

***New Age* elements in the Clamp's manga X**

Los elementos de la *New Age* en el manga X de Clamp

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Abstract

In this article, we start from the consideration that manga X, created by the collective CLAMP between 1994 and 2003, and published in Mexico by Editorial Vid between 2002 and 2005, is a story whose overarching principle corresponds to the various elements of the *New Age*. We base this on the following assumptions: first in this manga, the sephirotic tree, the B.O.T.A. tarot and the aspects of Enochian magic, typical of western esoterism, are present iconographically. Second, Kamui, the subject of the story, represents God, so that his actions determine the entire narrative; besides, it has a twin star (Fuma), which fulfills the function of being its complementary opposite. Finally, the apocalypse is detonated by the well-being of the Earth, which arises as an organism with its own life and is intended to survive the destruction of humanity. We carry out this analysis taking up the notion of an overarching principle, as well as the importance of the source, present in the historical method. In addition to the above, we use the paradigm of indicial inferences proposed by Carlo Ginzburg, the elements of structural analysis of Helena Beristain's story and the notion of postmodernity introduced by Fredrick Jameson. The primary sources would be the 18 volumes of X published in Mexico.

Keywords: Manga, CLAMP; New Age; postmodernity; religion

Resumen

En este artículo partimos de la consideración de que el manga X, creado por el colectivo CLAMP entre 1994 y 2003, y publicado en México por Editorial Vid entre 2002 y 2005, es una historia cuyo principio dominante corresponde a los diversos elementos de *la New Age*. Fundamentamos lo anterior con las siguientes premisas: primero en este manga se ven presentes, iconográficamente, el árbol sefirótico, el tarot BOTA y los elementos de la magia *enochiana*, propios del esoterismo occidental; segundo, Kamui, el sujeto de la historia, representa a Dios, por lo que sus acciones determinan toda la narración; además, cuenta con una estrella gemela (Fuma), quien cumple la función de ser su opuesto complementario. Finalmente, el apocalipsis se detona por el bienestar de la Tierra, la cual se plantea como un organismo con vida y se pretende que sobreviva después de la destrucción de la humanidad. Realizamos este análisis retomando la noción de principio dominante, así como la importancia de la fuente, presentes en el método histórico. Además de lo anterior, utilizamos el paradigma de inferencias indiciales propuesto por Carlo Ginzburg, los elementos de análisis estructural del relato de Helena Beristáin y la noción de posmodernidad propuesta por Fredrick Jameson. Las fuentes primarias serían los 18 tomos de X publicados en México.

Palabras clave: Manga; CLAMP; *New Age*; posmodernidad; religión

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Introduction

After the opening up of borders in the nineties, as result of the application of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), allowed the introduction of a large number of foreign cultural products to the country. Japanese anime and manga came to Mexico in large quantities, successfully, importing new graphics and narrative ways, which were mixed with Mexican graphics and narrative, and created hybrid products. Due to the impact of anime and manga in Mexico, in this time we propose to make an iconographic and historical thematic analysis, of a manga created in Japan and published in Mexico in 2003.

The theme of manga and anime begins to succeed in the academic field, so the literature that we could access, related to the subject in the Western context, can be divided into three groups: publications that analyze the Japanese graphics pre-manga, such as the Ukiyo-e (Japanese print) and the Shunga (Japanese erotic print), as well as its continuity with itself (Horno, 2015). The publications that treat manga in a general way, explaining its characteristics, its history and its genres (Santiago, 2010); and, finally, the academic publications that analyze from a theoretical approach some manga or anime.

In this article, we start from the consideration that manga X, created by the collective CLAMP between 1994 and 2003, and published in Mexico

by Editorial Vid between 2002 and 2005, is a story whose overarching principle corresponds to the various elements of the *New Age*. We base this on the following assumptions: first in this manga, the sephirotic tree, the B.O.T.A. tarot and the aspects of Enochian magic, typical of western esoterism, are present iconographically. Second, Kamui, the subject of the story, represents God, so that his actions determine the entire narrative; Besides, it has a twin star (Fuma), who fulfills the function of being its complementary opposite. Finally, the apocalypse is detonated by the well-being of the Earth, which arises as an organism with its own life and is intended to survive the destruction of humanity.

The previous arguments are based on the following methodology: on the one hand, we return to the historical method from which two main concepts are taken: the overarching principle and the discourse or source (Pappe, 2001). On the other hand, we work with the paradigm of indexical inferences proposed by Carlo Ginzburg (1999), which is an inductive method that takes into account the details from which the source is located in a more profound historical context. These details analyze, from images from the manga, the cover, and flaps of volume one. Similarly, we will return to elements from the theory of postmodernity proposed by Fredrick Jameson, and the structural analysis of the story suggested by Helena Beristain (1984).

Our work is supported by the analysis of the 18 volumes of X, published in Mexico, which are

our primary sources. As secondary sources, we have the bibliography and the press clipping references of the subject, published in English and Spanish, in addition to the audiovisual material.

Materials and methods

For the realization of this article, we start from the historical method, of which two main characteristics are retaken: the importance of the source and the idea of the overarching principle. Within the sphere of historical science, the most important is the source, because the historical analysis does not seek to investigate the reality of the past as such, but the vision of the past that the source communicates (Pappe, 2001). It is because the source is the basis of the investigation, which in our case we resort to a whole series of methods necessary to examine it, and thus only take up the tools that the source itself asks for, according to its particular characteristics.

Another element that we take back from the historical method is the dominant principle, an idea that sustains our argument about the *New Age*. The overarching principle (...)

