



Reflections on Sahoesaenghwal-e Daehae: An Approach to Japanese Manga as a Mirror of Social Structure

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Author's Declaration

The author declares that they have participated in the entire scientific process of this research, including conceptualization, methodology, writing, and editing. He also declares that they have no potential conflicts of interest regarding the authorship and publication of this article.

Abstract

“Sahoesaenghwal-e daehae”, which translates from Spanish as “On Social Life”, is the central theme of this article. It integrates personal reflections on manga as a significant cultural expression in Japan and globally within the social structure. The impact of manga extends across various societal aspects, playing a pivotal role in shaping popular culture, the economy, and the formation of identities and subcultures. Furthermore, it facilitates the expression of emotions and social reflection, fostering intercultural dialogue in areas such as technology and

cyborgs. Consequently, this piece discusses manga as ethical and political devices in social scenarios, exploring less examined fields like gender, technology, and cyborgs.

Keywords: manga; economy; culture; politics; society.

Introduction

Manga is a form of comic or graphic novel originating in Japan. It is an essential part of Japanese popular culture, characterized by its distinctive drawing style and right-to-left reading format (Parada, 2012). Mangas encompass a variety of genres, such as action, adventure, comedy, drama, romance, fantasy, and science fiction, among others. These genres are often published in specialized manga magazines and later compiled into bound volumes (Hernández, 2009). Each manga comprises a series of panels and pages that narrate a story with dialogues, images, and visual effects that convey the characters' plot and emotions.

Mangas are not limited to a child or youth audience, as there are Mangas targeted at different demographics. Additionally, they have transcended Japan's borders and have become popular worldwide, being translated into several languages (Álvarez, 2016). They have also influenced other media, such as anime (Japanese animation), video games, and film adaptations. Many have achieved great success and become popular franchises, generating fans and followers in Japan and internationally (Cámara & Durán, 2022).

One of the prominent theorists in the study of manga is Hiroki Azuma, who has significantly contributed to analyzing and understanding this form of artistic/narrative expression. Azuma is known for his theory of "otaku" and his concept of "database consumption." According to Azuma (2009), the "otaku" are avid consumers of cultural products and subcultures, and manga is one of the primary forms of expression that attracts this group. Azuma argues that it is a medium that has evolved to meet consumer demands rather than conveying specific messages or values.

In his theory of "database consumption," Azuma (2009) argues that manga and other cultural products are based on the idea of a "database" of pre-existing cultural elements. These elements, such as characters, stories, and artistic styles, are flexibly combined to create new works. According to the author, this appropriation/reconfiguration of cultural elements reflects the postmodern and fragmented nature of contemporary society.

Among his most representative works are:

Otaku: Japan's Database Animals (2001): In this book, Azuma examines the phenomenon of otakus in Japan, exploring how their media consumption culture and relationship with technology have shaped contemporary society. Azuma introduces the concept of "database animals" to describe how otakus construct identities and relationships through the collection/organization of information in their personal databases.

Manga Studies (2019) analyzes manga as a medium of communication and art. It examines the historical development of manga in Japan, its relationship with popular culture, and its influence on society. It also explores themes such as gender representation and the transformations of manga in the digital era.

Another prominent theorist in the study of manga is Frederik L. Schodt, who has conducted extensive research on the history and influence of manga in Japan and global culture. Schodt (1983) has analyzed manga from historical, sociocultural, and literary perspectives, emphasizing its importance as an art form and its impact on Japanese society. Among his most notable works are:

Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics (1983): This book is considered one of the first comprehensive studies on the history of manga in Japan. Schodt examines the origins and evolution of manga, as well as its impact on Japanese culture, including its growing popularity worldwide.

Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga (1996), where he examines a wide variety of contemporary mangas and their significance in modern Japanese culture. He explores themes such as gender, politics, identity, and technology through the lens of manga.

The Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the Manga/Anime Revolution (2007), focuses on the work of Osamu Tezuka, considered the “father of manga.” Schodt analyzes the importance of Tezuka and his character Astro Boy in the development of manga, as well as their influence on Japanese popular culture.

