

American Influence in Boku no Hero Academia: A Semiotic Study

Pengaruh Amerika dalam Boku no Hero Academia: Analisis Semiotik

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ABSTRAK

This study examines the influence of American culture on Japanese manga, with a focus on Boku no Hero Academia (BNHA). It explores how American superhero tropes, values, and ideologies are incorporated into Japanese media, reflecting broader themes of globalization and cultural hybridization. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, the research analyzes BNHA's visual, narrative, and thematic elements to uncover both denotative and connotative meanings of American influences. The qualitative research approach relies on primary data from the manga, focusing on character designs, dialogue, and institutional structures. Key findings show that characters like All Might, Star and Stripe, Best Jeanist, Present Mic, and Snipe embody American cultural archetypes, such as superhero and cowboy imagery. All Might symbolizes American exceptionalism, while Star and Stripe reflects militaristic ideals. The study reveals how BNHA blends American influences with Japanese storytelling, contributing to global discussions on cultural exchange in popular media and illustrating the hybrid nature of modern narratives.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji pengaruh budaya Amerika pada manga Jepang, dengan fokus pada *Boku no Hero Academia* (BNHA). Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana tropes, nilai, dan ideologi superhero Amerika diintegrasikan ke dalam media Jepang, mencerminkan tema-tema globalisasi dan hibridisasi budaya. Menggunakan teori semiotik Roland Barthes, penelitian ini menganalisis elemen visual, naratif, dan tematik BNHA untuk mengungkap makna denotatif dan konotatif dari pengaruh Amerika. Pendekatan penelitian kualitatif ini mengandalkan data primer dari manga, dengan fokus pada desain karakter, dialog, dan struktur institusional. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa karakter-karakter seperti All Might, Star and Stripe, Best Jeanist, Present Mic, dan Snipe mewakili arketipe budaya Amerika, seperti ikonografi superhero dan mitologi koboi. All Might, misalnya, melambangkan eksseptionalisme Amerika, sementara Star and Stripe mencerminkan ideologi militeristik. Penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana BNHA menggabungkan pengaruh Amerika dengan penceritaan Jepang, berkontribusi pada diskusi global tentang pertukaran budaya dalam media populer dan menggambarkan sifat hibrida dari narasi modern.



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1. Introduction

Manga refers to comic books and graphic novels created in Japan.

It shares the same art style as anime, with characters typically characterized by large, expressive

eyes, wild hair, and eccentric clothing (Schodt, 1996). This unique visual style sets manga apart from other comics and graphic novels produced in the United States, where characters tend to have less exaggerated expressions and a more realistic aesthetic. America has a big role in Japan's growth, not just in technological field, but also in Japanese popular culture such as: anime and manga. Following the Meiji Restoration, when Japan's isolationist policies were lifted, American and the west influence became more noticeable on the nation. This was the beginning of Japan's modernization, which drew greatly from Western culture. After the Meiji Restoration, European cartoonists Wirgman and Ferdinand Bigot brought comic strips to Japan. In the 1920s, Japanese newspapers used comics to express satire and enhance news reports (Schodt, 1996). Since then, Manga become popular across the country.

Nowdays, manga become worldwide phenomenon. Manga have a huge worldwide popularity, with fans of all ages and backgrounds appreciating the varied spectrum of content. Manga have influenced the entertainment business in a variety of ways, with Hollywood movies and TV episodes adapted from successful manga series. Moreover, the influences of technology, digital platforms and streaming services have made it easier for fans to access their favorite manga content. As the popularity of manga grows, so does the demand for more diverse and inclusive representation. To meet this demand, the industry is

producing and distributing more series with diverse characters and storylines that address social issues. (Bates, 2023)

Manga has carved itself its own niche in American popular culture over the last few decades, even attracting readers of all ages. Manga are becoming more common in American culture. Japanese animation is becoming increasingly popular in films and on television. It also influenced NBA players. Many NBA players are well-known "wibu". Manga and Anime are perfect match for NBA players' "busy" schedule, it becomes a shortcut for NBA players to get rid of the stress and pressure. Despite this, manga and anime has long been associated with "nerdiness" or weirdness in North America. However, NBA players continue to embrace it now (Noh, 2023). Naruto and Dragon Ball are the most popular Anime and manga among NBA players. That is why, in recent years, numerous companies have begun to collaborate with various labels to create special edition sneakers, t-shirts, hoodies, and so on.

Even though anime and manga have become global cultures, the American influence on them is undeniable; for example, many mangaka still assume that "Americanizing" a manga series will improve its quality. This inferiority appears to be a result of WWII, when there was a belief that Japanese commodities were inferior to American commodities. The most obvious sign of American influence in manga is the physical appearance of the characters (cowan, 2021). For

example, many characters in one of the most famous manga: Hunter X Hunter, do not generally resemble Japanese people, the portrayal of the character is too "white American (Caucasian)". With their huge eyes, and brightly colored hair, bear no resemblance to anyone in Japan particular.

