

## **“Japanese Postmodernism, Anime and Culture Hybridations: An Occidental Aesthetic Study of JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure”**

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**Abstract:** *This article is an aesthetic and historical analysis of the consciousness of identity, culture and art in Japan from its period of change from the Tokugawa era to the Meiji era, as well as the stage of World War II and the Postwar. The postmodern aesthetics of Japanese anime focuses on a constant cultural hybridization between the West and the East, where the notion of what defines part of Japanese culture is the result of an interaction of literary, cinematic, musical and cultural aesthetic motifs and tropes of the Western world.*

**Key Words:** *Anime, Art, Culture, Occidentalism, Postmodernity.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The study of postmodernity from the Japanese perspective generates a series of critical reflections on the social development of the Japanese power in cultural spheres that differentiate it from the West. The development of postmodernity in Japan arises as a result of a profound progress of the capitalist system throughout the Asian island. This process is the product of an economic, cultural and social heritage that emerged during the post-war period, due to the fact that it produced a radical change in mentality in the relationship between Japan and the West after World War II [1]. While, on the other hand, in the West, postmodernity emerges as the weakening of the model of modernity, exerting deep pressure on the role of the great metaphysical, scientific, religious, social and cultural stories inherited from enlightened thought.

Postmodernity is a philosophical and cultural movement that claims a fierce critique of modernity. It attacks the strong univocity of enlightened reason, its pride in believing itself the foundation and the vault key of all the senses, the vanity of European ethnocentrism or the sacralization of the great words of modernity (truth, freedom, justice, progress). The barbarities of the twentieth century (Nazi concentration camps, wars or poverty in the Third World) denounce that the great truths of modernity are only lies assumed to be the Truth. Ultimately, what the so-called postmodernity seeks is to fill us... with distrust towards everything that modernity presented as definitive, univocal and total [2].

Postmodernity, as Hernández and Espinosa put it, requires a direct critique of the project of modernity. However, it is not proposed as a reduction to the criticism of the modern, but rather a constant rewriting of the dogmatic values of science and reason, by a relativism and subjectivism characteristic of the new cultural currents of multiculturalism of the second half of the century. 20th century and early 21st.

### **II. Japan Postmodernity**

In the particular case of Japan, postmodernity results from a radical change in the nationalist project developed during the Second World War, as well as from the interaction with its historical period of the Meiji Era. The opening of the country to the West establishes a series of internal political tensions in the Japanese country, regarding its millennial past and the western modernity proposed by a new social and cultural relationship with the West. In this chaotic period of the country's history, Japanese culture began to reinterpret its identity, through the first mixes with the Western world from an economic and cultural point of view.

The concept of postmodernity within Japanese culture presents a series of intrinsic differences to those of other western cultures of Europe and America. On the one hand, Japanese society has a historical legacy of

opening to the late Industrial Age in the mid-19th century. Situation that ended up economically marginalizing it with other economically and industrially developed nations such as Great Britain, Germany, the United States, among other Western nations. The late development and its insertion in the socio-political flows of modernity, and its departure from feudal structures until the 19th century, positioned Japan in a deep search for national identity, which although it was very common among the nations of the world throughout the world. throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In Japan, social inquiry had very peculiar overtones due to its profound social solipsism with the rest of the nations before the nineteenth century.

The modernization of Japan postulated the cultural bases for the future development of postmodernity, as well as the warlike conflicts of World War II and its relationship with the West. Japan's path to postmodernity is linked to three fundamental moments in its history. The first occurs in the Meiji Restoration Era, the second at its insertion into the Axis bloc between Germany and Italy, as well as at a third time at the end of the Second World War. Each of these moments involves a direct relationship with the West in different ways. On the one hand, the first moment establishes the insertion of Japan in the western markets, the evolution of its feudal state to its industrial era, as well as its gradual progress to consolidate itself as a modern nation and power not only in the region, but also globally. The second stage involves a tense relationship between the western world and nations of the allied bloc, as well as some neighbors in the neighboring regions of Japan. This particular period is represented by a series of propaganda attacks between the two worlds. This stage presented a relationship of enmity that will radically contrast with the third stage. The last-mentioned section of relationship with the West in its history after the end of World War II, involved a continuation of the first stage of economic relations with the Western world. However, this connection occurred in a context of merely economic and commercial relations, but also of allies with Western countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, France, among others.