Methodology and Analysis

Qualitative research plays a pivotal role in the textual and discursive analysis of manga, as it profoundly understands and explores the multiple dimensions and meanings in discursive productions in the face of the characteristics of this cultural expression (Ibáñez, 2002). Some of the reasons why qualitative research is relevant in the analysis of Japanese manga include:

Exploration of cultural meanings; interpretation of symbolism and metaphors; study of characters and their representations; consideration of reception and audience; analysis of visual and stylistic codes; exploration of themes and messages. Japanese manga covers various topics, from fantasy and science fiction to social and political dramas. Qualitative research aids in identifying and analyzing these issues, as well as in understanding the messages conveyed through text and images. These actions allow for an in-depth analysis of the ideas and values in Japanese manga and how they relate to society and culture.

Many other Mangas can be analyzed from a social perspective. Each offers a unique view of society and can create reflections on various socio-cultural themes. Next, I will mention

the Mangas that have an emotional impact on me, and that will be analyzed to understand different aspects of society; it is noted that there will be a back-and-forth of dialogues, analysis, and reflections that encompass the ethical-political potential of manga in the face of social reflections.

Akira by Katsuhiro Otomo: This dystopian manga addresses issues such as political corruption, abuse of power, and social conflicts in a futuristic society.

Monster by Naoki Urasawa: Explores ethical, moral, and psychological questions through the story of a doctor chasing a serial killer, facing moral dilemmas in his quest for justice.

Ghost in the Shell by Masamune Shirow: Focuses on the near future, where technology has advanced, raising questions about identity, consciousness, and the relationship between humans and machines.

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind by Hayao Miyazaki: Though more famous as an animated film, it also has a manga version. This environmentalist and pacifist story tackles environmental destruction, war, and the connection between humans and nature.

Berserk by Kentaro Miura: This dark and violent manga examines human nature, ambition, power, and corruption through the story of a lone warrior battling demons and facing the horrors of war.

The analysis of Mangas involves a structured process of exploring and understanding the textual/discursive elements present in the work (Martínez, 2006). Here are the general steps explored for the analysis:

Selection of the manga, considering its relevance to the theme or perspective it wishes to explore.

Attentive Reading: Detailed reading, paying attention to textual elements such as dialogues, narrative, descriptions, and visual elements and observing how these interrelate and contribute to the construction of discourse and narrative.

Identification of Themes and Messages: Contextual attention to the values, ideologies, social or political perspectives expressed in the work.

Language Analysis: The language used in the manga's dialogues and narrative was examined.

Observation of tone, style, use of metaphors or symbols, and how they contribute to the construction of meanings and representations.

Character Analysis: Their characteristics, roles, motivations, and relationships. Observation of how they are depicted and what stereotypes they convey.

Analysis of Narrative Structure: How the story is organized, changes in narrative perspective, and the sequence of events.

Interpretation and Reflection: Based on the previous analyses, the messages and meanings of the manga are interpreted. There is also a reflection on the social, cultural, or political implications of the messages and representations in the manga.

It is important to note that these steps are general and can be adapted according to the specific needs of each analysis and the manga. Additionally, it is advisable to combine textual and discursive analysis with other methodologies or approaches, such as visual analysis, sociocultural analysis, or intertextual analysis, to better understand the work and its context.

Mangas as a Reflection of Society

Like other forms of artistic expression, Mangas can be considered a reflection of the society in which they are created. Through their stories, characters, and themes, mangas symbolize various social, cultural, and political aspects (Lorenzo J., 2018). In them, we find representations of a particular society's values, norms, and challenges (de Cabo, 2014). Authors can use mangas to explore and comment on everyday life, identity, social justice, politics, and religion, among other aspects of society (Martínez, 2006).

“Those who kill people and those who save people... what is the difference?” This dialogue poses a fundamental question about morality and the nature of justice. It refers to the idea that the line between good and evil can be blurry and that acts of violence can be justified under certain circumstances, a situation in which moral values are strained against the ethical fractures of a society.

