

How Hirohiko Araki Crafted Characters Within JoJo's Bizarre Adventure with Queer-Coded Traits as Well as Subverting and Playing into Gender Stereotypes.

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JoJo's Bizarre Adventure is an anime series based on the manga series of the same name created by Hirohiko Araki. The manga series first serialised in 1987 with the anime series starting in 2012. The manga series is still running and over the course of the last 36 years, has influenced a lot of media as well as a lot of people. What makes JoJo's so iconic, and beloved can be many different things: the narrative, unique power system, easy to love characters or the fashion. JoJo has something for everyone, but I would like to focus on the characters within the narrative. JoJo has quite a reputation among both its own fanbase and the anime fanbase at large: it is very homoerotic. Why is that and what queer-coded traits do the characters within JoJo have that challenges conventional stereotypes. How does Araki challenge gender and how does it relate to studies that exist?

“Queer coding is a term used to say that characters were given traits/behaviours to suggest they are not heterosexual/cisgender, without the character being outright confirmed to have a queer identity” (Grant, 2022)

When it comes to discussing exactly what conventional stereotypes are; there are many. “Queer representation now comes in many forms, and it isn't always positive. On top of that, even accurate and compelling forms of queer representation can sometimes be very upsetting to queer folks. Representation is a nuanced topic, not just because diversity is difficult to depict, but also because different forms of representation can achieve very different outcomes.” (Kaur, 2023)

JoJo's structure is that of an anthology series. There are currently 9 parts of JoJo with their own characters, art style, abilities and themes. Below is some relevant information for each part of JoJo.



