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A Subversive Potpourri: *Concrete Revolutio* or When the Phantasmagoria Turns Political

Abstract. According to Thomas LaMarre (xx-xxi), animation has been for a long time regarded as a lesser art form than cinema while the scholarly interest into animation studies has represented a rather recent development beginning with the 1990s, when it begins to coalesce into a proper field of study. In the case of *anime* – Japanese animation – the research on the various genres explored in *anime* and the various types of media production, has also represented a rather recent research interest of this art form in the West. The works of film-makers like Studio Ghibli's internationally acclaimed Hayao Miyazaki, Mamoru Oshii or Satoshi Kon as well as other more commercially popular *anime*, have crossed over with global audiences. The present study analyses an *anime* series entitled *Concrete Revolutio: Chōjin Gensō* (*Superhuman Phantasmagoria*), produced by Studio Bones, directed by Seiji Mizushima and written by Shō Aikawa, which ran in two split cours between 2015 and 2016. *Concrete Revolutio* is a series removed from the archetypal trope often plaguing the cinematic and animation landscape, namely that of a logocentric worldview constrained by binary oppositions. From a methodological standpoint, the study applies a multi-layered approach to the study of *anime*, in order to address the socio-political implications of a series that uses idiosyncratic characters of all shapes and sizes – from superheroes to demons, from aliens to Godzilla-like monsters – to provide a meta-critique not only of Japanese postwar history but of militarism, late stage capitalism, globalization, or exploitation to name but a few.

Keywords: *anime*, Cold War period, *mecha*, non-linear narrative, posthuman aesthetics, science-fiction, Seiji Mizushima.

*Justice is not on my side / The only thing absolute
for me is myself / We hurl our unanswerable cries
at each other / And they become the reason we live /
What can I do in this hopeless world we live in? /
Only those that keep searching can become the future /
Start the revolution"*

(ZAQ – Katararezu Tomo (*Without Heartlessness*)
– *Concrete Revolutio* Opening Theme)

Quis custodiet ipsos Custodes?
("Who watches the Watchmen?")
(Juvenal – *Satires*)

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I. Introduction

Anime provides in Denison's view, "a representation of reality, rather than its presentation" (16) while the posthuman bodies that inhabit sci-fi and *mecha anime* (robot *anime*) are "a metaphor that allows us to reflect on a cultural shift" (Silvio 117). In the *anime Concrete Revolutio: Chōjin Gensō* (*Superhuman Phantasmagoria*) (2015), director Seiji Mizushima and screenwriter Shō Aikawa have created an idiosyncratic world populated by superheroes, magical girls, *yokais* (supernatural beings), *kaijus* (monsters), aliens, robots, cyborgs, state agents and experiments – whose existence is obfuscated by governmental forces and safeguarded by the "Superhuman Bureau". While at first, *Concrete Revolutio* which is set in a fictional *Shinka* (Evolution) Era, in the year Apotheosis 41, twenty years after the war, might look like an incoherent jumble of Japanese pop cultural artefacts, the *anime* successfully subverts the very tropes it is comprised of. Meanwhile its nonlinear narrative opts for what Dancyger describes as the embrace of "politics over psychology" (395). Across the series, the narrative keeps switching to and from the present, the past and the future, while the protagonists of the Superhuman Bureau are tasked with registering and protecting the superhuman individuals as well as terminating those who pose a threat to peace. This study attempts to deconstruct the meta-narrative at the center of this Japanese phantasmagoria through the lenses of the larger socio-political context which the *anime* echoes. In the first section, it approaches the issue of nonlinearity and how it is used stylistically to construct the universe through a comparative analysis of the graphic novel, *Watchmen*. In the second part, the study takes a more in-depth look at issues concerning posthumanism through the various posthuman characters populating this fictional universe and thirdly, it provides an overview of how the themes of justice, peace and freedom reflected in the leitmotif of "student protests, counterculture aesthetics and looming threat of American intervention" (Creamer "A Fire Burns"), are counter-intuitively more divergent than one might give them credence to. *Concrete Revolutio* capture the essence of *anime* "in relation to the emergence of something new – the postmodern, the post-human, the post-national, non-identitarian politics, and more recently the digital and new media" (Lamarre 185 in Teo 73).