Additionally, they can reflect the concerns and experiences of the readers (Álvarez, 2016) by presenting characters in various situations with which readers can identify, conveying messages and emotions that resonate in society (Lorenzo J., 2013). It is essential to consider that mangas do not represent a homogeneous view of society, as there is a diversity of genres, styles, and approaches in the world of manga, and each author has their perspective and approach, allowing for a breadth of representations and explorations of society in mangas (Cámara & Durán, 2022).

“People destroy themselves. We do not need external help to destroy ourselves.” This dialogue includes the destructive nature of humanity, questioning the human capacity for self-destruction without the need for external forces. It reflects a profound social critique and raises questions about individual and collective responsibility. Thus, mangas can reflect the

society they are created, commenting on social, cultural, and political issues and transmitting messages and emotions that resonate with readers (Parada, 2012). They are a form of artistic expression that can capture and comment on the diversity and complexity of society.

“What does it mean to be a monster?” This dialogue examines the central axis of the manga: the exploration of human nature and the question of what drives a person to commit monstrous acts. It challenges the idea that monsters are supernatural beings and suggests that evil can reside in any human being. It showcases the subject’s relationships against moral, ethical, and cultural stances in which feelings about our actions unfold.

Mangas and Political Expressions

Mangas can be a platform for sociopolitical expressions in society. Through their stories, characters, and messages, they examine social issues and critiques of the system. For example: “Justice is a weapon... and like all weapons, it depends on who wields it.” This dialogue reflects on the power and corruption that can arise when justice is used as a tool. It highlights how the interpretation and application of justice are influenced by the motivations and values of those who administer it.

Some focus specifically on politics, presenting plots that explore corruption, the struggle for power, political conflicts, and social injustices (Hernández, 2017). These stories can critically view existing political systems, question the status quo, and propose alternative ideas.

Akira is an emblematic manga by Katsuhiro Otomo, known for its rich narrative and impactful dialogues. “Man is strongest when he lives for something greater than himself.” This dialogue captures the essence of Akira’s story and the main characters’ struggle against powerful forces and corruption. It reinforces that finding a purpose beyond oneself can provide strength and determination.

Mangas also reflect current sociopolitical issues, such as human rights, discrimination, the environment, and economic inequality. Authors can use mangas to draw attention to these problems, facilitating cultural interventions in their readers.

“I cannot go back. I cannot give up anymore. I am not going to let this world be destroyed.” This dialogue expresses a character’s determination and commitment to face challenges and fight for positive change. It represents the will to resist and fight against adversity, even in seemingly desperate situations.

It is important to note that mangas are not homogeneous in their political expressions (Casiri, 2011), as there are mangas that deal with political issues directly and provocatively, while others do so more subtly and symbolically (Fuentes, 2014). Some reflect the political vision of the author, while others present different perspectives and opinions. “If people feel lonely

alone, they are not good enough with themselves.” This reflection emphasizes the importance of self-acceptance and internal connection. It suggests that loneliness can be overcome when one is at peace with oneself, promoting a message of self-awareness and self-reflection.

In conclusion, mangas are a form of political expression in society, as they pose critiques of the system, showing the concerns of the society in which they are created. Like any form of artistic expression, mangas can serve as a tool to generate reflection, awareness, and debate on political and social issues.

Mangas and Economic Expressions

Mangas can reflect economic expressions in society through their stories and themes (Yumisaca et al., 2020). Although not all mangas directly examine economic matters, some may focus on the economy, trade, economic inequality, and other related aspects.

Some explore plots in specific economic environments, such as the business world, finance, and labor market. These stories feature characters facing economic challenges, such as job hunting, business competition, or financial difficulties (Roman, 2016). Through these plots, mangas offer a view of how the economic system works and how it affects people (Escudier, 2019).

They can also address universal themes linked to the economy, such as globalization, consumerism, economic development, and the distribution of wealth and power (Meo, 2015). They raise questions about the impact of economic policies, the influence of multinational corporations, and the social and environmental consequences of specific economic models. Thus, the dialogue, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” reflects on the dangers of power and how it can affect morality and ethics. It critiques government systems and power structures that can lead to corruption and oppression.