Part 1 Phantom Blood

JoJo: Johnathan Joestar

Manga serialisation: 1987-1987

Anime release: October 5th, 2012

Part 2 Battle Tendency

JoJo: Joseph Joestar

Manga serialisation: 1987-1989

Anime release: December 7th, 2012



Part 3 Stardust Crusaders

JoJo: Jotaro Kujo

Manga serialisation: 1989-1992

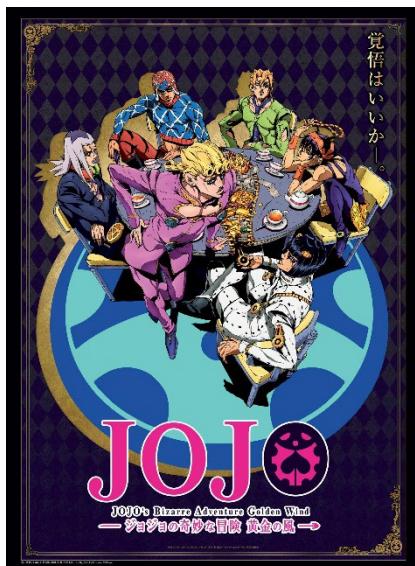
Anime release: April 5th, 2014

Part 4 Diamond is Unbreakable

JoJo: Josuke Higashikata

Manga serialisation: 1992-1995

Anime release: December 23, 2016



Part 5 Golden Wind

JoJo: Giorno Giovanna

Manga serialisation: 1995-1999

Anime release: October 6th, 2018

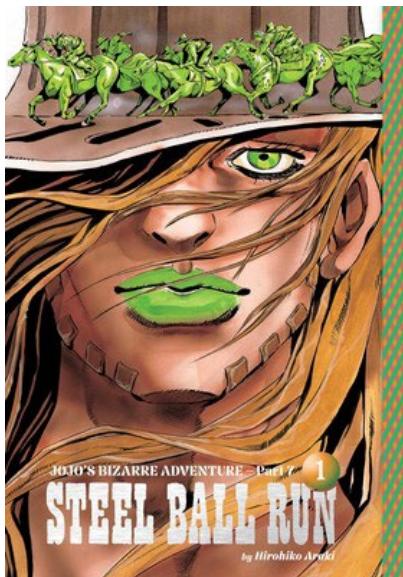


Part 6 Stone Ocean

JoJo: Jolyne Cujoh

Manga serialisation: 1999-2003

Anime release: December 1st, 2021

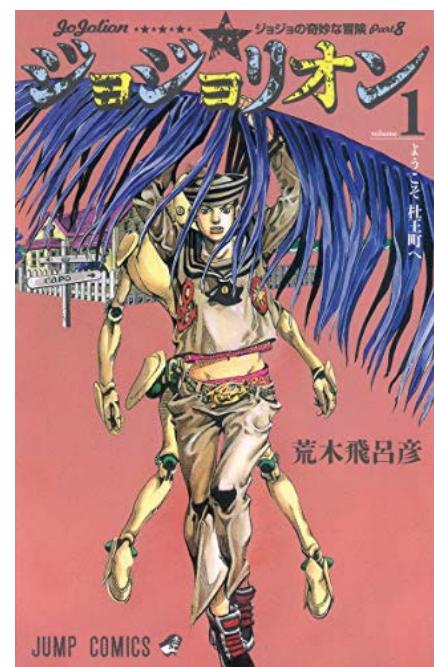


Part 7 Steel Ball Run

JoJo: Johnny Joestar

Manga serialisation: 2004-2011

Anime release: Not released



Part 8 JoJolion

JoJo: Josuke Higashikata

Manga serialisation: 2011-2021

Anime Release: Not released



Part 9 The JoJoLands

JoJo: Jodio Joestar

Manga Serialisation: 2023-Ongoing

Anime release: Not released

The importance of examining and understanding how the characters in Araki's work embody queer defining traits is not only important for the medium of anime, a genre which is lacking meaningful and tasteful representation but to celebrate his impact on the LGBTQIA+ community. JoJo's Bizarre Adventure is a staple of queer anime fiction and Araki has been progressive with his characters since the 1980s. The point of this essay is to collect the information found within JoJo, interviews with Araki and connect them to studies made in connection to members of the LGBTQIA+ community. This essay also takes a look at how Araki has been held back by others in trying to be progressive by his editors.

Giorno Giovanna and Jolyne Cujoh: Breaking Down Gender Norms

Part 5 'Golden Wind' was supposed to be JoJo's first part that had a female protagonist "Araki initially played around with the idea of making the protagonist of Part 5 a woman. However, after discussing with his editor at the time, Hiroshi Sekiya, who thought that a female lead would be a tough sell for the Weekly Shōnen Jump's readers, he eventually decided on making the protagonist a young man." (Araki, 2014) Part 5 starts with character Koichi travelling to Italy to find Haruno Shiobana, the birth name of Giorno Giovanna. The name Haruno Shiobana is a feminine Japanese name and the name Giorno translates to Day whilst the last name Giovanna is the feminine form of the Italian name Giovanni. A lot of the original feminine groundwork for Giorno made it into the final version of the character, especially his ability to "create life" Giorno can turn any non-living object into a living animal or body parts. The ability is reminiscent of the female body's ability to get pregnant and birth life.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Golden Wind episode 36 (Araki, 2019)

Jolyne Cujoh, the first female protagonist of JoJo possesses a lot of transgressive femininity. It is also a massive step forward for progressiveness as the genre JoJo is in (Shōnen) has a lack of female protagonists. Jolyne's design has elements of androgyny, there is a combination of typical feminine features like her hair and outfit but that is juxtaposed by her traditionally masculine build and confident poses. Araki's editor also asked Araki not to pursue a female lead for part 6 but Araki was adamant in creating a female protagonist.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Stone Ocean episode 17 (Araki, 2022)

Jolyne's design is less a subversion for media shown in the west but huge for its own genre where female characters in anime and manga are often weak and or sexualised. "There are still some setbacks due to the lack of character development and oversexualization of women in anime. From oversized breasts to skimpy outfits, the representation of women in anime appeal to a male fantasy by giving a false image of women throughout the media. Female characters have also fallen victim to being typecast as the sidekick or the hopeless romantic in love with the male lead." (Robinson, 2021) The design of Jolyne is not drawn for the male gaze, but instead a display of her confidence and self-expression. Outside of Jolyne's design her character embraces traits like assertiveness, aggression, and dominance, traditionally coded as masculine, while also celebrating her femininity. This fluidity challenges binary understandings of gender.