This research aims to inform and expand on the study of Japanese animation as well as to showcase the nuances and complexities of this medium through the multi-layered analysis of the *anime Concrete Revolutio*. From a methodological standpoint, the study approaches its research object by relying both on the field's literature as well as by referring to a series of *anime* blog reviews that explore the multifaceted aspects of this series (historically wise, from a media and propaganda point of view, as well as from a critical framework of discourse analysis). The study comprises of three main sections whose main purpose is to underline the syncretic and idiosyncratic nature of the *anime*. *Concrete Revolutio* has a syncretic structure due to the multitude of ideas and various subsets of socio-political implications as well as due to its American influence. These aspects are highlighted by addressing: 1. the turbulent his-

torical context which the series echoes, 2. the issues revolving around posthumanism and what it means to be part of an Alterity as well as how the Alterity is used, abused, exploited and manipulated to suit governmental and private agendas; and 3. the tension behind the triad comprised of the series central themes, namely peace, justice, freedom and how they disjunctively reoccur. This article attempts to convey the complexity of *anime* as an animation medium and highlights this aspect by analyzing the series both from a structural point of view as well as from the manner in which it explores the themes mentioned above. This complexity is what sets *anime* apart from American animation and is supported in Napier's view, by a moral and "psychological subtlety, and willingness to embrace the tragic potential of human existence" ("Manga and anime" 223).

I.1. Short Overview of Anime's Socio-Political, Military and Ethical Implications

Unlike Western cartoons – which for the most part are children-orientated, *anime* as a medium for animation is not limited from age constraints. In fact, as Perper and Cornog note, it is the propensity for integrating "political, social, and emotional issues into narrative entirety" (xvi) that had a major influence in reconsidering the untapped potential of Western animations or comics. In Napier's view, "anime mines all aspects of society and culture for its material, not only the most contemporary and transient of trends but all the deeper levels of history, religion, philosophy, and politics" (32). The author identifies a subversive element to *anime*, as a product created for public consumption and lacking from the American popular cultural landscape inhabited by "social conflicts, contemporary fears, and utopian hopes and attempts at ideological containment and reassurance"¹ (Kellner in Napier 33), so vividly expressed whenever the "exceptionalism" myth is invoked. In other words while the latter "reassures", the former "de-assures" (Napier 33). This is identified in *Concrete Revolutio: Chōjin Gensō*, where "de-assurance" inhabits a substrate of the series, which relies on different facets of history, ideology, philosophy, politics and popular culture, to "de-assure" the viewer that the existing *status quo* means things are getting in the right direction. Instead of lulling us into a false state of security, it tells us directly and unequivocally that we are on the verge of the precipice and the abyss is staring back at us.

There is a critique of militarism, of unchecked power publically and privately administered and lack of transparency, at the core of *Concrete Revolutio* which mirrors both the tumultuous late 1960s and 1970s in the Japanese society and is also applicable to the more contemporary, reactionary politics. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe frequently invokes a militarist rhetoric that if put in practice would effectively end Japan's decades long policy of "pursu[ing] security without relying on an arms build-up or a nuclear alliance with the United States or any other nation" (Hook 4). As Saito highlights, pacifism and militarism – which constitute the building blocks of

the Japanese national identity — “hold commensurable values” (37). Now more than ever, the fear – Bolton identified in political anime like *Blood the Last Vampire* (2000) – “that latent Japanese militarism (which has been pushed back into the realm of fantasy up to now) will somehow merge with the three-dimensional world... and reassert itself”² (5 in Saito 38) – is very real and palpable, especially when considering China’s ascendancy on the world stage, Japan’s economic turmoil or North Korea’s nuclear program. Where the nuclear option is concerned, Morton Halperin, former U.S. Department of State Director of the Policy Planning Staff during the Clinton administration, wrote that: “There is no guarantee that Japan would not pursue a nuclear option under the right circumstances” (2), even though such a pursuit would go against Japan’s three non-nuclear principles: to “not manufacture or possess nuclear weapons or allow their introduction into” Japan (Prime Minister Eisaku Sato (1968) quoted by Halperin 14).

Similar to director Mizushima Seiji’s previous works, *Concrete Revolutio* evokes like *Mobile Suit Gundam 00* before it, what Ashbaugh and Shintarou refer to as “the message of pacifism and criticism of contemporary geopolitics” (110). Moreso, it is worth noting that the underlying tension between the three main themes of *Concrete Revolutio*, namely those of “peace”, “justice” and “freedom”, is by the authors’ design. Time and time again, as a reviewer observes: “Everyone in this series with a sense of ideals seems to be fighting for one of those three [peace, justice, freedom], and when they’ve overlapped those people become allies. But more often than not, they seem to be mutually exclusive” (*Lost in Anime*, “Concrete Revolutio: Choujin Gensou – 02”).