(...) Is a type of concept that marks culturally, as belonging to an era, as an understanding of a society at a given moment, the discourse, in the same way in which events and actions can mark time or the objects and traces that marks the space. It accentuates the idea of the historical thought of a given point, in a determined political-social culture. Seeing different moments, it appears as a variable; however, some overarching principle can be detected, and almost always it is related to the idea of the validity of historical discourse. (Pappe, 2001, p.48)

The overarching principle is useful to us as it is the basis of the argument of the present article,

and allows us to understand the *New Age* as the guiding axis of a whole series of varied elements present in the iconography and narrative of *X*.

In addition to the above, we return to the paradigm of indexical inferences proposed by Carlo Ginzburg, which is based on the identification of details, signs or traces that allow us to capture a broader and more complex reality (Ginzburg, 1999, p.143). Such details or indications have been obtained through the use of tools from the proposal of *Structural analysis of the literary story* of Helena Beristáin and the *Neo-Baroque era* of Omar Calabrese.

Results

Cruxes and catalyzes in the story

X is an apocalyptic manga that tells the story of Kamui, a 16-year-old boy who returns to Tokyo after the death of his mother. Once there, a series of supernatural characters attack him while urging him to make a decision and enter one of the two sides in dispute: or join the dragons of heaven and save humanity from its destruction; or join the dragons of the earth, generates the apocalypse to destroy humanity and save the life of the Earth, which is being destroyed by human beings. In order to protect the lives of his two best friends, Kotori and Fūma, Kamui decides on the side of the sky dragons, but, when he does, the principle of complementary opposites is activated, and his friend Fūma becomes the Kamui of the dragons of the earth, murders Kotori, hurts Kamui and is dedicated to provoking the apocalypse to end human life.

The basic scheme of the syntax of the actions (Figure 1.) for the history of *X* is as follows:

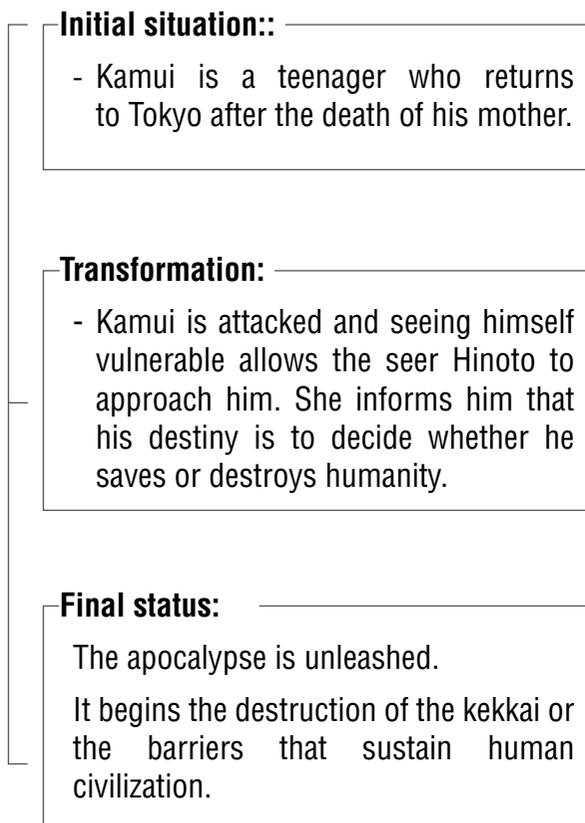


Figure 1. Syntax of Kamui actions

The outline of the narrative is structured from the syntax of the actions of the actants, which are all that fulfill a function in the story; they can be a character, an animal, an object or even an abstract element (Balderrama, 2008). The functions determine the actions of the actants within the story and can be divided into distributional or integrating; the first in turn are divided into two more: cruxes and catalyzes; On the other hand, the integrators are divided in turn into indices and information (Beristáin, 1984). For reasons of space, we will not deal with the integrating functions. We will mention the distributional ones to make clear the role-played by the various religious elements, which are apparently disjointed in the story of *X*.

We understand the cruxes as “the cardinal functions which suppression would alter the story,

and are constituted mostly by action verbs. Each one is a hinge of the story, since it means a moment of risk because it presents in it an alternative to acting “(Beristáin, 1984, pp. 30-31). The catalyzes, on the other hand, are secondary elements, descriptions between each crux. The logical chaining of functions (cruxes and catalyzes) is the syntax of the actions we observed in previous pages.

In *X*, each node is constituted by a series of elements of religious origin, which are presented both in the theme and in the manga iconography that we analyze. *X* takes iconographic and conceptual aspects of Christianity and East Asian religions, Christianity and Taoism being the cruxes of graphic narration, while the rest of the elements are presented as catalyzes and descriptions between each crux.

The story starts from the beginning of an eschatological approach, which is taken from the Christian tradition; however, the idea of irreconcilable opposites, typical of Christianity, is modified in history at the time when Kamui decides one side and another person occupies the place that remains vacant. Fūma then becomes the other Kamui, the other “me” of Kamui: an approach that is very much in keeping with the yin-yang proposed by the Taoist religion. Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism entered Japan via Korea and China during the *Asuka* period, in the 5th and 6th centuries (Tanaka, 2011). The first states that “the world represents a totality of cyclical order (Tao), constituted by the conjugation of two alternating and complementary manifestations” (Eliade, 1999, p.34). The preceding implies that these manifestations are the same. These are not irreconcilable and opposed elements, but linked opposites belonging to a whole. In *X*, Christianity, and Taoism conjugate and hybridize; they are cruxes whose omission would generate transformations in the story.