Furthermore, many Japanese manga are influenced by American sports themes. The increasing popularity of American sports in Japan, including basketball, baseball, American football, and skateboarding, has led to the emergence of manga series inspired by these sports. For example, *Eyeshield 21* is centered around American football, while *Kuroko no Basket* and *Slam Dunk* focus on basketball. *Slam Dunk* has become one of the most iconic "American sports-themed" manga and anime, rising to international fame and achieving significant success. To this day, *Slam Dunk* continues to be a beloved sports series, especially among fans who enjoy exciting basketball action, hard work, passion, and friendship.

Even today, the influence of American culture on Japanese anime and manga has been an area of scholarly interest, particularly in discussions of globalization, soft power, and transnational media flows. The studies by Otmazgin (2014), Orrù (2021), and Ghearaksa (2024) explore various dimensions of American influence on Japanese anime and manga. Otmazgin's work (2014) primarily investigates the economic and entrepreneurial dimensions of anime's global distribution, with a specific focus on

how entrepreneurs have facilitated the penetration of anime into the U.S. market. His study emphasizes the strategies employed by fans and companies to adapt anime for Western audiences. Ghearaksa's research (2024) takes a different angle by exploring the role of anime conventions in promoting Japan's soft power in the U.S. Her study focuses on how events such as Anime Con facilitate cultural exchange and help shape American perceptions of Japan. Orrù's (2021) examines American influence in *Boku no Hero Academia*, with particular emphasis on the character of All Might. Orrù interprets All Might as a symbol of American ideals, such as the superhero archetype, through visual cues like the red, white, and blue color scheme. However, her analysis is limited to the interpretation of a single character's embodiment of American stereotypes

The American influence in *Boku no Hero Academia* (BNHA), a widely successful manga by Kohei Horikoshi, exemplifies these global cultural exchanges. BNHA's narrative, centered on Izuku Midoriya, a boy born without superpowers in a society that values "quirks," mirrors the American mythos of the superhero—particularly the themes of individualism, meritocracy, and justice. This study examines the integration of American superhero conventions within BNHA, employing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to explore how visual and narrative elements embody American cultural and ideological influences. By doing so, it provides a cultural and

narrative investigation that offers a unique contribution to the field by exploring the transnational influence of American culture through the lens of semiotic theory.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the influence of American culture on the Japanese manga *Boku no Hero Academia*. Qualitative analysis allows for an in-depth interpretation of cultural and symbolic meanings embedded within the media (Creswell, 2008). This method is chosen because it enables the researcher to explore underlying themes, symbols, and cultural exchanges in a more interpretative and descriptive manner. The research is conducted using a transnational perspective, which examines the cultural exchange between the United States and Japan as reflected in manga. This perspective is crucial in understanding how American elements are integrated into Japanese pop culture and how they shape the narrative and character development in *Boku no Hero Academia*.

The primary data used in this study consists of the manga versions of *Boku no Hero Academia*. The manga, first published in 2014, provide extensive material for analysis. The researcher carefully examines specific visual, textual, and thematic elements within the series that reflect American cultural influences. For the data collection process, this study utilizes a documentation technique (Sugiyono, 2013), in which data is gathered

from textual sources (manga dialogue and narration), visual elements (character designs, costumes, and settings), and thematic components (heroism, justice, and cultural representation). The documentation method is selected as it allows for a comprehensive and systematic examination of how American influences manifest in both the storyline and artistic style of the series.

To analyze the collected data, this study applies Roland Barthes' semiotic theory (Barthes, 1972), which is widely used in media and cultural studies. Barthes' semiotics focuses on two levels of meaning: denotation (literal representation) and connotation (deeper, culturally influenced meaning). In this context, denotation refers to the direct visual and narrative elements found in *Boku no Hero Academia*, while connotation explores the underlying messages and cultural significance of these elements in relation to American influence. This approach helps in identifying how certain symbols, gestures, and themes in manga are derived from or inspired by American pop culture, particularly the Western superhero archetype. Furthermore, Barthes' myth analysis is employed to uncover the deeper ideological constructs behind the portrayal of heroism in *Boku no Hero Academia*. Through this methodological framework, this study aims to provide a critical insight into the cross-cultural exchange between Japan and the United States in the realm of popular culture, illustrating how American ideologies and

aesthetics continue to shape modern Japanese manga.

3. Finding and discussion

3.1 American Influence in Boku No Hero Academia Characters

- All Might: The Embodiment of American Heroism

In the My hero academy, there is one vital figure character that influenced the story, that is All Might. Something that we can automatically notice that, the All might character is influenced by superman character; it can be seen from his appearance. The character All Might in *Boku no Hero Academia* embodies the quintessential American superhero archetype, integrating both visual and ideological elements that reflect American hero mythology. All Might functions as a mythologized representation of American exceptionalism, reinforcing dominant superhero narratives while also adapting them within a Japanese cultural context. Barthes (1972) posits that myths operate as systems of signs that construct cultural meanings, making specific ideologies appear natural and universal. All Might's design, personality, and narrative role serve

as signifiers of American heroism, strength, and moral absolutism, offering a rich semiotic framework for analysis.