II. The Conceit of Nonlinearity: Of Animated Narrative Exploits, Protests and Superheroes

II.1. A Review of Protest Movement in Japan (1960-1970)

Concrete Revolutio is set in a postwar Japan in an alternate Cold War where the superhumans are the series’ equivalent of weapons of mass-destruction. As a reviewer notes:

piecing together the series’ media puzzle... superhumans were once enlisted by the U.S. government to fight against the kaiju in the 17th of the Shinka Era (1942), and the initial discovery of Gigantopithecus Gigantus took place in the same year that real-life analogue World War II began; 1939 or the 14th of the Shinka Era. Following the end of the war, superhumans mysteriously vanished from all forms of media (*Atelier Emily*).

As the study will show in this section, the *anime* focuses mostly on a tumultuous period in Japan’s history, revolving around the 1960s and 1970s while at the same time, addressing more contemporaneous issues. Both the screenwriter Shō Aikawa and the director Seij Mizushima’s previous works have been known for their political themes and criticism of the establishmentarian *status quo*, having showcased “how... elements

of culture and belief, especially ethno-centrism, militarism and pacifism, constrain and dispose societies toward war or peace" (Crawford 198). The relation with the United States and the protest movements further help in establishing a correlative timeline between the events in the *anime* and the historical events.

The U.S. Occupation Forces and especially the ratification of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1952, triggered protest movements whose particularity was given by the fact that the treaty with the U.S. had a clause stating that the treaty be ratified every ten years from 1960. The "decade" is now perceived "as an important parameter for conceptualizing time" (Kelman 78-79). Sharp describes that the failure of the anti-Treaty movement (*Anpo hantai*) was a marquee "in the political discourse of the 1960s, especially given Japan's role in supporting U.S. troops during the Vietnam War. ...Further mass protests occurred with the second renewal of the treaty on 14 June 1970, but to this day the joint military pact between the United States and Japan remains in effect" (21).

Kelman describes how "[i]ssues of agency, activism and protest were prioritized in political debates as activists searched the ruins of Japan's parliamentary democracy for a semblance of hope and a new foundation for democratic political development" (79). The Japanese New Wave addresses the failure of the 1960 and 1970 protests, with movies "contextualiz[ing] their dramas within the world of student radicalism and other antiauthoritarian activity" (Sharp 22).

Concrete Revolutio provides a critical reading of these events and not even the activists are spared from the critique. The protests from 1967-1970 did not stop the renewal of the treaty, whose extension was automatic unless the Japanese Parliament and U.S. Congress decided to terminate the treaty (Gatu 181). Like in the rest of the world, 1968's global activism touched upon the Japanese shores in what was going to be known as the *Zenkyōtō* Era – a time when in Kōji's words: "activism spread through-out the country like wildfire" (quoted in Kelman 248). The student protests from *Concrete Revolutio* are almost a perfect replica of the student protesters from Japan's biggest universities: Tokyo and Nihon, whose aims were to "challeng[e] existing structures of power" (Kelman 248) before things turned sour and devolved into violence with "many of the activists ... so shocked by the repeated intra- or inter-group violence that they decided to leave the movements" (Ando 18). The case of the student protests' situation is described by Kelman as follows:

The scale of the university upheaval was unprecedented. Of the three hundred and seventy seven universities that existed in 1968, one hundred and seven were plagued by disputes. By 1969 this number had increased to one hundred and fifty two as students vied to challenge the university authorities and establish their place within the massive upheaval that was sweeping the nation's institutions. The disputes even extended to high schools where classrooms were barricaded and occupied, and young students entered into the fray of activism, participating in the street demonstrations. The 1969 White Paper on Security published by the National Police Agency noted that

six hundred and two high school students had been arrested in demonstrations. The number of university students arrested, injured and even killed during this period was much higher. Universities were completely barricaded, classes cancelled and the streets and trains of the big cities regularly brought to a standstill by protesting students (248-249).

II.2. Animation, Timeskips and Cold War Intertextual Comparisons

Concrete Revolutio can be characterized as “an unexpected experience”. Every episode of the series is a *new, unexpected experience* with the first episode setting the tone for the rest of the series. As a reviewer notes:

erratic isn't a bad word to describe this premiere – though it's far from a perfect one. It's a strange mishmash of themes and styles – even the character designs are all over the map – and the narrative is about as scattered as any I've seen in a while. ... Frankly I was confused throughout most of the premiere, which seemed quite disinterested in explaining what was going on and why (*Lost in Anime*, “First Impressions”).

Similarly, with the second episode, the reviewer muses:

I'm quite baffled as to what to make of *Concrete Revolutio* ... The narrative is one of the strangest I've seen, for starters, jolting forward in fits and starts and leaping back and forth in time. Tonally the series is all over the map. What I don't yet know (among many other things) is whether all that is intentional (*Lost in Anime*, “Second Impressions”).