If the cruxes of the story are mixing Christianity and Taoism, catalyzes are presented through the thematic and iconographic representation of elements related to Shintoism (a religion initially from Japan based on the veneration of spiritual entities called *Kami*), the Buddhism and the iconographic aspects related to the *Golden Dawn*. The latter is a sect that mixes Christian and esoteric elements and claims to descend from the Rosicrucian society that apparently emerged in the seventeenth century, which we will discuss later when we mention Western esotericism. We will not delve into these elements for the moment, because the purpose of our article is to examine the way in which the *New Age* fulfills the role of the overarching principle of the story, which articulates the vast majority of religious elements scattered in it. Due to the above, for the moment we are only interested in making it clear that both Christianity and Taoism are cruxes of the story, and Shintoism, Buddhism and the elements of the Golden Dawn, are catalyzes of it.

New age as an overarching principle

We have already said that the *New Age* is the overarching principle that rules the story, so it is necessary to emphasize that one of its main sources is Renaissance esotericism. Due to the above, it is not strange to find in *X* several of its constituent elements. To analyze them, we will use some images from the manga. The first one has its origin in volume number three²: at the center of the page and in the foreground is Satsuki Yatouji, an earth dragon. She is naked with a full body, with open arms. It is surrounded by a computer cable and behind it, in the background, appears the *sephirotic* tree traced with white lines. In the backdrop, the vacuum is observed.

The image described in previous lines is one of many where the picture of the *sephirotic* tree

2. See https://www.mangahere.cc/manga/x_1999/v03/c001.1/39.html

appears in an iconographic way. According to Wouter J. Hanegraaff, the *New Age*, as a symbolic system of knowledge, has its origin in Western esotericism that was created during the Renaissance, influenced by two philosophical traditions: Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, and three traditional sciences: astrology, magic and alchemy, in addition to the Christian interpretation of the *Kabbala*. The *sephirotic* tree is one of the leading elements of the latter. This tree

(...) serves as a scheme that brings together traditional wisdom and accounts for the creation “of a parallel between the origin of the world, the sun, the planets, the elements, the four seasons, the man and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. (Pérez-Diestre, 2008. p.50)

The *sephirotic* tree has a close relationship with the Major Arcana of the tarot, which were also represented in *X* due to a feature of the publication. In its tankōbōn version (the compilation volume of a particular manga, pocket-size, and contains approximately 200 pages) in the flap of each volume appeared a tarot card. It was intended that, once the publication was completed, the 22 major arcana of the tarot would be published in the 22-programmed volumes. In the case of the version of *X* that arrived in Mexico, it was presented with simple boards that did not include flaps and, therefore, did not bring such cards. Even so, it is necessary to analyze them and mention them because they are part of the iconographic analysis that we are carrying out.

The Major Arcana that CLAMP presented in the original manga have a black background on which the other elements are placed. In the upper part, at the center, put the *X* that corresponds to the title of the manga; in the lower part, at the center, goes the corresponding letter

of the Hebrew alphabet. For example, in card number one the letter Alef³ is placed. The card corresponds to the Magician, and the image is composed of five layouts in color: in the foreground, the sacred sword appears, at the center, it occupies three-quarters of the image. In the backdrop, a caduceus⁴ that is behind the sword, almost at the center of the composition, in the third layout. Behind the caduceus is the pentacle of the earth, and, on the caduceus and the pentacle, the cup of water⁵ is held by Kamui, who is standing, holding the aforementioned cup with his left hand while his right arm stands up just next to his head, on which appears horizontal 8, which “represents domain, strength, and control and is also the mathematical sign of infinity” (B.O.T.A, 2016). In the fourth layout we observe gray clouds from which rays emanate and cover almost the whole image, except for the lower right, where, in the fifth layout, the skyscrapers of the city are seen.

The tarot that CLAMP drew in the original edition of *X* is directly related, by its composition and the elements represented, with the Case deck (Tarot B.O.T.A or Builders of the Adytum) created by Paul Foster Case. The original Case deck has a total of 78 cards, 22 of which correspond to the Major Arcana, which in turn correspond to the paths of the *Sephirothic* tree: “The Major Arcana are associated with the paths of the tree and thus, show the changing energies of the person's life” (Kraig, 1994, p.223). These energies are linked to the subjective part, feelings, and behaviors of humankind about the universe.

3. See http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_O5FzjdR0oFk/TGMHzKmwDoI/AAAAAAAAAMQ/jiiMzIplF1U/s1600/Imago.jpg

4. Rod intertwined with two snakes, which in the upper part has two small wings or a winged helm (...) In the caduceus, the balanced binary aspect is double: the snakes and the wings for what ratifies that supreme state of strength and self-control (and consequently, health) in the lower layer (snakes, instincts) and the upper layer (wings, spirit). (Cirlot, 1992, pp. 113-114)

5. The cup is part of what the Golden Dawn considers the four elemental weapons: the rod of fire, the cup of water, the knife for the air and the pentacle of the earth. (Regardie, 2005)

...the deck offers a halfway version between the one of the *Golden Dawn* and the one of Raider-Waite, and it is important because it constitutes the first public disclosure of the attributions that the *Golden Dawn* established between the Hebrew alphabet and the cards of the major arcana. (Kraig, 1994, p.28)

In the two previous images, the presence of two elements coming from the western Renaissance esotericism is observed: the *sephirothic* tree of the *Kabbala* and the major arcana of the tarot, represented by a deck created subsequent; elements that reveal reminiscences of the three traditional sciences which are the source of Renaissance esotericism: astrology, magic and alchemy.