**Fig I. “Aizawa” by Daniela Domínguez Rubin**

The annexation of the Japanese country to the former allied bloc, involved a greater cultural exchange between both nations. Situation that propelled a greater cultural hybridization between pop and artistic themes between both worlds. Japan's literature, film, music, clothing, and multiple cultural dynamics set the stage for a more dynamic interaction that was featured in Western narratives and representations in anime, manga, and other media formats of the Japanese mass culture.

### **III. Anime And The Case Of Jojo's Bizarre Adventure**

The particular case of JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure, both in its animated format and written in the manga, showcase dynamic and hybrid representations of the third period. The break with the propaganda format of the Second World War, made possible a linking of references and intertextualities characteristic of Western postmodernity, within Japanese culture. Although, much of the postmodern thought in the West is based on the death of the great meta-stories postulated by Lyotard. Also, this type of metaphysical and political deaths occurred in the Nippon country after the Second World War. One of the integral moments was the declaration and definition of the emperor as a human being, and not as a divine being.

This type of political proclamation ended with other presumably modern meta-stories of Japanese culture, such as that of radical nationalism and its erratic racial and cultural superiority with the rest of the countries of the region. This integral element produced and made possible a greater interrelation of themes, motifs and cultural tropes between the western and eastern world. It is essential to emphasize that this type of renouncement to cultural reasons before the end of World War II, also appeared in nations such as Germany in their refusal to accept North American cultural phenomena such as the case of Jazz in its aesthetic format of Swing.



**Fig. II. “Mikasa” by Karina Aguilar Aceves**

The particular case of Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure presumes to be a characteristic example of the thematic and narrative absorption of the films, images, motifs and iconic characters of the West. Situation that endows a loss of aura in the massive reproduction of the image and Western art, in its Japanese representations. All this, very characteristic both in the Frankfurt school in authors such as Benjamin, as well as the context of the development of mass culture in the West.

Japan, in this way, begins to relate acts of narrative fragmentation, intertextuality and motivic iterations of the West in its filmic and narrative works. From works such as "Throne of Blood" (1957) by Akira Kurosawa that relate a cultural hybridization between the classic narrative motifs of the European baroque in Shakespeare and literary themes of the Russian 19th century such as Dostoyevsky, with mythological characters from Japanese culture such as witches, ancient legends and traditional figures such as the Samurai Warrior.

Cinematographic works such as the one mentioned by Kurosawa, allow to visualize a motivic interaction between both worlds. This type of narrative constructions can also be observed in films such as *Astro Boy* that resort to the design of characters and futuristic spaces in films such as *Metropol* (1927) by Fritz Lang.

To all this, it is important to emphasize that in addition to the references that began to appear in the fifties and the sixties, anime began to have a greater boom, due to works such as *Astro Boy* by Osamu Tezuka, which although they were published in 1952 reached a major boom in the West in the postwar years both within Japan and in the rest of the world. Postmodernism in Japan began to establish a series of aesthetic canons in the representations of Japanese animation. After the impulse given by key animes in this process such as *Astroboy*, the aesthetics of animation in Japan began to become popular and to generate certain visual trends in the construction of characters, spaces and motifs in anime.