Yet nonlinear narratives are predisposed to a type of interplay with the audiences' expectations. In Dancyger's view:

[t]he nonlinear narrative may not have a resolution; it may not have a single character with whom to empathize and identify; it may not have characters who are goal-oriented; and it may not have a dramatic shape driving toward resolution. Consequently, the nonlinear narrative is not predictable. And here lies its great aesthetic potential: Because of that unpredictability, it may provide an audience with a new, unexpected experience (393).

In general, Paul Wells argues that “animation has inherent spectacle in the freedom of its graphic vocabulary, but it is a spectacle that has been naturalized into its vocabulary in a way that enables the form to infiltrate generic conventions almost unnoticed” (50). With *anime*, Susan Napier identifies “three overarching modes – the apocalyptic, the elegiac, and the carnival” and highlights that “the most intriguing trend ... is a general darkening of anime subject matter” (xiii, xiv). Napier cites Ledoux and Ranney who refer to the visual characteristics of Japanese animation – from as early as the 1970s – as “absolutely overflow[ing] with tracking shots, long-view establishing shots, fancy pans, unusual point-of-view ‘camera-angles’ and extreme close-ups ... [i]n contrast [to] most American-produced TV animation [which] tends to thrive in an

action-obsessed middle-distance"³ (quoted in Napier 10). Animation allows for subversive imagery to manifest itself "in a space nominally marked for a children's audience" and it is "made more acceptable by virtue of the fact that it is merely ink and paint" (Wells 49).

Sci-fi *anime*, Orbaugh argues: "defamiliarise and challenge the philosophical underpinnings of technoscience and global capitalism" ("Book Review" 450). *Concrete Revolutio* is a compounded and compounding reflection of Japanese science-fiction films "whose lines of flight – Brown suggests – ... set into motion in response to the mechanism of advanced capitalism, globalization, and emerging imaging and telecommunications technologies" should be filtered "through their rhizomatic connections with other anime, other films, other works of art, and other discursive formations"⁴ (9 quoted in "Book Review" 450).

In search of the "rhizomatic connections", the first striking element is that most of the superheroes of *Concrete Revolutio* are a nod to their American counterparts. Superheroes and giant robots as well as the viewer's projection of them are a manifestation – Freeman argues – of "the religious and mythological foundations of the cultures that produced them" (Lunning 274). He cites Uchida Kenji, a producer at the *anime* Studio Sunrise, who stated that: "In America, when you want to make something stronger than a human being, you make a superhero. In Japan, when you want to make something stronger than a human being, you make a giant robot". *Concrete Revolutio* combines both of these types. Freeman recalls how for Uchida, this difference in approaches stemmed from the two countries disparate views of "god":

... in America, God is anthropomorphized. The God of the Bible is thought of as person, and we are "made in His image". It would make sense then that an American superbeing would manifest itself in human form. [Whereas] in Japan ... the traditional concept of god comes from Shintō, the indigenous, animistic, and polytheistic religion of Japan. In Shintō, the concept of god or *kami* is much more malleable. ... Supernatural power can manifest itself in a mechanical form that may be humanoid in shape and may even demonstrate some human qualities, but it is certainly not human (Freeman in Lunning 276-277).

The American connection is not coincidental. The series' screenwriter Shō Aikawa has described it as "a superhero story in a setting similar to the American comic book series *Watchmen*" (*MyAnimeList*). Similarly to *Concrete Revolutio*, the plot of Alan Moore's graphic novel *Watchmen* was not what set it apart, "but the way in which it was told", as Whitty writes in his review: "What made *Watchmen* wonderful ... was ... a real metafictional depth. The movie cut all of that out to focus on the story and the action. And to assume that the best thing about *Watchmen* was its fight scenes is like assuming that the best thing about *Moby Dick* was its whaling scenes" (quoted in Van Ness 187-188). In the *anime* too, the cornucopia of characters, concepts, themes, flashbacks and flashforwards are the embellishments surrounding the anti-militarist,

anti-consumerist, anti-exploitation critique. Craig explains how nonlinearity applied “to storytelling plays fast and loose with time, so the audience is forced to play detective by putting all the scenes from the past (flashbacks), present, and future (flash-forwards) together in a coherent sequence in their mind” (54). Yet as one reviewer argues, *Concrete Revolutio* “is not in what it wants to do, or even where it ends up, but how it goes about getting there. ... What matters is the worldview behind it” (*Ganriki*).

The viewer is not expected to keep track of the nonlinear approach since most episodes deal with a different case spanning different time frames and since there is no central plot thread connecting the episodes, outside the main character’s journey from self-righteousness to disillusionment with the system. Under its colorful facade, *Concrete Revolutio* is an excoriating indictment of “the willingness – nay, *urgency* – of people to be herded, misled and manipulated” (*Lost in Anime*, “Concrete Revolutio – 05”) and of the other parties – from states officials to corporate agents, secret organizations and aliens – who take advantage of this most vulnerable flaw of the human condition.