Let's analyze the last image related to the elements of Western esotericism. It is a representation of Hinoto, the seer, who appears in the background in volume seven, standing on a disc, which has a series of writings. Highlight the Star of David and the pentagram within it. Such disk appears tilted to the left. In front of Hinoto is his sister, Kanoe. In the first layer, fragments of what looks like crystals can be seen, in the third layer, in the lower left, three disks are seen that resemble the machinery of a clock. The back is, once again, the vacuum⁶.

The disc on which appears standing, or seated, the seer Hinoto, is linked to the seal belonging to the Enochian magic, whose leading representative was Jonh Dee, a mathematician who “studied the Kabbala and who thought he had discovered the secret to invoke the angels through cabalistic mathematical computations” (Yates, 2011, p.6-7). We must not forget that in the Renaissance was common the interrelation between magical systems and the nascent notion of science, which gave way to Hermeticism: “Renaissance Hermeticism can be described as a manifestation of religious syncretism, based

6. See https://www.mangahere.cc/manga/x_1999/v07/c003/18.html

on the desire for a new cosmology that assimilated philosophy and the scientific discovery of nature without sacrificing the sacred dimension “(Hanegraaff, 1996, p.396-397). Therefore, it is not rare to find magic like the Enochian, which is based on the angeology or the study of the language of the angels, a significant branch of the Renaissance studies.

Angelology was an important branch of Renaissance studies. The Kabbalah intended to teach a way to approach angels and describe their hierarchies and functions in a very detailed way. The Christian Kabbalists identified the angels of the Kabbalah with the angelic Christian hierarchies described by Pseudo-Dionysus. The insistence of the Hermetic writings on the divine “powers” was an emanationist philosophy that without difficulty was incorporated into the Christian Kabbalah. To date, the immense importance of this movement in the Renaissance has not been appreciated. (Yates, 2011, p.131)

The magical system of Dee consisted of the following categories: *Sigillum Dei Aemeth* or Sacred Seal, *Liber Scientia Auxilii et Victoria Terrestri*, *Heptarchia Mystica*, *Table of Nalvage*, *Liber Loagaeth*, The Four Elemental Tables and Angelic Keys (Golden Dawn, 2013). Of these elements, we are interested in the *Sigillum Dei Aemeth* or Sacred Seal.

The *Sigillum Dei Aemeth* is an excellent recorded record on which there are inscribed (SIC) several names of God and Angels, within a Heptagon and Heptagram design. The Sigil was to be placed in the center of the Sacred Table, under the Crystal Ball. Smaller replicas were placed under the cup, as well as on the ends of the legs of the table, apparently to insulate the table from terrestrial influences. The Sigil is the only part of Dee’s work that has a direct correspondence with the earliest magical systems; versions appear in

the *Liber Juratis* and *Eodipus Aegypticus*, among other volumes (Golden Dawn, 2013).

The idea of a seal that allows isolating from terrestrial influences an exclusive space for magic coincides with the use that is given in *X* since it is a seer, Hinoto, who uses it while having visions about the future in his dreams.

Both the *sephirotic* tree of the *Kabbala*, as well as the B.O.T.A tarot cards and the Enochian sigil, are retaken in *X* iconographically because they are elements of the *Golden Dawn* sect, which claims to originate the Rosicrucian phenomenon that emerged in the early seventeenth century by the influence of John Dee, and that, in turn, retake much of the Renaissance Hermeticism, the basis of the *New Age*. About this phenomenon, the researcher Frances Yates (2011), in her book *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, states that the so-called Rosicrucian brothers never existed, that it was an imaginary society. The publication of the so-called *Rosicrucian Manifestos*, which apparently were the basis of that society, took place within a movement that sought an intellectual, social and religious revolution in an environment in which Catholics and Protestants conflicted. This movement was grouped around Frederick V, Elector Palatine, and Princess Elizabeth Stuart when they became kings of Bohemia. After Federico V was defeated by the Habsburgs in 1620 and fled with his wife to The Hague, the mentioned movement declined, strong persecution began in Germany, and everything related to the Rosicrucian fell into disrepute. During this time started the war of thirty years, whose outcome allowed religious freedom in Germany. The current *Golden Dawn* claims to descend from the Rosicrucian; it is from it that *X* takes up most of the elements that we see present in his iconography. At this point, it is important to remember that all this is governed by the *New Age* principle, to which this type of sects belongs.

So far we come with the iconographic references to the Renaissance esotericism, present in X. We must not forget that these elements are not cruxes of the narrative structure of the story; they are catalysis that provide descriptions of the story, enrich it and complement it. We will continue analyzing the rest of elements of the New Age, present in the manga that concerns us.

In addition to the references to Western Renaissance esotericism, in X we observe the notion of holism, which on this occasion is presented not only iconographically but also thematically, and is, therefore, the crux of the story. This is because Kamui, the subject of the narrative, represents God, so his actions and decisions determine the story. Also, it has a twin star (Fūma), who fulfills the function of being its complementary opposite. One of the most representative images of the above we observe in volume number 4: the scene occupies the two pages; the weight of the image is loaded on the left page and, in the center, in the foreground, we observe Kamui, covered with several clothes and holding the planet Earth. After Kamui, in profile, another Kamui is observed, also holding the Earth. As a second layer of this picture, the thickness of angel wings (feathers) and demon (bat) can be observed. On the right, circular elements belonging to various mechanical clockworks are seen. On the machinery is a small vertical vignette, which focuses on the face of Kamui⁷.

