Joan

A French manga critic from online friendship to books and shared reading

Joan is a French-language manga critic who writes as @_Meloku and publishes books as Joan Lainé. His work includes a decade of collaboration with AnimeLand, alongside Nostroblog and the personal blog La Cinquième Case; he also maintains BUNNIESU, a separate outlet for K-pop.[1, 2, 3] An early desire to tell people about things that had moved him developed into interviews, page-level criticism, editor-guided books and an informal reading club.

The changes involved learning different ways to be public. Friends supplied a place to write together; conventions required travel, introductions and language assistance; interviewing artists and a French letterer opened the finished book onto other people's work. He could keep the personal intensity of a reader's response while becoming more exact about what a recommendation, an interpretation or an author's account could tell somebody else.

Recognition before expertise

Joan recalls a PlayStation 2 spanning the end of primary school and the beginning of lycée, initially with Final Fantasy X and Ico. Japanese role-playing games became part of his cultural education. Ico's cover drew him in before its story produced what he remembers as an early artistic shock. Admiration and enjoyable mechanics were not always identical: Metal Gear Solid impressed him while its action and stealth were harder to enjoy.[4]

In his 2015 autobiographical account, online criticism began in 2008. Persona 3 affected a withdrawn lycée pupil who wanted other people to discover it. Schoolmates associated him with games, but the internet offered another circle. Soon afterward, Asano's Solanin made him recognize lives resembling his own elsewhere. He had kept a private opinion journal before internet access; public recommendations extended that private recognition toward other readers. Forums gave way to Twitter for opinions and Tumblr for images, alongside friction over supposed elitism and how to explain disagreement.[5]

His 2015 contribution to a collective favorites exercise retained distinctions inside that enthusiasm. With Solanin, he selected Matsumoto's Amer Beton, Maruo's La jeune fille aux camélias and Kamimura's Lorsque nous vivions ensemble. He discussed humanism within violence, grotesque beauty and social transgression, distinguishing Asano's stronger book from the one nearest his heart.[6] Life-changing proximity and a critical hierarchy need not coincide. That difference gave his writing room to value a work without pretending that the experience would be identical for everyone.

Friends make a publishing rhythm possible

On March 3, 2013, Joan introduced Nostroblog with Yokoyama, Raismith, Bobo, Maerlyn and V pour Viennetta. Maerlyn supplied the name. Manga and Japanese animation were central, but comics, games, television and music could enter. Different understandings of shared enthusiasms supplied the starting resource, rather than a settled editorial doctrine.[7]

By March 2015, ten writers usually published on Wednesdays and Sundays. Raismith created the illustrated banner; Plumes, Animint, social media and readers' shared links helped circulate the work. Joan wanted analytical articles, interviews, rankings and video, including Maerlyn's Let's Talk About participation.[8] The site needed a timetable, a recognizable surface and other people's distribution. A publisher's later description of Joan as its creator cannot replace those contributions.

The 2017 anniversary FAQ describes a month of discussions about name, design and schedule before launch. A shared calendar accommodated extra Friday pieces and timely changes. Articles could take weeks or months, bringing anxiety about reception. The collective chose free, advertising-free writing that brought no income; members' circumstances included study, teaching, banking and unemployment.[9] They fitted recurring publication around those other circumstances, buying books and spending weeks on writing that did not pay.

An online network becomes physical help

Japan Expo in July 2014 required more than wanting to interview someone. Traveling from southwestern France, with Albi in his itinerary, Joan worried about money, Paris transport, heat and crowds. Dou hosted him; fellow readers explained the convention, and a press badge helped him find his way. Ours256 worked with him on the Christel Hoolans interview, while Elsior helped with English and reassurance for Yusuke Nakamura. Books, appointments, missed performances and exhaustion filled the same trip.[10] Online acquaintance had become practical assistance at a place he did not yet know how to use.