Dragon Joestar: Representation of Transgender Characters Within Japanese Postmodernism

2023 was the year a brand-new part of JoJo started serialising, the part is named The JoJoLands and in the first chapter featured Dragona Joestar, sibling to protagonist Jodio Joestar. Dragona takes the role of JoJo's first major transgender character. When Dragona was first introduced in chapter 1, despite having a very typically AFAB body, Jodio refers to Dragona as "brother" opening a lot of discussion within the community on what Dragona's gender identity is. During an interview with the French editor of the series, he confirmed that Dragona is a transgender character. When discussing what the series could and could not do with the old publishing company vs the new company, he had this to say "In Jojolion, there was more horror, which was complicated to do when it was published in Weekly Shōnen Jump. The trans character wouldn't have made it into Jump either." (Lachasse, 2024)



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure The JoJoLands Chapter 1 (Araki, 2023)

When taking a look at trans representation within anime and manga as a whole, there is not a lot of explicitly gay or trans characters that are not for the purpose of pornography. The concept of androgyny is one that appears very frequently, however. This could be due to Japan's slower approach to gay rights and representation than the west. As it stands gay marriage is still not allowed within Japan and this is sometimes echoed within their media.

Dragona was not the first representation of a trans character within JoJo, during part 6 there is a prisoner Jolyne encounters. Even though they are referred to as she/her pronouns, this single page was Araki still representing trans characters. It should be noted that this scene was cut from the anime adaptation.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Stone Ocean chapter 3 (Araki, 2000)

Although this scene was cut from the anime, a nonbinary character called Foo Fighters, or F.F who was referred to as she/her pronouns in the manga was replaced by they/them pronouns in the anime.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Stone Ocean Episode 8 (Araki, 2021)

JoJo's past with transgenderism and sexuality is not perfect all the way through. As stated in the previous chapter, part 5 protagonist Giorno was supposed to be a female, but this was later changed, and Araki was also asked not to make the part 6 protagonist a female too. There is also room to question why it took so long for Araki to introduce trans characters into his work. Whilst a lot of characters within JoJo display androgynous character designs, there is one that changed designs entirely. During Anasui's first appearance during part 6 manga they are designed with a specifically female body



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Stone Ocean chapter 24 (Araki, 2000)

But then later on was changed to a much more masculine presenting body.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Stone Ocean episode 10 (Araki, 2021)

Anasui was shown with this masculine body in the anime from their first appearance. For years there was a lot of discourse on why this change was made but during an event in 2019 at the Lucca Comics and Games convention, Araki revealed the reason for the change was that he wanted to portray a character with an androgynous image that went beyond the standard definition of genders.

Although Araki does represent gender and sex his own way within his art, there is a question to be made of is he doing enough? “the subgenre of gender transitioning anime is not progressive, but instead reinforces male dominance and concepts of gender binary.” (Zuo, 2023) Araki subtle inclusion of trans characters or adding them as a means for another character to make a comment on is not progressive as it is representation for the way trans people are perceived.

Chosen Family: A Queer Motif

Why does the LGBTQIA+ community exist? Where so many queer people grew up needing family and kinship but were devoid of that from their blood family, they found it in other places. Every year, all around the world, sometimes even in countries where it is not allowed, there is a pride festival. The idea behind a pride festival is not just for representation, it is a celebration of who queer people are. Each individual part of JoJo's Bizarre Adventure will feature a new protagonist and a new journey. Through that journey different groups will be formed. The trials and tribulations that the characters will experience during their part will create a strong bond that can only be compared to family. Weston (1997) says “although we occupied separate households, we interpreted the option of independent residence as a feature distinguishing gay families from straight, one that qualified “our” kind of family as creative innovation.” This was in reference to the idea that queer people become so close they consider each other's homes as their own, they are not just friends and not blood family but nonetheless family. Part 5 protagonist Giorno Giovanna has a story akin to what a lot of queer people go through. Abandoned and abused by his mother, he is alone in the world. Giorno joins the Italian mafia, and his team members become family to him. Humans have a need to connect to each other and queer people find family that are not related to them by

blood. The human need for connection is displayed in its own way within each part of JoJo.

The Myth of the Gentleman: Performance of Masculinity

Parts 1 and 2 stand out among JoJo as being the most different from the rest of the series. When JoJo finally found its footing and formula as well as popularity with its 3rd part, introducing a new power system, lengthier narratives and a different genre, furthering this even more with the 4th part changing the entire art style and body proportions. Parts 1 and 2 take a lot of inspiration from Fist of the north star.



Fist of the North Star Series 1 episode 9 (Toei Animation, 1984)

Each part of JoJo encompasses a different art style but parts 1 and 2 as well as a bit of 3, have male characters designed with a lot of muscle and typical male stereotypes.