**Fig. III. “Tengu Mask” by Karina Aguilar Aceves**

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Postmodernity in Japanese animation is dynamited in a change of attitude in its narratives. In which, a constant representation of popular, literary, filmic and narrative motifs of western culture is generated. The representation of the West in animation acquires a mixture between what is observed as foreign from the Japanese creators and a constant rereading of its own identity as a nation. In addition to this, Japanese animation also begins to create a series of conditions for rereading its own culture in the Western world, as a greater fanaticism and appreciation for anime is beginning to be observed in the rest of the world. At present, Japanese animated cinema has a large number of references under various styles, studies, formats and currents. All this, to the point that Japanese animation is an integral part of the narrative construction of Japanese identity both inside and outside the country. From animated films such as *The Tale of Princess Kaguya* (2013), *The Red Turtle* (2016), *Poppy Hill* (2011), *Spirited Away* (2001) or *Princess Mononoke* (1997) to animated series such as “*The Seven Deadly Sins*”(2014), *Naruto Shippuden* (2007), *Yu-Gi-Oh* (2014), *One Piece* (1999) and *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* (2014), we can begin to distinguish despite the respective variants in the design of the characters, stories and animation techniques, a series of aesthetic assumptions based on traditional Japanese representations, cultural hybrids with the West and multiple aesthetic canons based on hyperbole and beauty.

Aesthetics refers to the perception that we have and consider beautiful, it can vary depending on the context in which it is found, depending on the type of nature, art, individual or any other nature, as long as it causes some sensitivity due to its authentic essence of being. . Aesthetics is commonly used to refer to the beauty of people and particularly in art to emphasize their technique, colors or simplicity.

The Greek Aesthetics is one of the emblematic ones and retains a high aesthetic idealism, therefore, it does not present reality as such, movements or any specific current, on the contrary, they seek only to reflect mainly beauty, perfection, where there is also balance between the elements, the drawings and the sculptures. Another of their characteristics is that they commonly used human bodies, defining their silhouette and making a perfect and beautiful figure in all its areas.

Philosophy and culture created great controversy in the adaptations and transformations of art, terms such as “aesthetic leisure” participated, where part of its capacity has the power to contribute values, as well as works of

art create a perspective of our own formation. Some philosophers stood out for their studies and ideas about beauty in Greece, including Plato and Aristotle.

The conception of aesthetics in the West has been approached by multiple authors who have known how to link it with artistic, philosophical and social disciplines, as is the case of authors such as Immanuel Kant, Plato, Socrates and Schopenhauer among others. The perspective of aesthetics in the West was also abruptly modified under the end of modernity and the beginning of a sociocultural awareness of the death of the great story of aesthetics and art. Iconic moments of art such as the insertion of artistic currents such as Dadaism and characters such as Marcel Duchamp marked a radical change in the consciousness of western aesthetics. The condition of the limits of art based on the creative act of the artist, were left behind under notions based on meaning and artistic discourse over criteria such as technique, beauty and transcendence. This type of radical changes in aesthetics in the contemporary world marked a point of change in the ways of representing, appearing and signifying in the West, while within Japanese culture aesthetics continued to mutate based on multiple hybridizations and social reinterpretations of its own identity in its millennial past.

Anime, on the one hand, kept the essence of the modern contrast between beauty and ugliness as a binary central axis of its narrative discourses. All this, despite the fact that western narratives chose to present us with a greater moral and narrative relativism in their artistic works. In addition, anime began to prefigure as an essentially Japanese art with cultural impact in the western world, this being a fundamental element in the stabilization of many of its aesthetic and expressive canons. Although, on the one hand, it is completely impossible and erratic to think of a univocal sense of anime aesthetics, it is important to take into account that most of its animated expressions do differ from other formats and animation producers in the West such as Disney case.

The animation of JoJo's Bizarre Adventure as mentioned, exhibits a link with the aesthetics of the West in Greek sculpture. The notion of sculpture, art and aesthetics of the Western world in ancient Greece shows multiple archetypes of human idealism through the mirror of art. That is, it shows us the possibility of imagining the transcendental virtues of the human being through the idea of self-representation. In the same way, JoJo's Bizarre Adventure creates through its aesthetic hybridization in design between anime and the aesthetic reflection of the representation of the human being in Greek art, a new representation of the human being and its ideality present in anime.

The dominance of Greek sculpture by organic forms occurred with inconceivable speed. It began in the fifth century, and by the middle of this it was already a fait accompli. The first of the great sculptors of this century, Mirón, freed sculpture from its archaic scheme by approaching nature, the second Polykleitos, already established his canon based on observations of organic nature. But the main Greek sculptor was Phidias who, according to the unanimous consensus of the Greeks, reached the maximum of perfection. Classical artists stopped treating the human body as a geometric figure and represented its complex living forms, but at the same time they aspired to discover the simple constant proportions in these forms [3].