His reading also had a physical footprint. In late 2014 he estimated owning 3,000–3,500 books, mostly manga, with storage becoming a weekly problem. A Kindle complemented borrowing and purchases, offering adjustable text and annotation, but did not replace his library card or physical comics. He still could not enjoy manga digitally.[11] The page that later criticism would inspect closely belonged to a costly, space-consuming reading environment.

The 2015 Junji Ito interview depended on Manga-Sanctuary, Delcourt/Tonkam and interpreter Fabien Nabhan after Angoulême. Joan asked about formation, motifs, page construction and collaboration. When he proposed a Marxist or social dimension to the horror, Ito denied intending it.[12] Joan left the reply in the conversation. Interpretation could exceed intention, but the artist's stated project remained a different kind of claim.

Admiration was beginning to encounter people who could answer back.

Giving somebody an entrance

His December 2015 discovery guide proposed anthologies as a manageable route into unfamiliar manga. Ax Anthologie, Comic Cue, Bang, Japon and Le jour où ça bascule offered shorter encounters leading toward individual artists; he had found Akino Kondoh through Ax. Available French editions and publishers made the route actionable.[13] A reader did not have to adopt his whole taste or commit to a long series before finding something worth pursuing.

The 2017 ten-mangaka selection distinguished a starting work from a personal favorite. Asano, Furuya, Nakamura, Oshimi, Kamimura, Nananan, Maruo, Matsumoto, Ito and Yamamoto were discussed through drawing, panels, desire, vulnerability and social pressure.[14] His accumulation of reading became useful through choices about where another person might begin. Romance, horror, queer narratives and alternative comics could belong to the same field without becoming the same experience.

Interviews turn finished pages into working decisions

At Angoulême in 2017, Mari Yamazaki and Tori Miki explained Pline through flexible collaboration: outlines and name, discussion, pencils, inking and scenery. Benjamin helped interview and photograph intermediate pages; Wladimir Labaere translated. Published in April 2024 around the work’s award, the recorded encounter acquired renewed relevance.[15] An interview could remain useful because it preserved how a page had been made, not simply what its authors said at a promotional moment.

The 2020 Matsumoto conversation joined Kana, AnimeLand, Manga News, Journal du Japon and Bodoï, with Yuki Takanami and Ilan Nguyên interpreting. The questions and professional access were collective. Matsumoto’s account of moving from unprecedented art toward personally interesting experiments offered Joan a view of uncertainty within an admired career.[16] It would later help him read artistic maturation beyond a demand for another definitive masterpiece.

BFMTV’s June 2021 Escale à Yokohama feature used Joan Lainé’s expertise as an AnimeLand critic. He had sought manageable Japanese texts and explained the manga’s silences and time, including a sequence where removing the panel gutter changed spatial and temporal boundaries. A reader controlled pace differently from an animation viewer.[17] Close attention was becoming professionally legible as an explanation of what pages did, beyond a verdict that a book was good.

The surrounding library widened that work. His 2023 Akimi Yoshida inventory combined French manga with Japanese artbooks, guidebooks, a career mook, short stories and interviews. Kamakura’s places and food extended Kamakura Diary’s world.[18] Collecting

gave him material for comparisons among drawings, testimony, adaptations and landscape.

That April, he interviewed Elsa Pecqueur about lettering Hagio’s Le Clan des Poe. An indexed Japanese volume, numbered translation and placed text had to be coordinated; narrow vertical balloons and embedded wording required adaptation and hand-redrawing while preserving a 1970s visual language.[19] The French edition was made by identifiable workers. Following the work beyond its celebrated Japanese author made the book in his hands more intelligible.

Different scales of criticism

Joan’s 2022 Club Shôjo character essay described longstanding solitude and admired Totonô Kunô in Tamura’s Don’t Call It Mystery for listening and making connections. He also imagined podcasts or live programs but acknowledged obstacles, and preferred expressing his thoughts to debating them.[20] Wanting conversation did not mean wanting every possible form of exposure. His eventual public formats had to fit those different inclinations.

