

JPN369: Japan and the West in Motion

Project IV: Cultural Representations of Japan and the West in the Postwar Era through the Figure of the Child

Topic

Mori Masaki's two animated films, *Barefoot Gen* (1983) and *Barefoot Gen 2* (1986) have come to be recognized as iconic representations of Japan's experience of the U.S atomic bombing of Hiroshima at the end of World War II. The gravitas of this historical event on the collective psyche of the Japanese, as well as on the growing global awareness of the precarious future of the world under the threat of a looming nuclear apocalypse, invites us to consider the problematic relationship between Japan and the U.S. in the second half of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mori's *anime* present a unique opportunity to investigate the relationship between the politics of the postwar era worldwide and the expressive power of *anime* as a medium of cultural representation that possesses global appeal outside Japan.

Based on our in-depth study of the primary and secondary sources for this module, we will analyze the ways in which the producer Mori employed the figure of the child in *Barefoot Gen* and *Barefoot Gen 2* to retell the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima in 1945.

Focused Analysis

1. Identify two related key moments in either of the two *anime*, and select one recurring motif in both scenes.
2. Analyze each scene cinematically based on our study of concepts, tools, and vocabulary specific to the field of *anime* studies.
3. Your analysis should delineate the psychological and symbolic significance of the characters' interactions, cinematographically depicted in these particular moments. For instance, consider how the psychological significance of the moments is conveyed through the director Mori's particular use of visual idioms unique to the genre of anime.
4. Also contextualize your analysis in relation to the overall significance of the *anime* and in relation to the source materials (i.e., Nakazawa's Keiji's "I Saw it (Ore wa mita, 1972) and "Barefoot Gen" (Hadashi no Gen, 2001 [in English])
5. To demonstrate the significance of your own analysis of the *anime*, articulate how your interpretation differs from at least two pieces of existing commentary on the anime.

Exhibition II

Prepare a reading script of 1,000 words (approximately three pages, double-spaced), that showcases, to maximum effect, your deepening understanding of the Japan-West relationship as seen through *Barefoot Gen*. Delivering your presentation as an Audacity audio file (five minutes) is an option open to all students.

Grading Criteria

1. Title: captures both the reader's attention and the focus of your critical analysis (5%)
2. Main body: 90%
 - a) A clearly defined thesis statement (10%)

- b) A precisely articulated topic sentence for each of the paragraphs, which is in turn developed into a well-supported and streamlined argument of 1,000 words (approximately three pages, double-spaced) (20%)
- c) Originality (20%): evidence of a critical engagement with the film beyond class discussion
- d) Substance (10%): no fillers (e.g., plot summaries, unnecessary quotes, repeated ideas, etc.)
- e) Accuracy (10%): no factual misreading of the primary sources (the film and the short stories)
- f) Prose (10%): well-chosen diction and tone, cliché free, grammar-and spell-checked
- g) Japanese language component (5%): an analysis of a selected passage or key terms in the original Japanese
- h) Secondary Source (5%): an integration of two judiciously chosen academic articles that supports the main argument

3. Format: 5%

- a) Citations: page numbers from the primary text notated within the main text
- b) Page numbers: inserted throughout the essay
- c) Works Cited
- d) Bibliography: annotated bibliography of secondary sources (a minimum of two entries)