It is important to note that mangas, as an artistic expression, showcase different economic perspectives. Some reflect a critical view of the current economic system, highlighting inequalities and injustices, while others may present a more positive or idealized vision. There are also approaches from a more neutral perspective (Cabo, 2014), simply exploring the economic aspects of the characters’ everyday lives. “Power and ambition can corrupt even the noblest of men.” This dialogue examines corruption and the destructive impact of excessive power and ambition on the story’s characters, showing how they can transform even the most virtuous into malevolent beings.

Manga and Cultural Expressions

As artistic expressions, manga represent various cultural manifestations within Japanese society and increasingly in global culture (Hevia, 2012). Through their stories, characters,

themes, and visual styles, manga capture elements of Japanese culture and explore a wide range of cultural aspects. 'I think, therefore I am.' This dialogue raises the question of identity (Santofimio, 2023) and consciousness in a world dominated by technology. It suggests that the ability to think and be conscious defines human existence, regardless of physical form.

One of the most notable aspects is manga's ability to portray everyday life in Japan. Many manga depict scenes and situations reflecting Japanese society's customs, traditions, habits, and values (Romero, 2012). These may include clothing, food, celebrations, social practices, and other cultural elements like power, inequality, tensions, and discourses. Reading manga allows readers to immerse themselves in the Japanese cultural milieu and learn about its customs and traditions from metaphorical perspectives. 'The body is just a shell. The mind is everything.' This dialogue focuses on the duality between body and mind. It questions the importance of physical appearance and emphasizes the relevance of consciousness and mental capacity.

Furthermore, manga addresses broader themes such as mythology, history, religion, and national identity. Many manga explore Japanese culture's legends and beliefs, incorporating supernatural elements and mythological beings into their stories (Madrid & Martínez, 2015). 'The real battle is not just against external enemies but also against our internal demons.' This dialogue underscores the idea that the protagonist's most significant challenges are not just external enemies but also their fears, traumas, and dark desires, which are incorporated as underlying elements of imagination, the metaphorical, and idealism versus culture. Other manga are based on historical events or specific periods, offering a unique perspective on Japanese history and its impact on contemporary society (Aguilar, 2013).

Manga also reflects cultural diversity in Japan, representing different regions, subcultures, and social groups. Some focus on urban life in cities like Tokyo, while others explore life in universal literature (Monzó, 2017). Manga addresses specific subcultures such as anime, technology, music, games, and other interests of Japanese youth. 'What is the meaning of being human?' This dialogue poses existential questions about the nature of humanity in an environment where technology and artificial intelligence are omnipresent. It questions whether humanity is defined by biology or deeper aspects, seeking ways of life and intersections with culture, social groups, and youth.

It is pertinent to highlight its influence on popular culture and cultural expressions outside Japan (Tomás, 2012). With their growing global popularity, manga has spawned adaptations into films, television series, video games, and other media, contributing to the spread and impact of Japanese culture worldwide (de León, 2014). Thus, manga is an artistic expression that captures and reflects various cultural expressions; through their stories, characters, and themes, manga portrays everyday life, traditions, history, diversity, and other cultural aspects of Japanese society. In summary, they have influenced global popular culture, contributing to the spread of Japanese culture worldwide.

Manga and Social Expressions

Manga is a powerful form of artistic expression that reflects and addresses various social expressions in Japanese society and beyond (Cruz, 2017). With their stories and characters, manga explore diverse aspects of social life and society's challenges (Adarme, 2016). 'Nature cannot be controlled by humanity. We can live in harmony with or fight against it, but in the end, it must always be respected.' This dialogue highlights the relationship between humans and nature, emphasizing the importance of living in harmony with the natural environment rather than attempting to control it.