The comparison between Part 1 Johnathan and part 4 Josuke is like night and day.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Phantom Blood episode 8 (Araki, 2012)



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Diamond is Unbreakable episode 39 (Araki, 2016)

The earlier parts of the show portrays the male characters as huge giants built like body builders. “The findings suggest that exposure to media images of the ideal male body, defined as lean and muscular, can have deleterious effects on mood and body satisfaction in men” (Aglita, 2004) This quote comes from a study on media exposure on male body images. The study refers to film and TV, but I would say it can be applied to anime

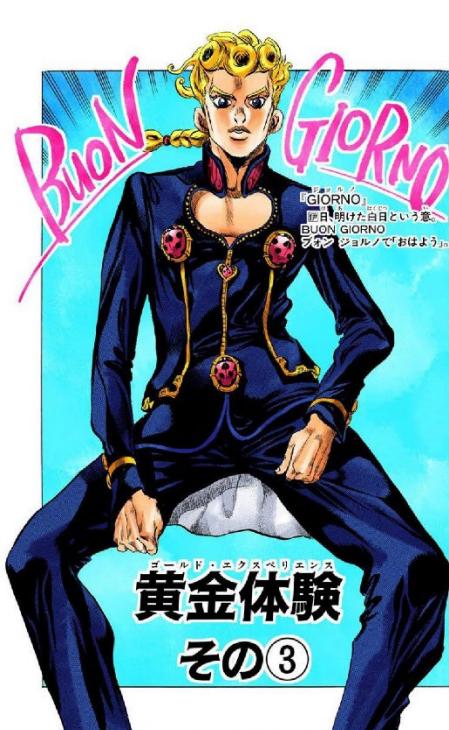
also. The constant referral to Jonathan as a true gentleman during part 1 reinforces the toxic traits of the gender archetypes that men need to have strong muscular bodies and act as a certain way. The chivalrous behaviour Johnathan displays to his love interest also reinforces nuclear family gender roles.

These aspects of gender will be lost as the series goes on, with the character designs no longer playing into these ideal body types.

The JoJo Pose: Queerness, Exaggeration and Campness in Character Design

One of the most well-known aspects of JoJo is the poses. Social media exposure also helped with this with the trend to recreate iconic poses on TikTok.

Araki takes inspiration from the fashion world when incorporating poses into JoJo specifically Vogue magazine.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Golden Wind chapter 3 (Araki, 1996)
(Versace Couture, 1992)



(Max, 1993)



(Araki, 2013)

“Most of JJBA’s cast is male, and yet the mangaka draws them in provocative, feminine poses akin to those of haute couture models.”
(Tacchi, 2021) Araki giving his characters poses found on the front cover of vogue magazine and other fashion journalism gives the characters a camp ambiance.

Going Against Time, Fate and Transformation: **Queer Temporality**

Queer temporality or queer time theory originated from theorists Lee Edelman, Jack Halberstam, Jose Esteban Munoz and Elizabeth Freeman. The concept is queer people experience time in a different way from straight people. The theory explores how queer people experience and

conceptualize time differently from the cisgender normative frameworks, often rejecting the linear milestones associated with heteronormative life trajectories—such as marriage, reproduction, and aging—in favor of alternative, non-linear experiences of time.