The 2023 gekiga introduction worked at historical scale, connecting artists, magazines, editions and broader comics culture. It directed readers toward Guilbert, Dahan, Holmberg, Asakawa and Leblanc’s work on Garo, as resources to pursue selectively.[21] A guide could organize a long reading history without insisting that someone follow it from beginning to end.

The 2024 Ōoku / Le Pavillon des Hommes essay concentrated instead on three consecutive pages, a flashback and a return to the present. Framing, black and white backgrounds, cropping, revelations, facial expressions and sound effects altered Iemitsu’s laughter and generated compassion. Fanbooks, magazines and interviews accompanied the reading.[22] An emotional response became something to inspect through the language of comics, rather than just identify as a theme in the plot.

In the May 2024 shôjo discussion, publication context complicated preference. Joan found pleasure and artistic force outside demographic labels, yet defended the importance of a field substantially made by women for women. Magazines and artists’ movement across categories mattered.[23] Labels could constrain a book’s reception while still naming institutions through which books and audiences became possible.

His July “manga de maître” essay used Hagio’s Barbara and Urasawa’s Asadora to value late-career exploration without declaring them the artists’ greatest works. Matsumoto’s earlier interview returned as a way to think about that freedom.[24] The distinction between the strongest work and the nearest to a reader’s heart had developed into a broader account of what a career might permit an artist to enjoy doing.

[External image / 外部圖片] Yellow Culture Shônen cover with a divided illustrated face and Joan Lainé’s name.

Culture Shônen (2024), Joan Lainé's first solo-authored book. In his publication account he credits Akimaro's cover design and describes writing the book between January and March 2024. Cover by Akimaro; Abysse Publishing / H-tag Pop; image shared by Joan on Nostroblog · Rights retained by the source and respective rights holders; no open license stated. · Image source

Books bring editors and other writers into the work

In June 2024, 100 mangas qui ont marqué l'histoire appeared as a 208-page collective guide, crediting Joan Lainé, Bruno de La Cruz, Roseline Mornet and Joséphine Lemercier.[25] A publisher could now package accumulated criticism at a different scale, with expertise distributed among several authors.

Culture Shônen, his solo debut, appeared on October 2, 2024. Sébastien Célimon, his former AnimeLand editor, guided it: themes were assigned; Joan negotiated additions and angles. Writing ran January–March beside other projects. Toriyama's death was announced near the end, prompting him to dedicate the unfinished introduction to Toriyama, whose Dragon Ball brought him to manga. Akimaro made the cover; layout and manufacture belonged to the publisher. Thematic dossiers, manga-making, editorial audiences, French reception and his own quizzes offered an approachable form for newcomers and experienced readers. He still wanted to write unpaid, freely accessible articles.[26]

The second volume followed in March 2025, in a compact 128-page format with guided analyses and quizzes.[27] Ynnis's Hentai! Érotisme et pornographie au Japon joined him with Benjamin Dulot and Julia Popek, including creator and researcher interviews. Dulot's Nostroblog/AnimeLand background and Popek's women's-manga and Club Shôjo research connected distinct critical worlds.[28] An edited solo series and collective guides brought different responsibilities. In each, the book required other people to turn his reading and writing into a finished publication.

Readers also need the publishers

When Cornélius sought support in July 2024, Joan used recommendations to send readers toward its shop and fundraising. Japanese work sat beside Korean, Chinese, American and French comics.[29] Knowledge of a catalogue became reasons to buy particular books, directing attention toward the organization maintaining their availability.

For naBan's fifth anniversary that September, he distinguished books already read from anticipated titles. Direct publisher shops could support the imprint; ordering through a bookseller could also increase local awareness.[30] The French-language book economy was part of the criticism. Future encounters depended on organizations able to finance and distribute them.

A second subject can remain pleasurable

During the 2024 book-writing period, Joan introduced BUNNIESU for K-pop, deliberately loose and guided by moods. Blackpink, NewJeans, (G)I-dle, Le Sserafim, Aespa, Ive, Twice and Red Velvet belonged to its enthusiasms.[31] A writer with established manga knowledge could begin something because it delighted him, without first making it another professional qualification.