A recurring social theme in the manga is the depiction of interpersonal relationships and social dynamics (Gomez, 2012), linked with friendships, romances, family conflicts, and other human interactions that showcase the complexities of society (Álvarez, 2016). Communication, respect, empathy, and overcoming obstacles in relationships give readers a perspective on social interactions and how they affect everyday life (Casiri, 2011). 'Hatred only breeds more hatred. It does not matter who started it first; what is important is to end the cycle of violence.' This dialogue reflects on the destructive nature of hate and violence, advocating for the importance of seeking peace and reconciliation rather than perpetuating conflict.

Moreover, manga addresses broader social themes, such as discrimination, injustice, inequality, and marginalization (Castro, 2015). Some explore sensitive and controversial social situations, like racism, sexism, and homophobia, among other issues, to promote social change. These stories portray characters who challenge established social norms, fighting for equality and justice in their environment. 'War only brings suffering and destruction. We must find a way to live peacefully and coexist with those different.' This dialogue reviews the horrors of war and proposes the idea of peaceful coexistence among different communities and cultures.

Some Manga tackles contemporary problems, such as environmental crises, violence, political corruption, and other social difficulties. These stories serve as a form of social critique by generating reflections on these issues and the future of humanity (Hernández, 2009). 'True strength does not lie in destructive power, but in compassion and the ability to protect others.' This dialogue highlights the importance of empathy and care towards others as an accurate display of strength.

Manga reflects existing social expressions and influences society by promoting positive changes. By reviewing social issues and presenting different perspectives, manga can foster debate, reflection, and awareness among readers. Additionally, they can inspire and empower those who identify with the challenges and struggles depicted in the stories (Monzó, 2017). 'Humanity faces its destiny in an endless cycle of struggle and suffering.' This dialogue reflects the pessimistic and somber tone of the manga, highlighting the idea that humanity

is trapped in a cycle of violence and despair that must be overcome despite the crisis of everyday values.

Other Representations in Manga: Intersections in Construction

The relationship between the cyborg, manga, and gender presents an exciting and relevant perspective in cultural and gender studies. Japanese manga has explored the representation of cyborg characters, beings that combine human and technological elements. These characters can question identity, human nature, and power relations.

In Masamune Shirow's manga 'Ghost in the Shell,' the concept of cyborgs plays a central role in the plot and exploring ethical-philosophical themes. It is set in a dystopian future where technology has advanced to the point where humans can modify and enhance their bodies with cybernetic implants. In this story, cyborgs are a fusion between humanity and technology, challenging traditional human and artificial boundaries. The main characters, like Major Motoko Kusanagi, are highly specialized cyborgs working in a cybersecurity unit. The plot raises fundamental questions about identity, consciousness, and the nature of human existence in a technology-dominated environment.

Additionally, it examines the impact of technology on society, how cyborgs interact with humans and other cyborgs and studies ethical issues related to body modification and the loss of individuality. The fusion between the biological and the artificial raises questions about the essence of humanity and the ability to maintain an emotional/spiritual connection in an increasingly technological world.

'Ghost in the Shell' also reviews themes such as surveillance, artificial intelligence, corruption, and power. Through its representation of cyborgs and the environment in which the story unfolds, the manga invites reflection on the social, ethical-political implications of technology and its influence on the human condition.

In the context of gender, manga featuring cyborg characters challenge traditional gender norms, exploring new forms of representation. Cyborgs can question binary gender constructions by blurring the boundaries between masculine and feminine, human and non-human. They also present themes related to sexuality and the body through cyborg characters, questioning established gender norms and expectations.

Manga challenges power dynamics and gender hierarchies in society. Some works may feature female cyborg characters as empowered and autonomous protagonists, thereby challenging stereotypical representations of women in media. Additionally, questions arise about how identities and power relations are constructed through technology and bodily modification. In 'Akira,' cyborgs are predominantly represented by Tetsuo Shima, one of the protagonists, who acquires superhuman abilities after encountering the secret Akira project.

As Tetsuo transforms into a cyborg, his body and mind merge with technology, granting him psychic abilities and immense power. This transformation leads to the loss of his humanity and plunges him into a destructive spiral.