The image described in the previous paragraph presents two elements belonging to the *New Age* holism notion: first, the reduction of all manifestations to an absolute entity. Second, the interrelation of the whole universe, which appears as iconographically as in a thematic way, regarding all the actions of Kamui are linked to the fact that he can be both the representative of God and his opponent. In fact, Kamui's name has two possi-

ble meanings: the one that represents the majesty of God, or the one that hunts it.

But these allusions are not just narratives. As we observed in the image, Kamui is represented iconographically as Christ or as God, so it is common to see him holding the planet Earth. The image of God or Christ holding the world is a constant in Christian iconography: "the sphere finished off by the cross, symbolizes the world, so it is held in God's hand, sometimes the figure of the Savior or the child Jesus" (Monreal, 2000, p.484).

As for the interrelation of the entire universe, this aspect is presented above all in the actions of Kamui, which influence all other characters and the course of the story. In the image described, this interrelation is observed in the machinery of the watch, because, for it to work, it requires the proper functioning of all its parts. Each component in a mechanical clock is in close interrelation with another element; in the same way, in X, the actions of each agent are closely linked and interrelated.

The notion of interrelation brings us to the third characteristic element of *New Age* holism: the universal dialectic between complementary polarities, which is present because the story takes up the idea of yin-yang, typical of Chinese Taoism. As for the iconographic representation, two Kamuis who hold in their hands the fate of the Earth are illustrated. From the beginning, Kamui has his contrary in the other Kamui in which Fūma becomes. In addition to the above, the clashes between sky dragons that protect humanity, and earth dragons that protect the Earth, are marked by the same principle, so that when an earth dragon dies, a dragon from heaven will take its place:

Kakyou: The future is still coming as predicted in dreams. A dragon of the earth disappeared ... but ... the successor of that

7. See https://www.mangahere.cc/manga/x_1999/v04/c001/112.html

power took place. And then ... another dragon of the earth will leave ... and another new power will take its place (CLAMP, 2005, p.11-13).

So the whole story works with that principle of interrelation, where the decisions of one affect the other, in addition to the link between the two sides of the same entity that raises yin-yang and Taoism. In fact, this Taoist notion will fulfill the function of modifying the principle of comparison proper to Christianity, because the yin-yang transforms its own polarized idea to it and converts that polarization into complementary opposites. This transformation is not only on the plot but iconographic level: both the actants and space question the notion of polarization, which ultimate foundation opposes two elements in an incompatible way. In fact, the idea of the decisive battle is not only “between the elect against the demon’s host” (Eliade, 1983, p.75), since the characters are actants and, therefore, have several functions and can even move from “elect” to “host of the devil” according to your choices, desires, and circumstances.

Another example of the graphic representation of the universal principle of complementary opposites is seen in volume 1, just when Kamui returns to Japan after his mother’s death and signs of what is to come are beginning to appear (CLAMP, X, 2003). In this scene, her friend Kotori has just lost consciousness after seeing Kamui return, and dreams: the image occupies two pages. On the right in the foreground is Kamui standing, dressed in school uniform; he wears a kind of white mantle on his shoulders, and from his back springs two wings, the right with white feathers and the left similar to that of a bat; in front of him appears the planet Earth breaking; some parts of the Earth separate and get lost in the immensity of emptiness. Six dragons surround the Earth; the images are grouped on the right page, but the left wing of Kamui,

part of its mantle and the body of the dragons that circularly surround Kamui and the earth, invade the left page⁸.

What elements of all those examined in previous pages can we find? There are allusions to Christianity, apocalypse, and yin-yang. First of all, Kamui is represented with an angel wing, that is, white and feathered; On the other hand, the left wing is similar to the bat wings with which the demon is represented iconographically. Both elements retake features of Christian iconography, where the angels carry white bird wings on the back, and the demon takes the bat and some dragon characteristics. However, in Christian iconography there is an essential characteristic derived from his polarized thought: in both cases, there is a struggle, a contrast between angels and devils, light and darkness, good and evil: both sides fight to the death. Despite this, in this image, the demon’s wing and the angel’s wing emerge from the same body, that of Kamui. This indicates the presence of both poles in a single being, complementary opposites that cannot exist without the other: Christianity is given over to yin yang.

There is an intersection, a point in common, the existence of opposites that allows the transposition of one concept over another and the modification of the original meaning, since “the key of the relations between yang and yin is called *Hsiang Sheng*, mutual emergence or inseparability” (Watts, 1976, p.61). Kamui represents that being that contains within itself complementary opposites, embodies this principle par excellence, and within this image alludes to the existence of two Kamui with contrary functions and actions that, however, are one.

The environment that develops in the image described in previous pages is the apocalypse.

8. See http://www.mangahere.co/manga/x_1999/v01/c002/18.html

Three clues lead us to that: the first is Kotori's thought that appears in two globes: "Is the Earth broken?" (CLAMP, X, 2003). With this dialogue, he only emphasizes the obvious: the Earth appears breaking, in straight reference to the eschatological myth of final destruction. It is surrounded by dragons, which it is not known if they detonate the destruction or try to avoid it; our dragons are represented with Eastern iconography, but they are appropriate because of the apocalyptic allusions. Finally, Kamui is surrounded by the immensity of emptiness, which is nothing and everything at once, the vastness of the universe that seems to surround the subject, the beginning of chaos and life.