In *Watchmen*, nonlinearity is effectively used – according to Van Ness – “to further create a sense of participation in the medium: “Watchmen’s cyclical and layered narrative structure invites the readers to participate in the meaning-making narrative ... to create a narrative that extends beyond the end’ (Van Ness 77)” (in Wandtke 182). The same applies to *Concrete Revolutio*, where the viewer can choose from a myriad of issues – the military industrial complex, war, colonialism, consumerism, corporatism, xenophobia, nationalism – to make sense of what they see. Both of them deconstruct and normalize the concept of superhero (Casey 169) with the superhero in *Watchmen*, as Reynolds notes, “far from representing a fantasy of power... becomes just another facet of society” (Reynolds 108-109 in Casey 169). The same observation applies to the notion that “Satire replaces explicit mythology” – (Reynolds 109 in Casey 169): in-depth explanations of the mechanics behind the *Concrete Revolutio* universe are discarded altogether in favor of the satiric commentary and aspersions against, for example, the refusal to come to terms with a most terrible legacy of a time when a nation lost its way and so did its people (“Joker Game – 04”).

In *Watchmen*, the plot is set in a noir alternate-Cold War period where superheroes are present and are forced by circumstances to remain hidden, the *anime* is also set in alternate postwar period during and after a period of reconstruction, where superhumans are tolerated and absconded from public knowledge in spite of the public being quasi-aware of them. Cold War wise, *Concrete Revolutio* focuses primarily on the period between the end of the 1960s and the 1970s: “a period of unrest in Japan, where the Japanese population protested, quite violently, and was also put down violently by police, against Japan’s involvement in the American war efforts in Vietnam, and American military presence in Japan” (“Concrete Revolutio – Cold War, Sizzling Justice”).

Unlike with Kon Satoshi's nonlinear enterprises, in *Concrete Revolutio*, director Seiji Mizushima employs a nonlinear narrative that while creating like in Satoshi's case, "a psychological puzzle", this puzzle does not have "to be pieced together in order to understand its meaning" (Odell and Le Blanc 27). The episode's timeline switches from various timeframes ranging from the years Apotheosis 14th, 16th, 17th, 29th, 34th, 38th, 40th, 45th, 48th (singular episodes), 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 47th (multiple episodes timeskips), up to the year 46th (when superhuman freedoms are no longer recognized) of the *Shinka* Era, or the 25th Century (from when one of the members of the Superhuman Bureau travels back in time) (*Anitay*). In doing so, the *anime* showcases a long reaching degenerative process of the relations between humans and non-humans / superhumans, between protesters and security forces, between members of the same team. This conceit with timeline obfuscation creates a messy, chaotic landscape where confrontations take place between various actors, mirroring the moral conundrums faced by the protagonists.

Historically wise, as stated above, the period illustrated ranges from 1939 to 1973. According to a reviewer:

A general timeline can be established from the definitely-not-Beatles concert at Budokan [indoor arena in central Tokyo] as shown in Episode 5. The actual concert took place in 1966 amidst protests from Japanese nationalists who disapproved of using the Nippon Budokan as a stage for a rock band instead of a martial arts tournament. Equating June 30, 41st of the *Shinka* Era (the date of the pseudo-Beatles concert in *Concrete Revolutio*) with June 30, 1966 (the actual date of the Beatles first concert at Budokan) reveals a timeline of approximately 1939 to 1973, or the 14th of the *Shinka* Era to the 48th of the *Shinka* Era (*Atelier Emily*).

The narrative structure of *Concrete Revolutio* is purposefully convoluted since the themes addressed are opened to interpretation, exploration and problematization: "[m]ultiple perspectives, personal bias, and situational variables do not always leave a definitive, *linear* answer. ... the complexity of the themes coincides with the convoluted nature of the narrative" (*The Chuuni Corner*). In addition, as is the case with more complex *anime*, the narrative construction serves to "reinforce our perception of the characters and enhances our understanding of their motivation" (Odell and Le Blanc). Experience is prioritized in front of the narrative but not at the cost of it. Odell and Le Blanc point out that in *anime* "[s]ometimes endings can be obscure, ambiguous or inconclusive" (34). Moreover while the "mainstream Western narrative structure, particularly Hollywood cinema, [needs] for conclusions to be reached and for all outstanding plot issues to be resolved, [t]hat is not the case with much of Eastern cinema, anime included" (Odell and Le Blanc 34). This is the case with *Concrete Revolutio*, where the narrative journey is more important than the *raison d'être* behind the destination.