The concept of cyborgs in ‘Akira’ raises questions about the limits of humanity, the relationship between the body and technology, and the danger of dehumanization in pursuing power and perfection. Cyborgs represent a critique of the excessive pursuit of power and the manipulation of technology by authorities and hidden interests.

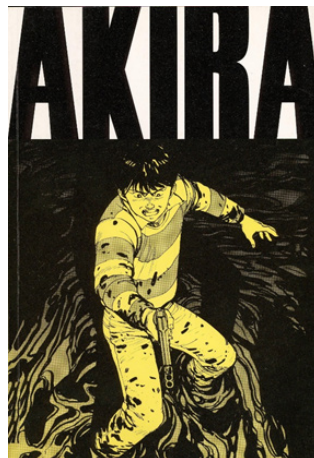
Moreover, ‘Akira’ also examines broader themes within a futuristic and post-apocalyptic context, such as violence, social alienation, and political corruption. Cyborgs symbolize the growing disconnection and social dysfunction in the society portrayed in the manga.

In summary, manga and the figure of the cyborg offer fertile ground for exploring issues of gender, identity, and power. These stories can challenge the established heteronormativity by questioning traditional gender roles and opening new narrative possibilities. Analyzing manga from a gender perspective criticizes the social and cultural constructions that shape our perceptions and experiences of gender. Manga has gained significant recognition in studies of culture and power due to its ability to represent identities and subcultures, perform social and political critique, and construct collective memory, aesthetics, visual narrative, consumption, and fandom.

Tensions and Fractures in Manga

Katsuhiro Otomo’s manga ‘Akira’ exhibits various tensions and fractures throughout its narrative, contributing to its complexity and impact on the genre.

Figure 1. Manga Akira



Source: Otomo (1984)

These tensions and fractures are manifested in different aspects of the plot, the characters, and the themes. In the following matrix, I develop their narrative complexity from their relevance in the manga panorama and pop culture.

Table 1. Tensions and Fractures in Katsuhiro Otomo’s *Akira* Manga I

CONCEPT	REPRESENTATION
POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY	In <i>Akira</i> , the consequences of supernatural power and its impact on individuals and society are explored. The characters struggle between using their power for the common good or falling into corruption and destruction.
REPRESENTATION OF DECAY AND VIOLENCE	The manga portrays a post-apocalyptic and dystopian version of Tokyo, showing the decay of society and the violence that permeates it. Scenes of destruction, the struggle for power, and violent confrontations are recurring elements in the work.
REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN DUALITY	The characters in <i>Akira</i> reflect the complexity of the human condition. Their dark sides and internal struggles are explored, as well as the capacity for redemption and the possibility of change.
TENSION BETWEEN THE HUMAN AND THE TECHNOLOGICAL	The manga addresses the relationship between technological advances and humanity. Technology is both a tool for progress and a threat, raising ethical and philosophical questions about the fusion of the human and the artificial.
REPRESENTATION OF ALIENATION AND LOSS OF IDENTITY	<i>Akira</i> shows alienated and disoriented characters in a chaotic world. The work's recurring themes are the loss of identity, dehumanization, and the struggle to find meaning amidst chaos.

Source: Own Elaboration

In Naoki Urasawa’s manga *Monster*, various tensions and fractures are presented that shape the plot through the characters.

Figure 2. Manga *Monster*



Source: Urasawa (2020)

These tensions and fractures generate emotional, moral, and social conflicts, adding complex depth to the story.