We have stopped at the third constitutive element of *New Age* holism: the universal dialectic between complementary opposites. This is considered to be one of the leading points that sustain the story and unite and hybridize the different religious traditions with the scientific elements. However, it is time to talk about the last characteristic element of the *New Age's* notion of holism: the Lovelock hypothesis, which proposes that the Earth is a self-regulating living system. The latter also plays vital importance as part of the *New Age*, which is the guiding principle of the story, and is that the war in *X* is detonated just for that reason: the dragons of the earth consider that the Earth, while it is alive, it is being destroyed by human actions and, in order to save it, it is necessary to destroy humanity.

The image that interests us is seen in volume number 10 of the manga. It occupies the whole page, which is composed of three vertical vignettes and one horizontal, the latter located at the bottom. In the first vignette on the right side there is a close up of Kamui surrounded by branches of trees; in the lower part, the Tokyo metropolitan offices are represented, which are located in a natural environment. There is water

instead of land, and the sky appears clean with some birds flying, surrounded by vegetation. The vignette in the middle is smaller and shows a close up of Kakyou, a dragon of earth, and the balloon says the following: "Kakyou: At this rate, the Earth will die" (CLAMP, X, 2004, p. 152). The third bullet on that page is the largest and is pasted on the left. In it there is a low angle view of the Tokyo tower, the floor is sandy, the dialogue contained in that vignette also belongs to Kakyou and says, "It has already lost part of its power to regenerate itself. The Earth is also alive, just like you. And those who kill it are human beings" (CLAMP, X, 2004, pp.152). The last bullet is horizontal and occupies the bottom of the page; it represents the planet earth, and the balloon says, "if the Earth continues to be trampled unnoticed by so-called living bodies..." (CLAMP, X, 2004, pp.152- 153).⁹ This image represents two aspects of the *New Age*: those above, the Lovelock hypothesis, which proposes that the earth is a self-regulating living system and the notion of *New Age*, is in the strict sense.

The first hypothesis is present both iconographically and thematically in the story, because, in the beginning, war is unleashed to save the earth from destruction, to which humanity suppress it. The idea of the apocalypse is not to generate a new order with humankind but to eradicate it from the planet. This aspect leads us to the notion of *New Age* in the strict sense. For Hanegraaff, the *New Age*, as a system of knowledge, was developed in the nineteenth century as a reflection of the process of secularization, due to four main aspects: the principle of scientific causality, the comparative study of religions, the new notions of psychology and the evolutionism of Darwin (1996). All these manifestations were taken up by Western esotericism and adapted to magico-religious princes, which generated new expressions such as evolutionary romanticism,

9. See http://www.mangahere.cc/manga/x_1999/v10/c004/

from which derive the transcendentalists and theosophists, the occult and spiritualism.

Hanegraaff (1996) proposes two ways of seeing the New Age: in a general sense and a strict sense. In these pages, we will focus on the last, because it is the one that is present in *X*. Two aspects characterize the New Age in the strict sense: the apocalyptic vision and the millenarian vision. Both are related to the process mentioned above of secularization, particularly of Darwin's evolutionary theory, which both transcendentalists and theosophists retook and adapted to their principles, which gave way to evolutionary romanticism:

(...) his enthusiasm for evolution rested on his interpretation as a scientific concept, which could replace Christian notions of history, but did not necessarily threaten religion as such. On the contrary, evolution could be seen as a sign of progress that is inevitable because in some sense it is divinely motivated (Hanegraaff, 1996, p.465).

Due to the above, the *New Age*, in the strict sense, maintains the thought that the subject holds a constant process of spiritual evolution, which begins before birth and continues after his death; it is an evolutionism more rooted in romanticism than in Darwinism (Hanegraaff, 1996). Precisely, in the image described above, in the first vignette on the right, we see a vision of the future where humanity was eradicated: a planet where nature resurfaces, free of contamination, in which, however, there are still vestiges of humanity, represented by the sophisticated offices of Tokyo. This image that appears recurrently in the iconography of the manga leads us to several aspects: *X*, in a literal sense, poses an apocalyptic vision, which is characterized by the idea that "The new world comes as a catastrophe on what it exists and replaces the world order with a radically different and transcendent one"

(Hanegraaff, 1996, p.98). In the story we analyze, the dragons of the earth, led by the other Kamui in which Fūma becomes, seek precisely to end the human order, so the new world comes only from the Earth. Therefore, that new world that would come would be a radically different one because there would be no human presence. However, despite the apocalyptic proposals that propose to sweep a block with all the previous order, to set out the new world, the graphic representations of such new world in *X*, always appear with the vestiges of some human construction that remains standing, as is the case of the tower and metropolitan Tokyo government offices of the image described in previous pages. It is the permanence in the graphic representation of a vestige of the previous order, which opens the way to *X* in the millenarian vision, which, unlike the apocalyptic, is characterized by a continuity of the previous order in the new world: "The typical millenarian dream of an Earth in peace, calm and fullness, without injustice or suffering" (Hanegraaff, 1996, p.9).

So far we have analyzed the way in which they appear, both in the narrative and the iconography of *X*, various elements of the *New Age*, which is the guiding principle of the story, but what is the relationship between the postmodernity and the *New Age*, which is given in *X*? We will discuss it below.