III. Where the Superhuman / Superhero Alterities Merge and Clash: The Quest for Posthumanism

According to Brown, posthumanism is entering “into cultural forms and practices” (“Book Review” 450) that as Orbaugh explains “transcend national boundaries while also being inflected by specific national histories” (Book Review 450) and ideologies. Meanwhile, “Donna Haraway (1991) and N. Katherine Hayles (1999) declare that we are all already posthuman cyborgs. Japanese sf [sci-fi], especially in anime, explores the anxieties and hopes accompanying the recognition that humans are transitioning inexorably into a new state of being” (“Manga and anime” 120). The *anime* classic *Ghost in the Shell* echoes these ideas with the main character, Major Motoko Kusanagi pondering on the human condition and noting that:

There are countless ingredients that make up the human body and mind, like all the components that make up me as an individual with my own personality. Sure I have a face and voice to distinguish myself from others, but my thoughts and memories are unique only to me, and I carry a sense of my own destiny. Each of those things are just a small part of it. I collect information to use in my own way. All of that blends to create a mixture that forms me and gives rise to my conscience. I feel confined, only free to expand myself within boundaries (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995).

Within boundaries is where the superhumans (*choujin*) of *Concrete Revolutio* are allowed to act, and the Superhuman Bureau is tasked with protecting them as long as they do not endanger the national interest. The superhumans and posthumans in *Concrete Revolutio* are intertwined – while the series uses the term “superhuman” (*choujin*), most of the characters inhabit a liminal space in-between “super” and “post”. In the context of the series, superhumans are a moniker for the end of the “man-centred” universe based on “that long-held belief in the infallibility of human power and the arrogant belief in our superiority and uniqueness” (Pepperell⁶ 20 in Hassler-Forest 68).

Where *Ghost in the Shell* – Clarke explains – “dramatised and visualised the theme of identity in the realm of human and cyborg/ artificial intelligence relations” (91), *Concrete Revolutio* captures the “Japanese expression of the relationship in terms of both connections and disjunctions between the human self and technological development” (91) and difference. This difference is seen for example in various “posthuman superhero bodies” such as: 1) “gods” – “bodies born with ‘natural’ superhuman abilities”; 2) “mutants” – “bodies that have gained superhuman abilities by ‘natural’ genetic mutation”; 3) “transformers” – “bodies that have gained superhuman abilities by some form of technological intervention”; 4) “cyborgs” – “bodies that become superhuman by their use of technology; 5) “robots” – “completely artificial bodies” (Hassler-Forest 69).

III.1. The (Post)human Horror Condition

Removed from the naturalized scenarios of *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* (Wells 51), *Concrete Revolutio* is a jarring and dissonant piece – beginning with the LSD-laced retro neon color palette to the character designs and behaviors – while its whimsically-dissonant tone is reminiscent of the Japanese cyberpunk horror film, *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989), which “follows a nicely dressed cyborg into the ordinary world, though the results are still disturbingly violent ... A technological virus infects the man, merging metal with his flesh. He becomes more metal-man than businessman” (Dinello 132). The horror in *Concrete Revolutio* stems from the mildly benign to army experiments. In the former case, Pirikappi, a no longer venerated forest god (*Kami*) whose sacred grounds had been transformed into a sky-jumping facility in time for a winter sport festival in Sapporo, makes so flowers sprout from the heads of all the human inhabitants of the city, and later summons them on the ski slope and transforms them into a human forest. The god is mollified when the only human left performs a ritual that honors the long forgotten traditions and thus everyone is brought back from their “arboreal” transformation.

In the latter, superhumans are grotesquely weaponized by the U.S. military and made part of the superhuman submarine *Antares*, by essentially having their bodies fused to the machine. Though still alive, the witch Kikko states that the superhumans from inside the hull of the ship, are dead. This scene evokes what Kellner and Best describe as man’s “control over our progeny” in a world dependent on technology (196 in Herbrechter 52). The scene can also be read along the lines of what Donna Haraway’s describes as “disturbingly lively machines” when compared to the “frighteningly inert” people (152 in Herbrechter 52) looking passively at the events transpiring. In addition, the military’s action in this case – both in regards to the superhumans and the technology – subvert the trope where “robotic tools will rise up without pilots and rampage en masse” (Bolton 123). While in Oshii Mamoru’s *Patlabor: The Movie*⁷ (*Kidō keisatsu patoreibaa*, 1989), the main concern is posed by the “frightening threat ... that labors are images of us, human-machine hybrids that have lost all humanity, increasingly technologized bodies that turn out to be empty shells” (Bolton 123), in *Concrete Revolutio*, humans unwittingly unleash this daunting prospect in their selfish and insatiable quest for military supremacy.