One of the most overt aspects of American influence in All Might's characterization is his visual representation, which closely follows the aesthetics of classic American superheroes. His muscular physique, exaggerated jawline, and bright costume in red, white, and blue colors evoke the imagery of Western superhero icons such as Superman and Captain America. These elements function as a first-order sign, where the denotative meaning is simply a strong hero's appearance. However, at the connotative level, this aesthetic choice reinforces the myth of American strength, resilience, and moral superiority (Dittmer, 2013). As Barthes (1972) explains, the repeated association of specific symbols with power and heroism constructs a myth that naturalizes the idea of American exceptionalism. All Might's visual presentation thus encodes him as an extension of this Western superhero tradition, making him a familiar yet culturally transposed figure in Japanese media.

Picture 1.
All Might design, My Hero Academia Wiki. (n.d.)



Beyond his appearance, All Might's persona and ideology reflect key American values, particularly the belief in justice, individualism, and the responsibility of the strong to protect the weak. His catchphrase, "I am here!" mirrors the grandiose declarations of American superheroes, reinforcing the notion of the hero as a symbol of hope and ultimate protection, as seen in picture 2. This phrase acts as a second order signifier, where its surface meaning (his physical

presence) is imbued with a deeper cultural narrative of heroic interventionism a concept deeply ingrained in American geopolitical ideology (Nye, 2019). The idea that a singular, powerful individual can restore order and save the world reflects the American concept of the superhero as a guardian of peace and democracy, an ideology frequently promoted in American media and foreign policy discourse.

Picture 2.
All Might's I am here!, BNHA Chapter 1



All Might's combat style and exaggerated expressions further align him with American superhero tropes. His attacks, named after American cities and states such as "Detroit Smash" and "Texas Smash", as seen in picture 3, serve as semiotic markers of American cultural hegemony. These naming conventions go beyond mere references; they symbolize

America's perceived global dominance in strength and influence (Dittmer, 2013). These attacks function as mythological constructs that reinforce the association between America and unparalleled power. The very act of shouting out these locations in battle mythologizes American strength, presenting it as an inherent and

naturalized form of ultimate power in the superhero universe.

Picture 3.
All Might's Texas Smash, BNHA Chapter 1



Additionally, All Might's role as the "Symbol of Peace", as seen in picture 4, aligns with America's self-image as a global protector. In the narrative, he is not just a hero but an icon of stability and order, much like how the United States often positions itself as the defender of global security. This myth of American heroism as a global force for good is deeply embedded in

American storytelling traditions, from comic books to Hollywood blockbusters (McGowan, 2016). All Might's characterization naturalizes the concept of American-style heroism, reinforcing the idea that true power must be benevolent, morally upright, and interventionist in nature.

Picture 4.
All Might's as the "Symbol of Peace, BNHA Chapter 1



All Might's mentor-student relationship with Midoriya serves as a powerful reflection of the American Dream narrative, particularly in its emphasis on meritocracy, self-determination, and upward mobility. The American Dream, is the belief that any individual, regardless of background, can achieve success through hard work and perseverance (Rasad & Munjid, 2019). This ideology is deeply embedded in the myth of American exceptionalism, which promotes the idea that anyone, given the right opportunities and dedication, can attain greatness. In *Boku no Hero*

Academia, Midoriya (Deku) initially lacks any superpowers (quirks) in a society where superhuman abilities determine one's social status and career prospects. Despite this, he idolizes heroes especially All Might and is determined to become one, even though he is repeatedly told that he is unfit for the role. This mirrors the classic Horatio Alger myth, a dominant narrative in American culture where a poor or disadvantaged protagonist overcomes obstacles through sheer determination, moral virtue, and hard work (Cawelti, 1976).

Picture 5.
All Might's decision to pass his power, BNHA Chapter 2



All Might's decision to pass his power (One For All) to Midoriya aligns with the myth of meritocracy, a key pillar of the American Dream. Meritocracy, in this context suggests that success is not determined by birthright but by individual talent, effort, and perseverance (McNamee & Miller, 2004). By selecting

Midoriya, as seen in picture 5, who starts off as weak but proves himself through effort and an unyielding sense of justice All Might reinforces the idea that success is attainable for anyone willing to work for it. This aligns with traditional American superhero narratives, where heroes like Superman (Clark

Kent) and Captain America (Steve Rogers) rise to greatness despite their humble origins (Dittmer, 2013). Thus, All Might and Midoriya's relationship functions as reproduction of American meritocratic ideals. It reinforces the myth that hard work leads to success, but it also acknowledges that those in power play a crucial role in granting opportunities. This nuanced portrayal reflects Japan's engagement with American hero tropes, adapting them to a Japanese cultural framework that values both individual perseverance and collective support (Napier, 2001). Ultimately, All Might serves as a semiotic bridge between American and Japanese superhero traditions. His design, ideology, and narrative arc encapsulate the myth of American heroism.