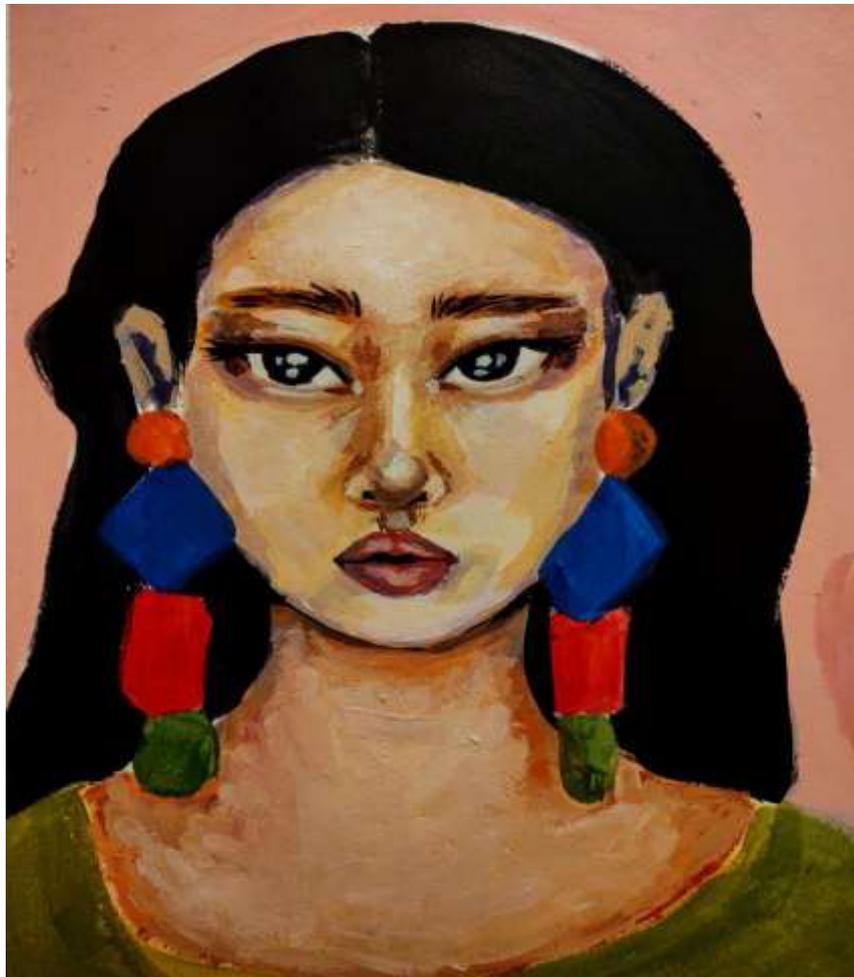
The construction of the aesthetics of the human being in the Greek perspective presented a constant evolution. From the representation of the human being seeking a mimesis with nature, to the development of sculptors such as Phidias who sought an idealization of corporality and the idea of the human being. In this same way, in that the Greeks abandoned geometry at some point in their history to represent what Tatarkiewicz mentions as complex living forms, anime abandons its notion of representation of geometry and balance, to position itself in the perspective of idealization and hyperbole.

In this same aesthetic exercise, Japanese culture sought to represent multiple ways of creating mimesis of nature and the human. The classic works of Japanese pictorial culture, as presented, show a constant reflection with the space of nature and its interaction in balance with the human. However, it also happens with the ancient Japanese Nogaku theater and its use of masks. Japanese painting developed an enormous plasticity in the questions of the physiognomic proportion of the face and the body within its pictorial tradition. Works such as the works developed in the Edo Era, such as the Ukiyo style, not only strongly influenced the work of French Impressionist works, but also set a trend in the notions of representation of gestural hyperbole so characteristic of both his paintings. as in his later manga and anime works.