Discussion

X and the *New age*: Postmodernity

The way in which *New Age* elements are present in *X* corresponds to postmodernity, which, for Fredrick Jameson, is not a period after modernity, but the dominant aesthetic of late capitalism, which is the Purest form of capitalism (Jameson, 2005). Jameson takes up, from Ernst Mandel, three phases of technological development,

which correspond to the three types of capitalism that have developed historically: the market capitalism in which national markets developed; the monopoly or imperialist phase, where the market gives way to companies that monopolize the production and trade of goods; and the current one, which he calls multinational (Vaskes-Santches, 2011). We are particularly interested in Jameson's proposal, because being postmodernity a cultural dominant, allows the elements that characterize it to be present in any other historical moment, although not as dominant.

The proposal of postmodernity, used to analyze this manga, explains the presence of religious aspects coming from very different traditions, cultures and texts, which, when introduced in X, are restructured and reworked to adapt to the story that is told to us. Retaking elements from the past in the form of pastiche is one of the most marked characteristics of postmodern aesthetics and is not exclusive to X: we observe it in other series such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and more recently *Death Note*. This aspect may have multiple *raison d'être*, however, in this space we emphasize the idea that the three manga have in common having been created under the dominant aesthetics of late capitalism: postmodernity, where the limits and the key separations are fade (Jameson, 1988), which allows the mixture of elements from different origins.

The elimination of limits and key separations, arises in postmodernity, due to what Jameson calls the disappearance of the subject or individualism, generators of unique visions of the world (Jameson, 1998, p.20), which results in the suppression of individual styles. The death of the subject generates the fragmentation of the realities and gives way to the actantial model, where the characters become actants and overcome the individuality to open the way to multiple functions and projections in a story: the pastiche and

the postmodern schizophrenia. We will focus on the latter.

Pastiche arises when the individual style dissipates, and there is a tendency to pick up and mix elements from different origins, to relocate them in current work. A characteristic of this pastiche is that these elements are never integrated or form a significant coherent chain; on the contrary, they are swamped without integrating into their new context. Pastiche, therefore, is "the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the use of a stylistic mask, discourse in a dead language" (Jameson, 1998: 20). We live therefore in a time in which there is "strength of the myths of origin and the signs of reality" (Jameson, 1998: 20).

Postmodern schizophrenia, on the other hand, is directly linked to pastiche because it implies the imitation or parody of different styles (Jameson, 1998: 18). It is composed of decontextualized fragments that do not end up interrelating or integrating because they have lost their original, and appear swimming with a large number of elements from different origins, without coherence. Lacan describes schizophrenia as a rupture in the signifying chain, that is, in the syntagmatic, intertwined series that form an enunciation or meaning (Jameson, 2005, p.15).

When the relationship breaks down, when the links of the chain jump, we find ourselves with schizophrenia, a jumble of signifiers, different and unrelated. (Jameson, 2005, p.15)

This pastiche composed of schizophrenic fragments from different origins is what we can see in the elements of the *New Age* present in X. We must distinguish that not all have the same function: the elements of Western esoterisms, such as the B.O.T.A tarot, the *Kabbala*, the *sephirotic* tree and the *Enochian* seal, are simple graphic descriptions, catalysts that are not interwoven

with the story. The notion of holism *New Age* is not the same in which we observe Kamui as the supreme entity, interrelated with its entire universe and with its corresponding opposite complementary. The notion of holism is present both in the graphics and in the story and is a crux of the story. The same happens with the hypothesis of Gaia and the millenarian approaches to the narration. In short, the way in which the elements of the *New Age* are presented in *X* corresponds to postmodern schizophrenia and pastiche; however, they will have different functions, either cruxes or catalyzes.

Around the *New Age* and its relationship with postmodernity, two aspects must be highlighted: its approach as a religious system and the beginning of its boom that occurs in the sixties. For Hanegraaff, religion is “any symbolic system that influences human action and allows it to maintain ritual contact between the everyday world and a larger symbolic framework” (Hanegraaff, 1999, p.147), so this author makes a difference between one religion and other religion. If religion were any representative system that exerts influence on the subject and allows him to establish ritual relationships within every day, religion would be characterized by being entirely institutionalized. The *New Age* is then religion, insofar as it is a system of knowledge that allows subjects to maintain ritual contact in their daily environment, within a broad symbolic framework, without having specific institutions. For this author, the *New Age* as a religion emerged from the nineteenth century, but it was until the sixties of the twentieth century when it gained momentum and, after the seventies, was established as a movement and was named as such (Hanegraaff, 1999). But since its inception, the *New Age* has kept hybrid characteristics very close to postmodernity: the use of the past, the rise of technology, hybridity, the fragmentary use of elements from different origins, reinserted and hybrid in a new text.

It is not by chance that it was in the seventies when the *New Age* was constituted as a movement. Recall that it is around that decade that the moment in which postmodernity becomes dominant culturally. The *New Age* is a form of postmodern religion, as it is constituted by a multiplicity of visions, all-important. Jameson’s proposal for postmodernism can give an idea of the reason why the *New Age* becomes a movement, more or less constituted only until the seventies of the twentieth century, although it had existed for almost a century: it was that the moment in which postmodernity began to become dominant culturally, which explains why a symbolic system with such similar characteristics (hybridity, fragmentary and unstable use of the past, mixture of religious and scientific elements, visibility of technology, etc.) It will also become visible. In this religious context begins a rise of new religions, cults, and sects that remain in the nineties due to the anticipation of the end of the world, which supposedly would arrive in 1999. The above explains why, to understand manga *X*, was necessary to return to the proposal of postmodernity posed by Jameson (1998): it is because it was created at a propitious moment, under the influence of the aesthetics of late capitalism and the rise of the fragmentary.