- **Best Jeanist: Fashion and Symbolism in Heroism**

The character Best Jeanist in *Boku no Hero Academia* represents a unique fusion of American fashion culture and American heroism. Best Jeanist, as a hero who elevates fashion to a form of morality, signifies broader themes of American consumerism, self-branding, and the performativity of heroism. One of the most striking

aspects of Best Jeanist's character is his denim-based costume, which transforms fashion into a heroic identity. Denim is a quintessential symbol of American culture, associated with industrialization, rugged individualism, and mass consumerism (Miller & Woodward, 2012). As a hero who meticulously upholds both style and discipline, Best Jeanist embodies the American ideology of self-presentation as power, aligning with the myth that external appearance signifies internal virtue. In this context, denim serves as a first-order signifier, denoting merely a choice of clothing. However, as a second-order myth, it connotes a broader American ethos of durability, hard work, and capitalist branding. Historically, denim has been linked to American laborers, later evolving into a global fashion statement through brands like Levi's, which symbolize both rebellion and mainstream consumerism (Crane, 2012). Best Jeanist's hero persona, centered around fabric manipulation, mythologizes the idea that clothing is not just a necessity but an extension of identity and societal value, mirroring the American obsession with fashion as a form of self-definition.

Picture 6.

Best Jeanist Design, My Hero Academia Wiki. (n.d.)



Best Jeanist's philosophy of heroism extends beyond physical strength, emphasizing image, discipline, and presentation. This reflects the American concept of self-branding, where individuals are encouraged to curate their identities as marketable commodities (Hearn, 2008). In the U.S., public figures, including superheroes in comics and Hollywood films often build their personas around signature aesthetics, much like how Batman's dark imagery reinforces his mystique or how Captain America's

uniform embodies patriotic ideals (Dittmer, 2013). Best Jeanist functions similarly: he constructs his heroism through an unmistakable visual identity, as seen in picture 7. His unwavering commitment to style suggests that heroism is not just about strength but about controlled presentation, aligning with the American myth that success requires both skill and the ability to sell oneself to the public (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

Picture 7.
No 4 Hero Best Jeanist, BNHA Chapter 48



Another major theme in Best Jeanist's characterization is his rigid moral philosophy, which emphasizes self-discipline and personal refinement. This reflects the American ideal of individualism, where people are expected to achieve success through strict self-control and ethical integrity (Bellah et al., 2007). His teachings to Bakugo, a hero known for his brash and impulsive nature reinforce the myth that true power lies not just in raw strength but in the ability to

harness one's image and actions into a disciplined, socially acceptable form. Barthes (1972) describes myths as narratives that reinforce dominant ideological structures, making certain values appear natural and universal. Best Jeanist's approach to heroism aligns with this, as his emphasis on image-conscious discipline mirrors the American belief that even natural talent must be refined and molded to fit societal expectations (Lears, 2003).

This also echoes the Protestant work ethic, a foundational American ideology that equates hard work, discipline, and self-control with moral superiority (Weber, 2002). However, *Boku no Hero Academia* subtly critiques this ideal by portraying Bakugo's resistance to Best Jeanist's philosophy. While Best Jeanist represents the structured, controlled image of heroism, Bakugo embodies raw, unfiltered ambition, reflecting a tension between American ideals of self-policing professionalism and more rebellious, individualistic heroism, as seen in

picture 8. This contrast suggests that while Best Jeanist's perspective aligns with American values of branding and discipline, it is not the only legitimate path to heroism, offering a more nuanced take on Western cultural ideals. By insisting that Bakugo refine his demeanor to fit the public's expectations, Best Jeanist reinforces a core American belief: that success in any field, including heroism, requires both skill and the ability to perform within a given structure (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

Picture 8.
Best Jeanist's insisting Bakugo to refine his demeanor, BNHA Chapter 57



Furthermore, Best Jeanist's philosophy reflects a Western ideal of social conformity, where individuals are encouraged to present themselves in ways that align with cultural norms (Goffman, 1959). In America, this is evident in corporate environments, where dress codes and behavioral expectations play crucial roles in professional success. Best Jeanist's

insistence on maintaining a polished image echoes this ideology, suggesting that even in a world of superheroes, external perception remains a critical factor in social standing. In contrast, Bakugo's refusal to conform challenges this notion, presenting a counterargument that raw talent and authenticity can also define success. This ideological struggle

highlights the broader debate within American society regarding the balance between individuality and societal expectations (Bellah et al., 2007). Best Jeanist serves as a representation of American consumerism, self-branding, and disciplined individualism, reflecting how *Boku no Hero Academia* adapts Western hero tropes through a Japanese lens.

- **Present Mic: The Loud, Energetic Broadcaster**

The character Present Mic in *Boku no Hero Academia* embodies a striking fusion of American media culture, rock-and-roll aesthetics, and the ideology of entertainment as power. Present Mic's exaggerated, radio-host-like persona functions as a myth of Americanized entertainment culture, reinforcing

the idea that visibility, charisma, and performance are integral to influence and success. One of the most obvious markers of American influence in Present Mic's character is his DJ-inspired persona, particularly his exaggerated vocal delivery, loud personality, and use of English catchphrases. His role as a commentator in the U.A. Sports Festival reflects the American tradition of sportscasters and wrestling announcers, where voice and spectacle play a significant role in shaping audience engagement (Miller, 2013). American media culture has long celebrated loud, high-energy performers—from radio DJs to sports commentators—who cultivate distinct personas to capture audience attention (Holt, 2004).