In February 2025 he reported over a hundred articles, 8,200 visitors and eighty comments, while describing a low-pressure space mainly for people who knew him and welcoming strangers. Being read was motivating; opinions and musical recommendations were welcome.[32] This public pleasure sits beside the more demanding forms of criticism and commissioned writing, rather than having to justify itself as their training.

The reading club gives enthusiasm a repeatable form

By 2025, La Cinquième Case provided a personal home for manga writing, linking the books and offering PayPal and Ko-fi support.[33] The personal outlet gave him another setting in which to decide how to address readers.

Monthly rankings narrow the task: the January 2025 selection, published in March, excluded reissues, sequels and spin-offs. Four current favorites brought existing interest in Paru Itagaki, Gô Tanabe and Nao Iwamoto together with Kirio Fanclub.[34] A reader could take a small suggestion from a sustained critical history without treating the ranking as his whole reading diary.

The Club Lecture, announced for April 2025, invited reading one or both of two selections and discussing them through comments, social media or direct exchange. No registration, attendance obligation or uninterrupted monthly commitment was required. One-shots and short series limited cost and time. Matsumoto’s Éveil and Okazaki’s Helter Skelter opened its first pair.[35] The shared date encouraged starting, while the small choice left room to refuse, skip or return.

Making that invitation usable required attention to editions. May’s Pour Sanpei and Petite Forêt could each be read in a collected volume, despite earlier two-volume editions; their shared interest in everyday making provided a thematic connection.[36] August expanded to three choices, but L’étranger de la plage remained a bounded one-shot assignment with its continuing sequel optional.[37] A recommendation did not quietly become an obligation to collect an entire series.

Genre expectations needed similar care. The October 2025 Halloween pair, Poor Little Mina and L’enfant Frankenstein, was explained to readers wary of immediate terror or violence.[38] January 2026 paired Kamimura’s Le Fleuve Shinano with Kôno’s Une longue route through poetic treatments of difficult love, again explaining an earlier three-volume edition and a later collection.[39] Historical comparison and practical access became parts of

the same invitation, without requiring each monthly post to reproduce a whole essay.

Longer criticism continued. September 2026’s Underground review placed Maruo within late-1960s culture, magazines, performance and visual references, while keeping autobiographical material distinct from fiction. Credits included Casterman, Miyako Slocombe’s translation and Hinoko’s lettering; his entry advice also acknowledged that immediate attachment could be difficult.[40]

Another September essay used Manabe and Tatsumi to challenge a picturesque Japan through exploitation, poverty and marginalized lives. Links to contemporary social manga, gekiga, autobiography and short stories were accompanied by comparison with hardship in France.[41] The invitation to discover Japan did not require keeping social suffering safely exotic.

For October 2026 he paired Ito’s Soïchi with Mochizuki’s La dame de la chambre close: comic horror beside a disturbing psychological story, with alternative collected or two-volume editions accepted.[42] The critic who had interviewed Ito eleven years earlier was still finding another way for someone to encounter the work.

These activities have changed what Joan is able to offer: a shared publishing rhythm, a conversation translated and preserved, an explanation of three pages, a negotiated book, or a date on which to start reading something unfamiliar. Each needs different people and practical support. The collective, interpreters, editors, letterers and publishers do not disappear behind the critic’s byline.

His early recognition in Solanin was personal. Its public continuation depends on allowing the next reader a different experience: another starting point, edition, pace, preference or objection. The critical confidence remains, including the desire to express a judgment. Around it he has gradually built formats that make enthusiasm usable without requiring everyone to become the same reader.