The aesthetics of the first manga in the history of Rakuten Kitazawa "Tagosaku to Mokube no Tokyo Kenbutsu" from 1902 shows the foundations of the future Japanese anime aesthetics. This first case of a Japanese manga graphic novel is strongly influenced by the visual aesthetics of its past and the Ukiyo style [4], where the gestures of the face can break the mimetic forms of the geometry of human nature. The face of "Tagosaku to Mokube no Tokyo Kenbutsu" not only marked a watershed in the ways of creating manga, but also ended up influencing Japanese animations in their search for identity, aesthetics and design.

The visual aesthetics of animations such as "Namakura Gatana" from 1917 by Junichi Kouchi (1892-1973) as well as that of other creators of the time such as Oten Shimokawa (1892-1973) and Seitaro Kiyama

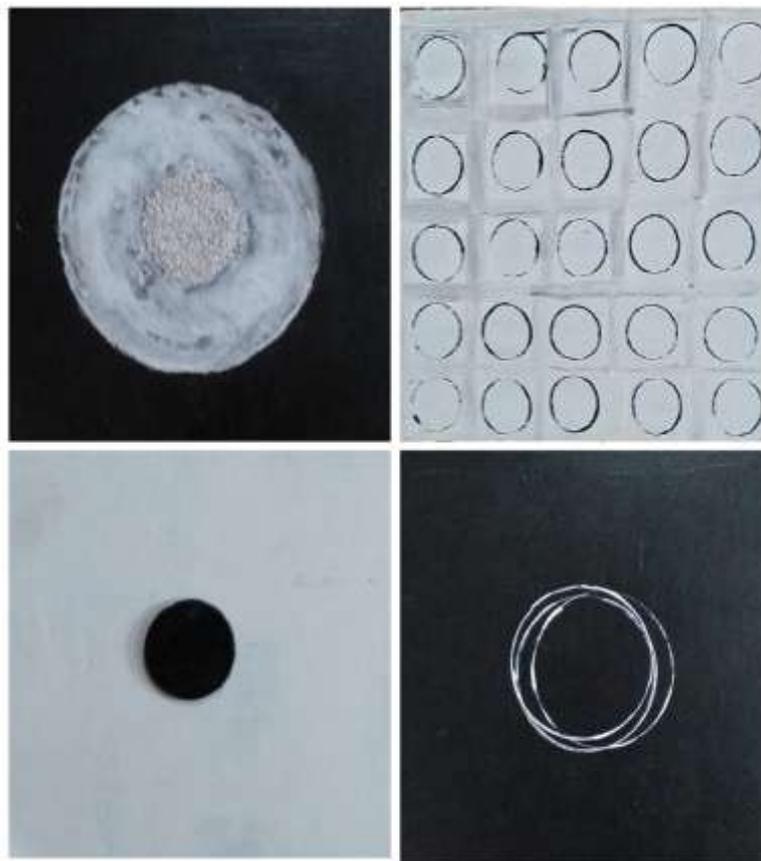
(1888-1945) show a recovery of folklore Japanese characteristic of the visuality of Nogaku, the Ukiyo style, and even the early Rakuten Kitazawa manga. Unlike Katsudo Shashin's anime "The Sailor Boy", where the question of proportion and geometric balance is an integral element of the film's aesthetics. Namakura Gatana exceeds any question of proportion on the face of the samurai protagonist and the rest of the characters. The function of aesthetics and Japanese hyperbole does not lie in an idealization of the character but is presented as an aesthetic motif focused on the expressive realm.



**Fig. IV. “Sakura” by Gabriela Jasso González**

This aesthetic relationship of hyperbole in its visual representations will not be limited to its cultural heritage during the postmodern process. At the time of the third historical stage that arose after the post-war period, the Japanese animated industry began a process of greater acceptance of influences with the West, a situation that not only allowed them to represent the world outside the Japanese in a positive and positive way. not propagandistic in his animations, but rather endowed Japanese animated cinema with the ability to hybridize aesthetic, narrative and semiotic motifs throughout his filmic stories. The idiosyncrasy innate expressiveness of anime in its aesthetic heritage has a turning point within the Japanese postmodern period in the character of Astro Boy from Tezuka [5]. All this, due to the fact that this animated product had a strong impact on the Western market and culture. Likewise, the character of Tezuka inaugurates a new trend in the design of characters of Japanese origin, through which, it is possible to have various aesthetic canons of the physiognomy and the expressive characteristics of the characteristic face of Japanese animation. The iconic Astro Boy series marked a watershed in the visual aesthetics of the characters and the search for identity typical of Japanese designs. It is important to emphasize that in this period, Japanese animation began to distance itself from the motifs and designs of the great western animated producers, such as Disney [6]. Unlike the American production company that used to create narratives based on classic European novels and Gothic stories from the 19th century as was the case with the Brothers Grimm stories; On the contrary, the anime began to create hybrid narratives between its culture and the narratives of the West, as was the case of Kimba the White Lion (1950) by Tezuka that used some narrative motifs based on the story of Shakespeare's Hamlet, this being a Cultural