Picture 9.

Presenter Mic Design, My Hero Academia Wiki. (n.d.)



Additionally, Present Mic's visual aesthetic aligns closely with American rock-and-roll and punk culture, particularly in his spiked blond hair, leather jacket, and sunglasses. These elements evoke the rebellious and energetic spirit of American rock musicians, particularly figures like Elvis Presley,

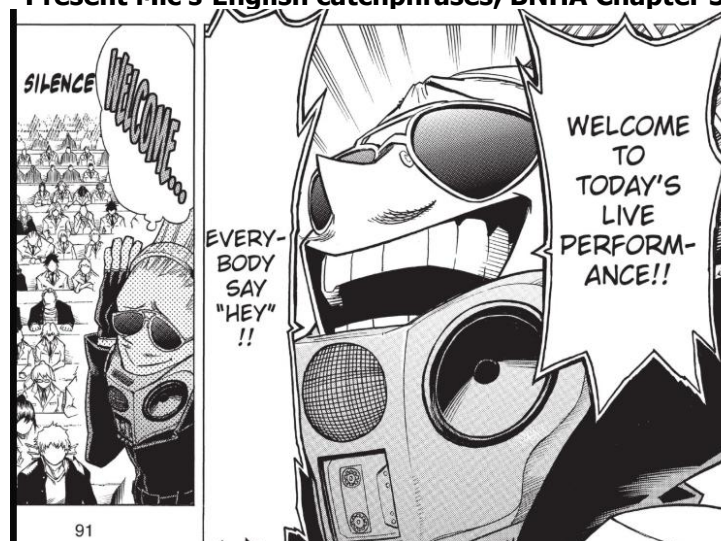
Billy Idol, and punk rock performers who used their image as an extension of their defiant personas (Hebdige, 1979). His costume choices, including the heavy use of black and sleek accessories, reinforce the myth of the rock star as an individualistic, rule-breaking figure, a common trope in American

media (Frith, 2001). This aligns with the American ideal of self-made success, where individuals build their influence through unique branding and “showmanship” (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

Present Mic’s role as a commentator and educator further reinforces his connection to American media culture. His function in the series is not only to fight villains but to narrate battles and events in a high-energy, engaging style, reminiscent of American sports commentators and game show hosts (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). His exaggerated vocal delivery and frequent use of English catchphrases, such as “HEY, WELCOME, YEAHHHH!” and “FOR REAL!” as seen in picture 10, reflect the global influence of American pop culture linguistics (Crystal, 2003).

This linguistic performance is not merely a quirk; it signifies the cultural dominance of American media, where English catchphrases have become shorthand for excitement and authority. According to Barthes (1972), such symbols are embedded within media representations to naturalize ideological meanings, making Present Mic’s linguistic style an extension of the globalization of American media discourse. His presence in *Boku no Hero Academia* suggests that heroism is not only about combat but also about narration, framing, and entertainment, drawing parallels to the American culture of sports commentary, professional wrestling personas, and reality television personalities.

Picture 10.
Present Mic’s English catchphrases, BNHA Chapter 3



Another key aspect of Present Mic’s characterization is his ability-based heroism, where his Quirk, “Voice,” allows him to amplify his speech to extreme levels, as seen in picture 11. This ability serves as a

metaphor for the power of media and mass communication, aligning with American ideals of free speech, influence, and the power of mass dissemination of ideas (Habermas, 1989). In the United States, the

idea that a strong voice can shape public perception and mobilize action is central to political, cultural, and entertainment industries (Sujiwa & Munandar, 2024). Present Mic's ability is not just a tool for

combat but a representation of the power of sound and rhetoric, reminiscent of influential American radio personalities, motivational speakers, and pop culture icons.

Picture 11.
Present Mic's Quirk "Voice", BNHA Chapter 66



Moreover, Present Mic's enthusiastic and hyperbolic personality aligns with the American myth of the "Showman", a figure who thrives on spectacle, charisma, and engagement. This archetype can be traced back to figures like P.T. Barnum, early American radio hosts, and contemporary celebrity culture, where the ability to entertain is often seen as synonymous with leadership and influence (Tichi, 1994). In *Boku no Hero Academia*, Present Mic serves as a mediator between the audience and the narrative, bridging the gap between reality and fiction in a manner reminiscent of American media figures who construct narratives around sports, politics, and entertainment (Hartley, 2012).

