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JAPN 213

Social Issues in Manga and Anime

Anime and manga are both seen as forms of entertainment and media. They have many different genres ranging from action/adventure, drama, comedy, etc. Different manga and anime are focused towards different people, such as adults, kids, males, females. A lot of manga and anime reflect the thoughts and experiences of the creator. There is another powerful aspect that manga and anime have that sometimes isn't thought about. Social issues are often reflected within anime and manga from the times they are created in. Social issues such as gender equality, homosexuality, animal cruelty, digital media, technology and many other issues.

Throughout history there are many examples of women being oppressed and seen as inferior to men. Women were only allowed to stay at home and do cooking, cleaning, raising children and not receive an education. From around 1910 to 1930 there were even magazines known as shojo magazines that depicted the traits an ideal woman should have. The general illustration of an ideal woman is "idle and daydreaming within her own imaginary world of novels, poetry, and painting." (Macwilliams p.117). In 1953 a manga written by Osamu Tezuka was published known in English as Princess Knight. The main story is about a king and queen have a baby girl that they raise as a boy to prevent an evil duke from becoming the next king because only a male can lead the kingdom. Osamu Tezuka, through this manga, brings attention to the social issues regarding men and women having predetermined roles in society. Another manga created by Riyoko Ikeda in 1972 called The Rose of Versailles brings attention to gender equality. Set during the French revolution, a leader of the palace guards raises one of his daughters as a boy to succeed him as leader of the palace guards. A small difference is that the main character becomes leader of the palace guards, but the know she is female, but because she has proven to be capable of the role is still allowed to become the leader of the palace guards.

A social issue that is a bit more recent is the rapid development of technology and the potential problems that may come from it. A sense of fear and hatred of technology starts to arise within people. Machines are thought to be taking over the American work force and even potentially becoming sentient and overthrowing humanity as the superior race. A likely beginning to this fear could be from the rise of machines being used in factories to make production faster and cheaper, but in turn causes many people to lose their jobs. Another big technology the caused quite a bit of panic when it started was the internet. Were the things on the internet real, how could people on the internet be identified, where is all this information stored and who has access to it. In a manga by Osamu Tezuka called Astro Boy in English. The head of the ministry of science loses his son in a car accident and decides to create a robot that looks like his son. In this world humans and machines coexist and the robot son acts as an analog between humans and machines since he looks human, but is a robot. In an anime called Serial Experiments Lain (1998), the lines between reality and the wired, which seems to be something like the internet, are crossed and at times the two realities merge together. "The problem of identity is crucial in lain" (The Signal of Noise, Adele-Elise Prevost), this quote captures one of the major issues of the anime and reflects the fear some had of the internet of the time.

Manga artists often reflect their opinions within their works. Reflections of how they feel about social issues, their opinions about those issues and how they see the world. Through manga we can learn a lot about the past and the different issues that people saw in the world. Whether those issues are related to gender equality, human rights, technology and many other issues. Beyond only social issues, manga also contain the artists view of the world. The beauty, the ugly, the good and the bad. Manga are truly windows into the heart and soul of those that create them.