Table 2. Tensions and Fractures in Naoki Urasawa’s Manga *Monster*

CONCEPT	REPRESENTATION
TENSION BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL	The manga explores the dichotomy between good and evil, questioning human nature and challenging conventional ideas of "monstrous." The characters face ethical and moral dilemmas, forced to make difficult decisions that test their principles and values.
FRACTURE IN IDENTITY	Identity and its construction are recurring themes in <i>Monster</i> . The main characters confront the loss of their identity due to traumas, manipulations, and shocking revelations. This fracture in identity leads them to question who they are and how they have become who they are.
TENSION BETWEEN JUSTICE AND VENGEANCE	The manga addresses the pursuit of justice and the desire for vengeance. The characters are involved in a plot of conspiracies and crimes, where they must decide whether to seek legal justice or take justice into their own hands. This tension between justice and vengeance raises questions about morality and the repercussions of their actions.
FRACTURE IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS	<i>Monster</i> presents complex, often fractured human relationships. Family ties, friendships, and emotional bonds are challenged throughout the story. The characters experience betrayals, losses, and intense emotional conflicts, which contribute to the dramatic tension of the plot.
TENSION BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT	The past plays a crucial role in <i>Monster</i> . Secrets and past events directly impact the plot from the characters' lives. The tension between the past and the present is manifested through surprising revelations and unexpected connections, which drive the narrative and generate intrigue.

Source: Own Elaboration

In Masamune Shirow’s manga *Ghost in the Shell*, various tensions and fractures contribute to the construction of the plot and the exploration of philosophical and existential themes.

Figure 3. Manga *Ghost in the Shell*



Source: Masamune (2023)

Below, some of the most significant tensions and fractures in the manga are highlighted:

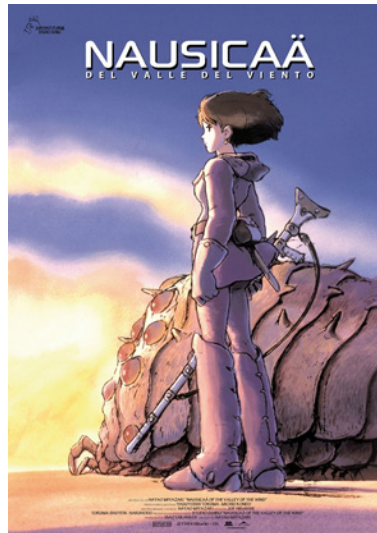
Table 3. Tensions and Fractures in Masamune Shirow’s Manga *Ghost in the Shell*

CONCEPT	REPRESENTATION
TENSION BETWEEN THE HUMAN AND THE CYBERNETIC	In the world of <i>Ghost in the Shell</i> , technology and cybernetics have advanced so much that the line between human and artificial becomes blurred. The characters experience a constant tension between their human identity and the cybernetic enhancements they possess. This tension raises questions about humanity's essence and consciousness's nature.
FRACTURE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY	The characters often face a fracture in their identity, whether through manipulation of their memory or merging their mind with technology. This fracture leads them to question who they are and how their environment influences their identity in contrast to their past experiences.
TENSION BETWEEN SECURITY AND PRIVACY	The plot unfolds in the context of technological advancements and mass surveillance. This tension between security and privacy poses ethical and moral dilemmas about government surveillance and the balance between protecting citizens and respecting their rights.
FRACTURE IN THE PERCEPTION OF REALITY	The manga explores the nature of reality and consciousness through the existence of digital "ghosts" (consciousness or soul). The characters face a fracture in their perception of reality when they encounter digital entities that can manipulate their consciousness, distorting their understanding of the world around them.
TENSION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING	The characters of a public security unit often find themselves involved in missions concerning collective well-being. However, they must deal with their motivations and ethical dilemmas. This tension between individualism and collective well-being is reflected in the decisions they make and the internal conflicts they face.

Source: Own Elaboration

In Hayao Miyazaki’s manga *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, various tensions and fractures enrich the narrative and delve into environmental, ethical, and social topics.

