn't mind seeing these things developed in other ways.

Anyway, this is good. Maybe great. I'm probably going to ditch out of The Drifting Classroom, in which my interest has somehow started to wane despite plagues and the emergence of cults and factions, and read this instead.

Brad says

If I hadn't seen the film version of Akira way back in the late eighties, at a midnight screening at our local Indy theatre (run by the crazy Swede my Dad hated for selling us a nicked table), and if I hadn't watched it repeatedly over the next twenty some years, I'd have read this manga this week with complete disdain. But the movie, luckily, is a masterpiece, and it is based on the full six part manga, so I have some sense of where Akira is going and what makes it worth while.

As a stand alone chapter, though, Akira #1 is poor. The characters are all lame in some way, one dimensional and boring: Tetsuo and Kaneda are impossible to empathize with or like, the kids being experimented on are lame, the Colonel is all yankee action movie bluster, Kei -- the hyper-capable love interest -- has become an overdone stereotype. The action is too frenetic. The pace is unrelenting in a bad way. The dialogue, in translation, is laughable. Even the future world is suffering due to the passage of time.

Yet there is something, one thing, that redeems Akira for me. I often talk with friends about the cinematic qualities of American and British comics and graphic novels, but those books have nothing on Akira. Akira is like the missing link between the page and screen. I don't know manga, so I can't speak to whether or not this is a common feature, but Katsuhiro Otomo discards all attempts at explication. There is know "meanwhile," no "Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters," no added commentary to refresh our memories, no bits of narration to make transitions easy. Otomo is all film editor. One bit ends and the next panel takes us somewhere else. A straight cinematic cut from one piece of action to the next.

For me, it's worth reading just for that.

So even though I was super disappointed with this reading experience, I will keep reading the series. Maybe it will get better. Maybe the whole will be as good as the film it inspired. Maybe its just the most elaborate first draft screenplay/storyboard ever assembled. I'll soon find out, so I'll let you know.

Mizuki says

I first watched the anime adaptation of *Akira* when I was an eight or nine years old kid (despite the gruesome images and the violence, the anime was still aired in daytime 'family hours' during summer holiday back then, shocking) and the whole thing really scared the shit out of me. I mean, what eight years old kid has the strong-enough mentality to handle the image of little children who look like elderly, evil looking massive teddy bear, and a teenager turns into a mother fucking monster!?

I only started to appreciate **this Sci-Fi masterpiece** when finally I mustered up enough courage to overcome my childhood trauma and watched the anime again when I went to college.

Decades later, I am now reading the manga version of *Akira*, I am impressed by Katsuhiro Otomo's realistic and detailed artwork, his gloomy worldview and his creativity! I'm speechless!

Lisa says

3.5 stars

I haven't read any Manga before so this is new to me and it did take a bit of getting used to - I did get a bit lost in places. I think I need to pay more attention to the pictures rather than relying on the words for all the info as I would normally.

I enjoyed it though and will order volume 2 from the library right now!

Coffee&Quasars says

3.4 stars.

For fans of: hijinks; ominous foreboding.

Avoid if: you're sensitive about being bald.

Rebecca McNutt says

This strange sci-fi dystopian manga takes place in Neo-Tokyo, a thriving city built from the ruins of Tokyo after World War Three. But Tetsuo and Kaneda, two punk teens in a biker gang, find themselves caught up in government corruption, scientific experimentation, paranormal power and frightening secrets when they encounter the obscure truths of *Akira*.

Just who or what is Akira? Well, this first volume is much more detailed than the 1988 animated film adaptation, to say the least, and it was incredibly fast-paced and gripping; I'm going to be reading the next few volumes soon as well to find out just how in-depth it gets. I loved the art/illustrations, the characters, the impressive amount of intelligence and thought put into it all... definitely a book worth reading!

Maria says

BRUH. honestly? I enjoyed this more than i enjoyed the movie. everything makes sense here, the transitions from one scene to another go smoothly (the anime has a flaw in this regard), character design works better, the characters themselves, especially minor ones, are actually given some characterization and time to develop hence the increase of the emotional impact certain scenes had on me (MY BOY YAMADA MAN. R.I.P. to MVP).

overall, very nice so far, I think that reading the manga before/after watching the anime is actually a requirement if you want to really understand what the author really meant by all of...this.

oh, by the way - fuCK YOU, TETSUO, and your inferiority complex, too.