- Snipe: The Cowboy Persona

The character Snipe in *Boku no Hero Academia* embodies the Western gunslinger archetype, a figure deeply ingrained in American mythology. His design, abilities, and persona draw from the cowboy culture of the American frontier, which has been mythologized in American cinema, literature, and history. One of the most striking aspects of Snipe's character is his costume, which directly references the American cowboy, as we can see in picture 12. His wide-brimmed hat, long coat, and bandana evoke the imagery of the Wild West, a period historically associated with rugged individualism, frontier justice, and firearms proficiency (Slotkin, 1992). Snipe's design reinforces the American ideal of the cowboy as a self-reliant, law-bringing hero, much like legendary figures from Western films such as John Wayne's characters or Clint

Eastwood's "Man with No Name" (Cawelti, 1999). The cowboy is an American cultural construct that symbolizes justice, honor, and resistance against chaos, and Snipe's character adopts this

imagery to position himself as a modern enforcer of these values within the superhero society of *Boku no Hero Academia*.

Picture 12.

Snipe's costume, My Hero Academia Wiki. (n.d.)



Snipe's quirk, "Homing," which allows him to hit targets with extreme precision, further aligns him with American sharpshooter mythology, as seen in picture 13. This ability mirrors the "gunslinger myth" found in both historical narratives and popular culture, where legendary marksmen such as Annie Oakley, Wild Bill Hickok, and Wyatt Earp were celebrated for their unerring accuracy and control over their environment (Wright, 2001). In American Western films and

literature, the lone sharpshooter is often portrayed as the ultimate arbiter of justice, symbolizing the belief that order is maintained through individual skill and power rather than institutional law (Buscombe, 2006). By embodying this myth, Snipe's character reinforces an American ideological framework where justice is defined by the hero's ability to act independently and with superior skill, rather than relying on a collective system of governance.

Picture 13.

Snipe as sharpshooter, BNHA Chapter 22



Additionally, Snipe's persona and speech patterns further solidify his cowboy identity, as seen in picture 14. His rough, informal manner of speaking, paired with his confident yet reserved attitude, resembles the stoic gunslinger trope popularized by Hollywood (Coyne, 1997). The American cowboy archetype is often depicted as a

man of few words but great action, embodying the ideal of self-sufficiency and personal justice (Kitses, 2019). Snipe's low-profile but highly effective role in hero society mirrors this tradition, positioning him as a figure who operates outside of the spotlight yet remains highly respected for his abilities.

Picture 14.

Snipe's informal manner of speaking, BNHA Chapter 60



Beyond aesthetics and abilities, Snipe's moral philosophy reflects key American ideologies associated with the cowboy myth. The Western gunslinger often represents frontier justice, where heroes must take the law into their own hands to protect the innocent (Slotkin, 1992). Snipe, while technically part of Japan's pro-hero system, maintains a lone-wolf mentality, much like classic American vigilantes. This suggests that heroism in *Boku no Hero Academia* incorporates elements of the American justice myth, where individual action is sometimes portrayed as more effective than institutional enforcement. Snipe serves as a representation of the American cowboy myth, incorporating iconography, ideology, and narrative tropes from American

Westerns into the superhero framework of *Boku no Hero Academia*. His costume, sharpshooter abilities, and moral philosophy reflect the American values of rugged individualism, frontier justice, and personal skill as a source of legitimacy.

- Star and Stripe: Reflection of American Heroism

The character Star and Stripe in *Boku no Hero Academia* embodies the American superhero archetype, incorporating both visual and ideological elements that reflect the broader influence of American hero mythology. Star and Stripe's design, abilities, and narrative role serve as signifiers of American heroism and geopolitical influence, offering a rich

semiotic field for analysis. One of the most overt aspects of American influence in Star and Stripe's characterization is her visual representation, which draws heavily from patriotic symbolism. Her

costume features the red, white, and blue colors of the U.S. flag, along with a star-spangled chest plate that closely resembles Captain America's uniform.

Picture 15.

Star and stripe's costum, My Hero Academia Wiki. (n.d.)



This aesthetic choice functions as a first-order sign, where the denotative meaning is simply a costume design. However, at the connotative level, it signifies American nationalism and the myth of the United States as the global enforcer of justice (Barthes, 1972). Superheroes in American pop culture, such as Superman and Captain America, have historically been depicted as protectors of freedom and democracy, reinforcing the image of the U.S. as a global leader (Sujiwa & Munandar, 2024). By mirroring this imagery, *Boku no Hero Academia* encodes Star and Stripe as an extension of this Western superhero tradition, making her a familiar yet culturally distinct figure within the Japanese manga landscape. Beyond aesthetics, Star and Stripe's Quirk, "New Order", as seen in picture 16, serves as a semiotic extension of American

exceptionalism. Her ability to impose her will on reality reflects the broader ideological perception of the United States as a dominant global force, capable of reshaping the world order according to its values. In Barthesian terms, her Quirk operates as a second-order signifier, where its raw function (an ability to change the rules of nature) is infused with deeper cultural meaning. This reflects America's self-perception as a world power with the authority to dictate international norms (Hall, 1997). The mythologization of American dominance through her powers positions her not just as a superhero but as a symbol of how American influence is projected globally. This echoes real-world narratives of U.S. interventionism, where the nation asserts its influence in political and military conflicts under the guise of maintaining order (Nye, 2019).