III.2. The Human / Posthuman Non-Binary

The events in *Concrete Revolutio* are centered on the issue of superhumans who in the year Apotheosis 41 of the *Shinka* (Evolution) Era, have made Earth their home. Their existence and actions are kept hidden from the general public while the “Superhuman Bureau” or “Superhuman Population Research Laboratory” is tasked with monitoring, safeguarding or terminating those that pose or might pose a threat to humanity. The members of the Bureau are: Jirō Hitoyoshi (initially regarded as the

only human of the team, who later leaves and turns against the Bureau), recent member Kikko Hoshino (a magic user / magical girl), Emi Kino (a half *youkai* woman (supernatural creature)), Hyōma Yoshimura/ Jaguar (a time traveler who can transform into a tiger and stop time), Fuurota (a shapeshifting ghost or *obake*, also a recent addition to the Bureau), Daishi Akita (the section chief, revealed later to be a *Fumer*, part of a “race of gaseous, body-hopping aliens” (Bridges, “Concrete Revolutio – Episode 8”). Other characters include Magotake Hitoyoshi (a scientist and technical consultant who adopted Jirō), Raito Shiba (a deceased police detective, killed on a case and whose personality was put into an android), Uru (Kikko’s magical assistant who calls her *Hoshinoko* (“Star Child”), resembles a Daruma doll), Grosse Augen (a giant alien who has to merge with a human, is known as “an Ally of Humanity” but regarded negatively by the public), Earth-chan (a planetary monitoring / satellite-robot), etc. An entire array of superhumans (cyborgs, artificial-made sport superhumans, idols and comic bands with superpowers), robots, subterrans, *Kaijus* (monsters), aliens and even gods (*kamis*), along with humans from the military, security services, corporate agents, student protestors and superhuman groupies, complete this phantasmagoric tableau.

The humans in *Concrete Revolutio* reject the mantle as “heirs to Enlightenment traditions of secular liberal humanism, in which humanity, having displaced the gods, achieves heights of wisdom and self-aggrandizement – the post/human as superhuman” (Graham 154-155). Instead they advocate for making use of superhumans, only in so far as the exploitation of these enhanced and perfectible beings, serves their militarist, security or economic interests. The subject’s posthumanist features enabled in some cases through a metamorphosis (of biological or artificial origins), trigger in the “base human” similar symptoms to those evoked by the “Uncanny Valley” effect on “human-like-but-not-quite” robots – namely revulsion and rejection.

The “post” in “posthuman” presupposes in Hopkins’ view that the “object or phenomenon modified by “post” is no longer the same kind of thing it was” (73). Here, the posthuman, Hopkins continues: “would describe an entity that began as human (individually or in its taxonomic descent) but is clearly no longer a member of the human species, and indeed does not bear enough resemblance to humans to even count as close” (73). While the superhuman, in this context, “attempts to free us from the human condition by enhancing desirable human traits to an extent that surpasses the limits of the class” (Hopkins 73). Both of these instances occur in *Concrete Revolutio* with the caveat that the attempts at enhancing and controlling the post/super/meta-human bodies are conducted for mostly material reasons in various ploys of power politics.

The main character, Jirō Hitoyoshi, initially regarded as an average human, inhabits a borderline space between human and monster, when in later episodes it is revealed that the beast inside of him awakens when the three seals hidden on his bandaged left arm, are removed. Moreover, the beast alterity, is compounded by the fact

that Jirō's main means of policing superhumans, namely his car, can transform into Equus, a giant quadrupedal *mecha* (robot), whom he controls from the inside. So there is a case of "beast in the man" and "ghost in the shell"⁸, which is evocative of the fact that: "[i]n the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals" (Hayles 13).

Similarly to *Ghost in the Shell*, "the non-objective, non-linear credence of the animated form", leads legitimacy to the "theme of post-human status" (Wells 51) while the benign, colorful and smooth artwork, creates a false sense of security. Here too, like in other major genre works (Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) or Rintaro's *Metropolis* (2001) based on Osamu Tezuka's *manga*), the posthuman subject – reflected in the series' superhumans – interacts with humans that are "portrayed as controllers and manipulators" (Teo 84). Concurrently, the one human guided by a naive and deeply-seeded sense of justice, Jirō, is shown to not have been a simple human after all. Similarly, the android policeman, Raito Shiba is described by the members of Bureau – superhumans themselves – as having been "more human than any of us" ("Concrete Revolutio Episode 14 – The Metal Detective") while Jirō's childhood hero is revealed to have been just a human in a mask: "Raito was human in spite of being a robot, while the Rainbow Knight, a person without supernatural powers, was more than human, because of what he was capable of doing" ("Concrete Revolutio Episode 15 – Bound Humanity").