so I just watched the iconic movie for the first time and whilst it's undoubtedly a groundbreaking masterpiece I still found it quite hard to follow the plot. the reason why is apparently because it only follows the events of first half of volume one and first half of volume 6 which is ??

anyways, the need for more info is obvious. here we go

Newton Nitro says

(Resenha da Série Inteira)

Só quem foi adolescente nos anos 80, e que era completamente nerd com a paranoia nuclear e a Guerra Fria, como eu era, pode entender como foi marcante assistir aquele anime maravilhoso naquela época, naquele tempo. A possibilidade de um apocalipse nuclear era mais concreta do que a cadeira esquentando o meu traseiro nesse momento. Eu, na minha piração nerd adolescente, usava essas narrativas pós-apocalípticas como guias de sobrevivência, com aquela visão de “o que eu faria nessa situação”. Isso me fazia consumir com voracidade tudo que rolava na cultura da época, os filmes do Mad Max, o filme para TV “The Day After – O Dia Seguinte”, entre trocentos outros. E foi nessa fissura que, por meio de uma fita mega-pirataada entre o minúsculo submundo anime-nerd de Belo Horizonte que o anime Akira explodiu meus miolos.

Anos seguintes, em meio a revolução que passava pelos quadrinhos no Brasil, com Cavaleiro das Trevas, Watchmen, Ronin, Lobo Solitário, comecei a ler o mangá de Akira, e mais uma vez entrei em contato com a genialidade de Katsushiro Otomo. Mais até do que no anime, os temas de aniquilação nuclear e sobrevivência pós-apocalíptica são explorados até suas últimas consequências.

Mas nessa minha última releitura da saga, com um olhar mais amadurecido, reconheci novos elementos na narrativa, e considero Akira como sendo uma história que lida com temas muito ligados à experiência japonesa da Segunda Guerra Mundial, sua singularidade como o único povo atingido por uma bomba nuclear (o que explica os temas recorrentes de destruição apocalíptica, o topo do monstro gigante destruindo Tóquio, etc.) e do período pós-guerra.

O mangá é bem diferente do anime, apesar de compartilharem os mesmos personagens, terem cenas e até temas em comum. A narrativa se divide em duas partes distintas: a primeira parte é, apesar de também pós-

apocalíptico é bem cyberpunk e futurista, a segunda parte é completamente de sobrevivência pós-apocalíptica, com o cenário da primeira parte em ruínas absolutas.

A segunda parte, que compões a maior narrativa da saga, revela uma sociedade lutando para reencontrar a normalidade dentro do colapso social e arquitetônico de Neo-Tokyo. Uma busca trágica, pois, no final do arco narrativo, descobrem que não existe possibilidade de retorno ao período pré-apocalíptico, cujas memórias só podem ser acessadas através de fantasia nostálgica e do enfrentamento de traumas do passado.

Essa busca pelo passado pré-apocalíptico, seja pelas memórias da infância de Tetsuo, seja pelo topo infantil que se repete na saga (tirando Tetsuo, todos os paranormais estagnaram seu desenvolvimento corporal, e muitos até psíquicos, no estágio infantil). É como se fosse uma expressão do desejo japonês de retornar a uma era onde Hiroshima e Nagasaki não aconteceram. Sempre me impressionou que a primeira cena de Akira, tanto no mangá quanto no anime, é a destruição de Neo-Tokio, uma referência clara ao bombardeio de Hiroshima e Nagasaki. É como se Otomo dissesse: “olha, vamos falar de como o bombardeio atômico fodeu com a mente do nosso povo”.

Como Katsushiro Otomo nasceu em 1954 e cresceu em meio ao Japão pós-guerra e cada vez mais influenciado pela cultura americana, não experimentou diretamente o trauma do bombardeio atômico. Imagino que sua inspiração para Akira, com seus paranormais poderosos e sua singularidade (avanços tecnológicos que levam a criação de seres com capacidade infinitamente superior à inteligência humana, sejam inteligências artificiais, ciborgues ou pós-humanos como Akira e Tetsuo) seria de reconstruir o trauma do apocalipse japonês para uma nova geração, que só o compreende através da mediação histórica. Uma nova geração que cresceu dentro do caos que é o mundo pós-segunda guerra mundial, e que transformou, como Kaneda e sua gangue, o caos em uma nova normalidade.

O final do mangá é uma rejeição à ideologia da nostalgia, uma rejeição a qualquer noção de patriotismo ou identidade fixa, em nome de uma identidade flexível, passível de adaptação e construção de novas organizações (como a nova nação que surge no final), ou identidades além das humanas (como a transcendência de Akira e Tetsuo).