hybridization applied both by the Japanese animated industry of the 1950s as well as by Japanese live action directors such as Kurosawa in "Throne of Blood" and their respective links with Macbeth tropes by William Shakespeare.



**Fig. V. “Eien no Tamashi” by “GAT” Gloria Álvarez Tenorio**

The aesthetics of postmodernity in Japanese animation is located in the era of mass media production, where animation is linked to the loss of the industrial aura of its cultural products. All this, just as it happens in the western world. With the intrinsic difference that Japanese animations sought to create a mass reproduction of a transmedia character between the written format of manga and anime as a whole, as well as that they began to present multiple tropes of mixtures between the West and its history as a nation.

The particular case of JoJo’s presents a series of tropes linked to western culture within the period of Japanese postmodernity, that despite the fact that the JoJo’s anime emerged in the 21st century, the manga was published in the eighties, at the as well as manga narratives like the case of Tetsuo Hara in the last decades of the 20th century.

Tetsuo Hara's graphic novel, like the case of JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure, began to create cultural hybrids within its narratives, a situation that ended up creating references to Western pop culture characters such as Sylvester Stallone and some other iconic characters from films and works from the United States, America, Europe, such as the United Kingdom, throughout the first narrative arc of history.

The case of Tetsuo Hara, as well as that of JoJo’s, exhibit the tendency to fracture western narratives and create intertextual motifs that allow not only a representation of the West, but also a rereading of their own search for identity in the liquid time of postmodernity. Japanese identity is reconfigured in postmodernity through the narrative fragmentation of Western tropes reinterpreted through the narrative fusion of the Japanese aesthetic past and the cultural link with the Western world.

Hirohiko Araki's work covers the spatiality of Western countries. From Europe to North America, JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure references exhibit a radical political and cultural shift between the relationship of the Japanese world with the Western world. Unlike the second period in Japan founded throughout the Second World War, the animated story decided to forget its enmity with the Western world to integrate into the culture of the Western from the Japanese [7].

From the strong bodies like Greek gods that reminded us of Hollywood action stars like Stallone to the aesthetics and names that showed us the rock and heavy metal stars of the 80's and 90's. What in JoJo's was a skill called Gold Experience would actually be an album by the acclaimed musician Prince.

This avalanche of popular culture captivated the fans, who read (and continue reading) with the illusion of seeing what new references they will find in the future. And little by little, it was not only JoJo who alluded to these icons, but also, the others began to be allusion to him. Famous fighting video game characters like Guile, Rose, or Juri from "Street Fighter", as well as Benimaru from "The King of Fighters", seemed to be based on characters from the master Araki's work such as Rudol von Stroheim, Lisa Lisa, Jolyne Cujoh, or Jean Pierre Polnareff. And little by little, he began to become a cultural reference in Japan.

JoJo's references show not only a constant link with Western culture, but also with multiple fandoms, both in their doujinshi formats and also through interaction in spaces such as blogs and social networks. a situation that exhibits the transmedia character of Japanese animated narratives in the postmodern period. The narrative heritage of Japanese postmodernity enables the cultural mix between the Far East and the West from a more global and inclusive political, social and economic perspective. The use of references, of the search for the identity self-definition of the Japanese through the non-solipsist perspective, enables not only an intercultural heritage of both worlds, but also a narrative fragmentation characteristic of the Japanese animated medium in its constant representation of Western tropes.

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