X and its moment of creation

The prophecies of Nostradamus entered in Japan in the seventies, predicting the end of the world in 1999. These were introduced by the journalist Ben Goto and generated numerous reprints.

Since his first book on Nostradamus became a runaway bestseller—going through almost 150 printings in only three months—he has written over ten more volumes specifically on Nostradamus as well as dozens of other works on UFOs and extraterrestrials, the polar shift, John’s Apocalypse, the secrets of Fatima, and various other prophecies.” The

publication of Goto's book in 1973 and its success as a bestseller triggered a boom of Nostradamus in Japan. In fact, this interest in Nostradamus is cited as one of the signs of the turn of popular culture, towards the spiritual and mysterious¹⁰. (Kisala, 1997, p.48-49)

During the decade of the nineties, it was common the production of manga with an apocalyptic plot, as was the case with *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Angel Sanctuary*. For Susan Napier, cited by Santiago Iglesias:

the apocalyptic theme in manga and anime is defined by the complex Japanese cultural background, the result of the different events that took place throughout the 20th century, especially in the decades following World War II and up to the present day. After overcoming post-war and experiencing a socio-economic rise that seemed unstoppable, the extreme economic crisis that hit the country in the nineties, and the bombings in the Tokyo subway¹¹, raised concerns, feelings, and experiences, long considered taboo, that until then they had lain dormant or supposedly forgotten. (2010, p.169)

X was published in the same decade when Japan was living the third religious wave of its history: the first occurred during the *Meiji* government and resulted in the creation of religions derived from *Shinto*; the second occurred after the Second World War when religious freedom and democracy became constitutional. The third one began between the seventies and eighties when the Japanese economy began to reach its peak,

and youth requested more than material gains. They discovered a spiritual need and the search for peace of mind (Repp, 1997). It was a time when a lot of new religions increased, therefore, it is not strange that the *Golden Dawn* order was founded in Japan in the year 2000, date in which *X* was still published; nor that its elements formed part of the numerous religious aspects that circulated in society at that time. In this context, it is understandable that *X* is a manga with a highly sophisticated theme, whose overarching principles are both postmodernity and *New Age*, elements that articulate the narration and graphics of the mentioned manga.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we affirm that the various elements, both religious and scientific that are apparently scattered in the manga *X*, find its dominant principle in the New Age, as a movement that descends Western esotericism transformed by the process of secularization.

The various elements of religious origin dispersed in the story fulfill multiple functions: both the Christian apocalypse and Taoism are knots of history. They recreate, interpret and hybridize. This hybridity is displayed in *X* through the reinterpretation and restructuring of various elements: eschatological myth, yin-yang, apocalypse, Christianity; the reuse of all these factors allows the mixing of the components, whose original concepts are modified to integrate them into the story.

How is it that *X* succeeds in hybridizing the elements coming from such different religious traditions? It is because there is sympathy between them (Gruzinski, 2000, p.188) that allows a point of union and the consequent transposition of such diverse elements, since "the presence of the hybrid has to reveal kinship between separated things

10. "Since his first book on Nostradamus became a runaway bestseller—going through almost 150 printings in only three months—he has written over ten more volumes specifically on Nostradamus as well as dozens of other works on UFOs and extraterrestrials, the polar shift, John's Apocalypse, the secrets of Fatima, and various other prophecies." (Kisala, 1997, p.48-49)

11. "In 1995 the followers of the sect Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth), spread sarin gas in the Tokyo subway, causing the death of twelve people and intoxicating hundreds of travelers" (Kisala, 1997, p.169)

“(Gruzinski, 2000, p.203). This element or point of union, this attractor, is the one that “selects one or the other connection, orients one or the other link or suggests one or another association between beings and things” (Gruzinski, 2000, p.207), point that allows fusion: the *New Age*.

It is necessary to emphasize the importance of analyzing this type of graphics products. At the time, they generated transformations in the Mexican cultural scene. Example of the above is the offer of cultural consumption and entertainment (including anime and manga) that was introduced in Mexico in the eighties and nineties, which modified the field of Mexican comics in two ways: On the one hand, by presenting a greater diversity of consumer offers, which contributed to accelerate the decline of the industrial story; on the other hand, the greater facility to access American and European comics, influencing who would later be creators of the countercultural story. In particular, the introduction of the aesthetics of manga and anime imported new ways of making graphics, visual narration and strategies of cultural consumption, which were taken up by the Mexican creators, who adapted them to their context and their particularities.

At the time, *X* was one of the first sleeves that arrived in Mexico and had a postmodern aesthetic, which led to the management of such varied religions. In general, Japanese sleeves are not exported alone; they are part of a commercial formula that includes animation, video games and a whole series of derivative products.

Series like *Dragon Ball*, *Sailor Moon* or *Pokémon*, captured a whole generation of young people in the 90s who, attracted by the design of their characters and their extensive stories, have transferred the success of manga-anime to our days. (Horno, 2014, p.346-347)

Since their introduction to Mexico in the nineties, these young people have introduced new forms of narrative and graphics to the local tradition of comic strips, in addition to publicizing new market strategies that local cartoonists have retaken to generate their versions of Mexican manga. Example of the above is the work of Lorena Velasco Terán, founder of *Estudio Syanne*, author who has published works such as *DREM*, a Mexican manga with fantastic and psychological themes. In addition to manga, *Syanne* creates clothing based on the aesthetics and dress of Japanese rock singers, which gives a more complex dimension to the influence in Mexico of manga, anime and its derivative products.

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