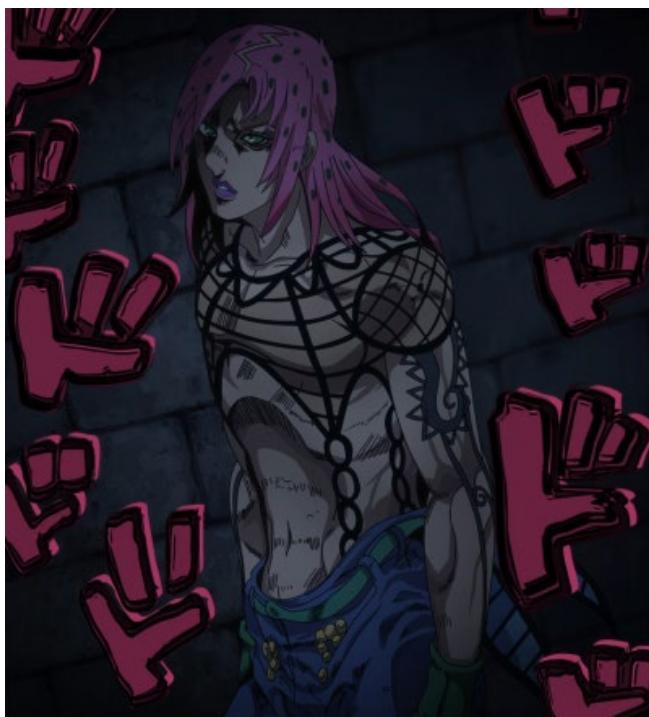
Time and the fluidity of time is something that is brought up a lot throughout all of JoJo. Some of the time-based abilities throughout JoJo are quite complex, especially as the series develops. Starting simple with part 3 protagonist Jotaro and antagonist Dio being able to stop time. Then, in Part 4 the antagonist Yoshikage Kira gains the ability to reverse time by an hour when someone learns his identity. It is part 5 onwards when the time abilities get complex, the antagonist Diavolo can predict the future then erase whatever happens but leaving the effect, similar to removing the cause without the effect. To make a connection to another piece of queer media: *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) there are relations to time as well as cause and effect. The song Sweet Transvestite has the lyrics “So I'll remove the cause... but not the symptom” The lyrics resonates with Diavolo's powers, as both suggest a reality where linear causation is defied. Another song within Rocky Horror by the name time warp celebrates the disruption of conventional time, inviting participants to “jump to the left” and step outside traditional temporal constraints.

The queer temporality theory can be found in other queer media, as themes of time are regularly put into question and bent, furthering the concept that queer people experience time differently. The theory is deeply embedded within JoJo.

As JoJo is full of time altering abilities, it mirrors the theory of queer temporality as time as a non-linear trajectory. The series rejects a straightforward, linear progression of events, instead embracing a fluid, cyclical, and multifaceted understanding of time. This mirrors the ways queer individuals navigate temporalities outside of societal norms, challenging conventional structures and creating new ways of experiencing the passage of time.

The Villains of JoJo: Subtle Representation

The villains of JoJo are entirely masked within queer coded traits. “Traits that have become tropes for male villains such as being well-dressed, having feminine mannerisms, flamboyant hand gestures, little to no interest in women, etc., show how deep queer coding is embedded into the media.” (Ray, 2021) Not only do the main villains within JoJo embody these traits but smaller side villains will also incorporate these aspects into their characters. The article referenced above makes the claim that these connotations are actually negative but within the context of JoJo actually mean something different. The intentional and embracement of homoeroticism subverts traditional notions of queer coding as inherently negative. Araki, does not use these traits to villainize queerness but rather to amplify the uniqueness and flamboyance of his characters, giving them an undeniable charisma. There is a nuance to the way Araki shows queer representation through his villains and representation is not always there for the explicit need to educate. Representation is for empowerment and good storytelling.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Golden Wind episode 33 (Araki, 2019)



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure Stardust Crusaders chapter 139 (Araki, 1992)

JoJolion: The Legacy Hirohiko Araki Leaves Behind

After completing this essay, I found that JoJo has great relations to the queer community and the queer tropes are more than just surface level.

During the time of researching for this essay, I came across a lot of material that guided me in creating this research project. It is the creation of a lot of hours and even an entirely other research project that I decided to leave behind in favour of creating this. JoJo's Bizarre Adventure is an anime and manga that I hold very dear to my heart. As a queer, trans writer, JoJo is deeply special to me and in the bibliography, there is further reading of books and articles that did not make it into the research project directly with a quote but still informed my decisions along the way. There is also material relevant that I researched when working on another research question before creating this one.

Further research could examine specifics into the impact JoJo has had on the queer community directly. One Japan legalises gay marriage and more LGBTQIA+ rights are introduced, JoJo's impact on making that happen could be studies.

It is very possible that part 9 The JoJoLands will be the last piece of published work in the JoJo series made by Hirohiko Araki due to his age and the time it takes for him to create a part of JoJo. In that spirit, I am sure Araki's work will be viewed, adored and talked about for generations to come and it will continue to inspire queer people to express themselves as well as find comfort and love within this cherished franchise the way I have.



Me dressed as Parts 1 and 3 antagonist Dio in a JoJo themed bar in Tokyo.



For the community and friends, I have found through JoJo.

3299 Words

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