Figure 4. Manga *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*



Source: Miyazaki (2023)

Below, some of the most significant tensions and fractures in the manga are highlighted:

Table 4. Tensions and Fractures in Hayao Miyazaki’s Manga *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

CONCEPT	REPRESENTATION
TENSION BETWEEN NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY	In the post-apocalyptic world of <i>Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind</i> , there is a clear tension between nature and technology. Humanity has unleashed ecological destruction, facing the consequences of its own greed and lack of respect for the environment. This tension is reflected in Nausicaä's struggle to balance protecting nature and using technology for human well-being.
FRACTURE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND LIVING BEINGS	The story narrates the relationship between humans and the creatures of the Toxic Forest. There is a fracture between those who see the creatures as threats and seek to destroy them and those like Nausicaä, who understand the importance of coexisting in harmony with nature, trying to understand and protect these creatures.
TENSION BETWEEN DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS	Throughout the manga, tensions between different social groups are explored, such as the inhabitants of the Valley of the Wind and neighboring kingdoms, as well as between those who desire war and those who fight for peace. These tensions reflect the sociopolitical conflicts in society, affecting the main characters.
FRACTURE IN THE VIEW OF HUMANITY	<i>Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind</i> exposes a fracture in humanity's view of the environment and war. Some characters project a selfish and destructive view of humanity, while others, like Nausicaä, represent a hopeful and compassionate vision that seeks reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Source: Own Elaboration

In Kentaro Miura’s manga *Berserk*, tensions and fractures are observed which contribute to the dark and gritty narrative of the story.

Figure 5. Manga Berserk



Source: Lehoczky (2023)

Below, some of the most significant tensions and fractures in the manga are highlighted:

Table 5. Tensions and Fractures in Kentaro Miura’s Manga Berserk

CONCEPT	REPRESENTATION
TENSION BETWEEN HUMANITY AND BESTIALITY	In Berserk, the tensions between human nature and bestiality are explored. The protagonist, Guts, struggles against his savage instincts while facing demonic creatures and the corruption that affects humanity. This tension is reflected in the constant struggle between reason and the dark desires within the characters.
FRACTURE IN MORALITY AND ETHICS	The world of Berserk is filled with complex and morally ambiguous characters. There is a fracture in morality and ethics, where the boundaries between good and evil are blurred. Characters find themselves trapped in difficult situations, facing morally questionable decisions, which create internal and external tensions and conflicts.
TENSION BETWEEN FATE AND FREE WILL	The manga explores the tension between fate and free will. The characters are involved in an epic and violent plot that is guided by forces beyond their control. However, they also struggle to choose, seeking their own destiny and challenging the dark forces surrounding them.
FRACTURE IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	Berserk presents complex and problematic personal relationships. The relationships between the characters are marked by betrayal, revenge, and suffering. These fractures in relationships add layers of tension and tragedy to the narrative and deepen the internal and external conflicts of the characters.

Source: Own Elaboration

Conclusions: An Unfinished Path

As a form of cultural and artistic expression, manga significantly impacts our understanding of social, political, economic, and cultural life. Through its stories and characters, manga allows us to reflect on various aspects of society. Below are some important conclusions about the role of manga in these areas:

Social Life. Manga represents social life that incorporates everyday interactions, group dynamics, and social structures. Through the stories and characters, we can observe how personal relationships develop, how conflicts are negotiated, and how individual and collective identities are constructed. Manga also addresses issues such as diversity, inclusion, and the challenges faced by society.

Politics. Manga frequently revisits political and social themes, whether explicitly or implicitly. It deals with issues such as corruption, abuse of power, human rights, social justice, and civic participation. Through these stories, manga invites us to reflect on the functioning of political systems, power struggles, and potential solutions to social problems.

Economics. Manga takes an economic approach by exploring issues like inequality and economic development, globalization, and the impact of technology on society. It presents characters facing economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, or the pursuit of job opportunities. Some manga works also critically view existing economic systems and raise questions about resource distribution and sustainability.

Culture. Manga is a form of cultural expression that immerses us in cultures' diversity, fractures, tensions, inequalities, and differences. Through its stories, we explore various aspects of Japanese culture and learn about other manga-represented cultures. Manga can help us understand how cultural values are constructed and transmitted and how cultural identities are negotiated, produced, and transformed.

In summary, manga offers a window into social, political, economic, and cultural life. It allows us to explore and reflect on various aspects of society, providing an enriching view of reality and generating dialogues on contemporary issues. Its ability to entertain and educate simultaneously makes it a valuable tool for understanding life in all dimensions.

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