Para Katsushiro Otomo, na minha interpretação da narrativa de Akira, um apocalipse não é o fim de tudo, após um apocalipse sempre existe uma reinvenção da cultura e da identidade, uma metamorfose e o estabelecimento de uma nova normalidade. Para o bem, ou para o mal, ou para além dessa dicotomia absurda. :)

E se você não leu, meu caro leitor, corre e leia! :) É doidimais véééi! :D

ANOTAÇÕES DURANTE A LEITURA DO MANGÁ AKIRA

Seguem algumas anotações que fiz ao reler Akira, de Katsushiro Otomo. :)

Técnica Narrativa: Dialogos expositivos, a história abre com restos de um holocausto nuclear, distopia. Mesma preocupação do watchmen, zeitgeist da época.

Tetsuo e a gangue agem como bullies com o número 26, a primeira das crianças velhas., espelhando o comportamento que tem na escola.

A relação entre a gangue da pílula é bem desenvolvida, a relação entre Tetsuo e Kaneda é uma das espinhas narrativas da saga.

Tema da delinquência juvenil contrastado com a delinquência governamental.

Rebeldia juvenil, e a narrativa visual muito cinematográfica e com toques mais ocidentais. Otomo disse que foi influenciado pelo cinema rebelde americano dos anos 70, filmes como Bonnie and Clyde e Easy Rider.

Técnica Narrativa: A narrativa é bem ágil, a cada três páginas algo importante acontece.

Técnica Narrativa: Uso de McGuffins, objetos que geram perseguições dentro da trama. Primeiro com a pílula que Kaneda rouba dos rebeldes.

Técnica Narrativa: Muitas narrativas de “busca-apreensão-retorno”, sempre correndo atrás de algo ou fugindo de algo.

Os planos do governo e dos rebeldes começam a dar errado a partir da interferência da gangue de Testuo e Kaneda, e do encontro acidental com o Número 26. A trama evita coincidências.

Uma das diferenças com o filme é o tema antropológico da organização de uma sociedade selvagem e religiosa ao redor de Akira, depois do primeiro cataclisma.

O tema das drogas esta presente desde o início, o simbolo da pílula, e da capacidade de desenvolver habilidades acima do limite humano por meio de drogas era muito presente nos anos 80, com a popularização dos esteróides, a cultura da cocaína como meio de se tornar um super executivo. Os filmes da época lidavam muito com esse tema, como Rocky 4.

Técnica Narrativa: Personagens femininas proativas, fortes, bem construídas e fugindo dos topos tradicionais de tramas de ação, Kay salva Kaneda muitas vezes. E adorei a personagem Chioko, uma mulher enorme e durona.

A arte é maravilhosa e a colonização da Epic Comics foi impressionante, incrível como foi uma das primeiras colorizações de quadrinhos mainstream. As cores foram feitas emulando as aquarelas usadas tradicionalmente nas primeiras páginas dos mangás.

A narrativa passa para uma exploração de temas sobre o fanatismo religioso e como cultos se desenvolvem.

As drogas previnem Tetsuo de aumentar seus poderes, e ele precisa aprender auto-controle. Metáfora da cultura das drogas e do capitalismo sem limites dos anos 80, a década do “cobiça” da era Reagan. É também uma narrativa de iluminação, tradição budista – oriental, gnóstica. A verdadeira natureza do homem é ilimitada.

Tema da singularidade, deuses criados pela ciência humana. Pós-humanismo e Trans-humanismo.

Tema cyberpunk, usar o lixo e reusar a tecnologia para novas configurações. A rua encontra seus próprios usos para a tecnologia.

Alta tecnologia do começo e baixa tecnologia da segunda parte.

Única coisa que não gostei, a arte vai ficando meio “nas coxas” à medida que vai chegando nos últimos volumes. Nem se compara mais com a arte dos primeiros volumes, parece que Otomo estava mais cansado! ;)

Javier Muñoz says

Visualmente espectacular, se lee en un suspiro y la historia, oscura y vertiginosa, está muy bien planteada.

En este tomo pasan muchas cosas y parece que ya se encarrila toda la trama, así que me da a mí que en los próximos tomos habrá mucho relleno, en todo caso, continuaré porque este tomo me ha resultado muy entretenido y para mi, después de haber visto la película unas cuantas veces, esta es una de mis cuentas pendientes en el mundo del cómic en general y del manga en particular, además como consigo los tomos en la biblioteca sale gratis.