Picture 16.
Star and Stripe's Quirk New Order, BNHA Chapter 330



Additionally, Star and Stripe's role in the narrative reinforces American interventionist themes. She arrives in Japan not as an observer but as an active participant in the battle against Shigaraki Tomura, the series' primary antagonist, as seen in picture 17. Her portrayal as a foreign hero intervening in a Japanese crisis mirrors Western depictions of American military or humanitarian interventions in global conflicts. In

this case, the presence of an American hero in a Japanese superhero conflict subtly reinforces the global myth of American leadership in crises, mirroring how American superheroes like Superman or Iron Man often take central roles in saving the world. This highlights how *Boku no Hero Academia* borrows from and adapts Western superhero tropes within a Japanese storytelling context.

Picture 17.
Star and Stripe on her ways to Japan, BNHA Chapter 328



Furthermore, Star and Stripe's military background is an overt reflection of the American emphasis on military power and global authority. Her status as the strongest hero in the United States aligns with the myth of American

military superiority, which has long been reinforced in U.S. media and political rhetoric. The narrative surrounding her character suggests that the United States' heroic strength is closely tied to its militaristic prowess, a theme often

found in American superhero films where military cooperation plays a vital role in combating global threats (Edwards, 2021). This further illustrates how her character functions as a semiotic

representation of the intertwined relationship between American heroism and military ideology, as seen in picture 18.

Picture 18.

Star and Stripe and American military superiority, BNHA Chapter 330 and 331



Another significant marker of American influence in Star and Stripe is her unwavering individualism, a core tenet of American cultural identity, as seen in picture 19. Unlike many Japanese heroes in *Boku no Hero Academia*, who emphasize teamwork and collective effort, Star and Stripe embodies the rugged individualism of Western superhero narratives. Her approach to heroism aligns with

the American ideal of the self-reliant figure who imposes their will upon the world, much like iconic figures such as Batman or Iron Man (Eco, 1979). This ideology contrasts with the series' broader themes, which tend to emphasize collaboration over solitary heroism, making Star and Stripe's character an outlier and reinforcing her distinctly American identity within the story.

Picture 19.

Star and Stripe portrayed as solitary heroism, BNHA Chapter 331



3.2 Superhero Institutions and Society's Perception of Heroes

Another key American influence on BNHA is the institutionalization of heroism. In Western comics, superhero organizations such as the Avengers, the Justice League, and the X-Men regulate and oversee superhero activities. Similarly, BNHA introduces U.A. High School, as seen in picture 20, as a formalized institution for training heroes, akin to Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in *X-Men*. These institutions serve as structured environments where young heroes hone their skills, train under experienced mentors, and prepare to take on real-world threats. This concept is deeply embedded in American superhero culture, where institutions provide

guidance and a sense of legitimacy to the role of heroes in society. In BNHA, the institution of heroism operates as a signifier that constructs a specific cultural narrative about heroism, transforming it from an individual act of bravery into a structured profession with formalized training, licensing, and regulation. This mirrors the way American superhero comics often depict heroism as an organized system rather than an isolated endeavor. For instance, in Marvel's *Civil War* (Millar, 2006), superheroes are required to register with the government, highlighting the tension between state control and individual agency, a theme that is similarly explored in BNHA through its licensing system for Pro Heroes.

Picture 20.
U.A. High School in BNHA Chapter 3



Moreover, the institutionalization of heroism in BNHA serves a semiotic function by reinforcing a structured ideology of order and discipline. By presenting heroism as a regulated profession,

BNHA aligns with American narratives that depict superheroes not only as symbols of justice but also as part of a broader societal system. This structured approach to heroism conveys an implicit

message about the necessity of institutional oversight, reflecting broader concerns about authority, responsibility, and power in American cultural discourse. Furthermore, BNHA explores how society perceives and commercializes heroes, a theme that resonates with the American superhero tradition. The concept of Pro Heroes, hero rankings, and media coverage of hero activities in BNHA parallels the celebrity-like status of superheroes in American comics and films. In American media, figures like Iron Man and Batman are not just crime fighters; they are also public icons with corporate sponsorships, brand recognition, and extensive media presence. Similarly, in BNHA, heroism is commodified, with Pro Heroes engaging in endorsements, sponsorship deals, and public relations campaigns to maintain their reputations. This aligns with Barthes' (1972) argument that myths function to naturalize cultural constructs, presenting the commercialization of heroism as an inherent and unquestioned aspect of the superhero identity.