Sources and bibliographic notes

1. X, public profile of Joan, @_Meloku.↩
2. Blogger, public profile of Joan; linked blogs.↩
3. Ynnis, Hentai! Érotisme et pornographie au Japon; credits and author biographies. Publisher biographies corroborate the publishing name and AnimeLand collaboration. This catalogue does not allocate individual chapters or interviews; the complete guide was not inspected.↩
4. Joan, “Mes jeux préférés sur Playstation 2,” 22 November 2023.↩
5. Joan, “À quoi bon donner mon avis?”, 9 August 2015; including author replies.↩
6. Nostroblog, “Les #4FavMangas,” 5 August 2015; section II, Meloku.↩

7. Joan, “Des copains et du goût,” 3 March 2013.↩
8. Joan, “Deux ans, déjà,” 2 March 2015. The site reported 15,025 visits for 2013 and 38,798 for 2014. Visits are not unique readers or personal earnings.↩
9. Nostroblog, fourth-anniversary FAQ, posted by Joan, 3 March 2017. Collective occupations do not identify Joan’s personal employment. No present income, fees or complete employment history is established.↩
10. Joan, “Un noob à Japan Expo,” 16 July 2014.↩
11. Joan, “Le livre numérique et moi,” 10 November 2014.↩
12. Joan, interview with Junji Ito, 11 February 2015.↩
13. Joan, “Comment découvrir des mangas différents facilement?”, 9 December 2015.↩
14. Joan, “Mes 10 mangakas préférés,” 22 March 2017.↩
15. Joan, interview with Mari Yamazaki and Tori Miki, 28 April 2024; conducted in 2017.↩
16. Nostroblog, joint interview with Taiyô Matsumoto, 27 November 2020.↩
17. Jérôme Lachasse, BFMTV, report on Escale à Yokohama, 5 June 2021.↩
18. Joan, “Ma collection Akimi Yoshida,” 30 April 2023. Possession of Japanese books does not establish complete reading of their texts.↩
19. Joan, interview with letterer Elsa Pecqueur, 6 April 2023.↩
20. Joan, “À la recherche du personnage modèle,” 27 April 2022.↩
21. Joan, “Introduction au gekiga,” 17 December 2023.↩
22. Joan, Le Pavillon des Hommes analysis, 14 April 2024.↩
23. Joan, “Que préférez-vous dans les shôjo?”, 19 May 2024.↩
24. Joan, “Manga de maître,” 17 July 2024.↩
25. Decitre, 100 mangas qui ont marqué l’histoire; publication and contributor record. The complete book was not inspected. The record establishes credits and format, not allocation of entries, writing fees or sales.↩
26. Joan, “J’ai écrit un livre sur le shônen manga,” 2 October 2024. The complete book was not inspected; process and declared aims here follow the author’s account, not an independent evaluation of the finished volume.↩
27. Decitre, Culture Shônen, volume 2; publication and format record. The complete volume was not inspected. Content descriptions are the catalogue’s claims; publication does not establish reception or commercial success.↩
28. Ynnis, Hentai! Érotisme et pornographie au Japon; credits and author biographies. Publisher biographies corroborate the publishing name and AnimeLand collaboration. This catalogue does not allocate individual chapters or interviews; the complete guide was not inspected.↩

29. Joan, “Cornélius a besoin de vous,” 3 July 2024. The article’s account of a legal dispute belongs to its advocacy, not an independent adjudication.↩

30. Joan, “5 ans de naBan: quels mangas retenir?”, 29 September 2024.↩

31. Joan, BUNNIESU introduction, February 2024.↩

32. Joan, BUNNIESU first-anniversary post, February 2025.↩

33. Joan, La Cinquième Case, “À propos.” The personal outlet does not establish a definitive break with Nostroblog; platform relations and support income remain undocumented.↩

34. Joan, January 2025 manga ranking, posted March 2025.↩

35. Joan, April 2025 Club Lecture launch, posted March 2025. The invitation establishes the proposed format, not participation rates, completion or community size.↩

36. Joan, Club Lecture, May 2025.↩

37. Joan, Club Lecture, August 2025.↩

38. Joan, Club Lecture, October 2025.↩

39. Joan, Club Lecture, January 2026.↩

40. Joan, Underground review, September 2026.↩

41. Joan, “La face cachée du Japon dans les mangas,” September 2026.↩

42. Joan, Club Lecture, October 2026.↩