The presence of media and public perception in BNHA also reflects broader American cultural concerns about the intersection of power, responsibility, and spectacle. In many Western superhero narratives, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion about heroes, often positioning them as symbols of national identity and moral authority. BNHA adopts this approach by depicting how heroes are scrutinized by the public, evaluated based on their rankings,

and judged according to their ability to maintain public trust. This dynamic reinforces the idea that heroism is not only about strength and skill but also about maintaining a specific image and cultural narrative, further supporting Barthes' (1972) view that myths serve ideological functions by reinforcing dominant societal values. Additionally, the influence of American media on BNHA is evident in how the series portrays the spectacle of heroism. The hero licensing exams, tournaments, and professional hero rankings reflect the competitive and performative nature of heroism, akin to the way American superheroes are often depicted in media as larger-than-life figures. This performative aspect aligns with Barthes' concept of connotation, where the representation of heroism in BNHA carries deeper ideological implications. By structuring heroism as a competitive, media-driven industry, BNHA critiques the commodification of hero figures, paralleling real-world concerns about the commercialization of celebrities and public figures in Western societies.

The research on the American influence in *Boku no Hero Academia* through a semiotic lens highlights several important implications for understanding cultural exchanges between the United States and Japan. By examining how American superhero tropes, values, and ideologies are embedded within the narrative and visual elements of *Boku no Hero Academia*, this study underscores the broader effects of globalization

on media and storytelling. One significant implication is the role of media in bridging cultural divides. The blending of American and Japanese superhero archetypes in *Boku no Hero Academia* not only appeals to a global audience but also reflects how media products can adapt and incorporate diverse cultural influences while maintaining local relevance. This blending facilitates a wider understanding of cross-cultural influences and allows for a broader conversation about the power dynamics in global media flows.

Furthermore, the research raises important questions about identity and cultural hybridization. By analyzing characters such as All Might, Best Jeanist and Star and Stripe, the study reveals how American values, including individualism, meritocracy, and nationalism, are reinterpreted within the Japanese manga context. The semiotic analysis demonstrates that these American cultural markers are not merely borrowed but are recontextualized to create a unique narrative that speaks to both American and Japanese audiences. This process of cultural hybridization suggests that media can serve as a site of negotiation, where influences from one culture are not simply replicated but transformed to fit the socio-cultural context of another. The implications of this for global media are profound, as it indicates how cultural narratives evolve and adapt across borders, influencing audience perceptions and cultural consumption patterns.

Additionally, the study highlights the commercialization of

heroism in *Boku no Hero Academia*, which mirrors broader trends in American media where superheroes are not just symbols of justice but also commodities. The institutionalization of heroism in the manga, through formalized training and rankings of heroes, echoes American practices where superheroes are also marketed as brands. This aspect of the study provides insight into the intersection of capitalism and media, offering a critique of how even the most altruistic figures, such as superheroes, are subject to market forces. This critique speaks to the commodification of values in modern society, raising questions about the ethical implications of turning idealized figures of heroism into marketable entities.

In sum, the research not only illuminates the specific ways in which *Boku no Hero Academia* reflects American cultural influence but also contributes to broader conversations about the role of media in cultural exchange, identity formation, and commercialization. It opens up avenues for further studies on how other non-Western media adopt, adapt, and negotiate Western influences, offering critical insights into the processes of globalization and media hybridization.

4. Conclusion

This study has examined the profound influence of American culture on Japanese manga, with a specific focus on *Boku no Hero Academia* (BNHA). Through a semiotic analysis grounded in Roland Barthes' theory, the research

revealed how American superhero tropes, values, and ideologies are reinterpreted within a Japanese narrative framework. The findings highlight several key aspects of this cultural exchange, as exemplified by the characters and institutional structures in BNHA. First, the character of All Might embodies the quintessential American superhero archetype, with his visual design, catchphrases, and ideological alignment reflecting themes of American exceptionalism, meritocracy, and moral absolutism. His portrayal as the "Symbol of Peace" mirrors the United States' self-image as a global protector, reinforcing the myth of American heroism as a universal ideal. Similarly, Star and Stripe serves as a direct representation of American nationalism and military prowess, further emphasizing the transnational flow of superhero mythology.

Other characters, such as Best Jeanist, Present Mic, and Snipe, illustrate the diverse ways American cultural elements, ranging from fashion and consumerism to media spectacle and cowboy mythology, are integrated into BNHA. These characters function as semiotic bridges, blending American and Japanese cultural narratives while critiquing or reinforcing specific ideologies. For instance, Best Jeanist's emphasis on self-branding and discipline reflects American capitalist values, while Snipe's lone-wolf persona challenges Japan's traditional collectivism. The institutionalization of heroism in BNHA, particularly through U.A. High School, parallels American

superhero narratives where organizations like the Avengers or X-Men formalize heroism as a profession. This structured approach underscores the commodification and media-driven nature of heroism, aligning with American cultural preoccupations with spectacle, public perception, and commercialization.

In conclusion, *Boku no Hero Academia* exemplifies the dynamic interplay between American and Japanese cultural influences in contemporary media. By adapting and recontextualizing American superhero tropes, BNHA not only appeals to global audiences but also engages in a critical dialogue about power, justice, and identity. This study contributes to broader discussions on transnational media flows, demonstrating how Japanese manga serve as sites of cultural hybridization. Future research could explore similar phenomena in other media or examine how audiences in different cultural contexts interpret these blended narratives. Ultimately, the findings underscore the enduring impact of American culture on global popular media while highlighting the creative ways in which these influences are localized and transformed.

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