III.3. Of Kaiju and Speciesism

In *What is Posthumanism*, Wolfe posits "that the human occupies a new place in the universe, a universe now populated by ... nonhuman subjects" (47). *Kaijus* – Godzilla-like creatures – are such a subject and in typical fashion, in *Concrete Revolutio* too, they are regarded as evil, with Jirō declaring early in the series that: "All beasts are evil" (Episode 4). Yet, they are mostly compared to natural disasters, and since *kaijus* are beasts, they are bound only by the laws of nature, not of man or moral. In general, the *kaiju* is used as leitmotif for man's folly, representing the fallout of weapons of mass destruction. In *Concrete Revolutio*, the viewer is told that *kaijus* are the embodiment of "human anger", which as a reviewer notes: "could also be said of real-life nukes" (Bridges, "Concrete Revolutio, Episode 4"). Another reviewer wonders: "The Kaiju are as they appear, forces of nature, created by humanity. Are they the manifestation of the idea of the atomic bomb, humanity's creation mixed with nature that seeks to restore balance?" Just like the atomic bomb symbolizes the great lengths humans would go to boast about their suicidal superiority, at the cost of everything else, so is the *kaiju*, a manifestation of man's repressed bestial nature where the bestial – the negative characteristics – is transferred unto nonhuman animals through speciesism:

a displacement of race and racism (relations between humans as imagined in racial terms) onto relations between humans and animals ... [which] entails the displace-

ment of problems associated with race relations onto species relations and vice versa. Speciesism thus comprises violence to nonhuman animals *and* to those designated as racial others (Lamarre 76).

In *Concrete Revolutio*, there is a mixture of both. The *others* – the superhumans – are seen either as disposable commercial goods, a means to an end, a nuisance or as a threat that has to be contained and subdued. Brown argues that when humanity intersects with technology – but also as in this case, with the supernatural, the uncanny or the unknown – it results in “an ambivalent mixture of power and control, of dominance and submission, of empowerment and alienation” (117). The superhumans pose a double conundrum: on one hand, they are a sign of evolution – organic or artificial – and a metaphor for an increasingly technologized world that offers the prospect of advancement and immortality. At the same time, they are also a harbinger of death⁹, of an era coming to an end, in anticipation of man’s replacement, substitution or inevitable automation. The android policeman suffering from a crisis of faith, argues how a “robot’s sense of justice is immutable and objective, which is why they should be the arbiters of justice and morality”, yet from an essentialist point of view, Raito himself has *always* been human (he is afterall “the copy of a human mind, a perfect copy”) (“Concrete Revolutio Episode 14 – The Metal Detective”).

IV. Points of Intersection and Points of Disjunction: Justice, Freedom, Peace

Fundamental themes such as justice, freedom, peace in the context of law and order, survival of the fittest, or the loss of innocence permeate this phantasmagoria being reiterated in various forms across the series. “Do all heroes – as a reviewer wonders – indeed, all people who fight for any cause – do it for one of peace, justice or freedom? And are these ideals mutually exclusive?” (*Lost in Anime*, “Concrete Revolutio – 11”). An exchange between the main character, Jirō and another character, finds the former stating that: “You admired superhumans, too! Those who do the right thing, not for themselves or their country, but for a single...”, only to be interrupted by the latter who asks: “A single what? Justice? Peace? Freedom? Defending my freedom disturbs the peace! Pursuing your justice violates my freedom! There is no single answer!” (*The Josei Next Door*). And herein lies the moral conundrum

In the 1960s, filmmakers like Yasuo Ōtsuka, Isao Takahata and Hayao Miyazaki, who were part of the Toei animation studio, regarded “animation as a fulfillment practice of their socialist ideals, a means to build a new Japan devoid of pre-war imperialist values, and a medium that embodied fresh youthful stories as Japan rebuilt herself by learning from her dismal war experiences” (Hu 139-140). Because *Concrete Revolutio* mirrors events from the 1960s and 1970s, it also bears within itself a deeply seeded disappointment with the postwar aftermath. Due to its nonlinear framework, the viewer is shown in the flashforwards, more often than not, a rather worsened situation than in the current timeline, colored by the main character’s hindsight of the

present. The real world and its re-imagined fantastical counterpart are made of somber, cynical and hypocritical calculations and both of them are steering towards the cusp of the abyss, prolonging the corrupted status-quo through pragmatic reassurances and deliberate intoxications. A review observes that:

There's a real air of inevitable tragedy to this show. Each episode features two concurrent timelines whereupon the characters being focused on display wildly different interactions depending on which time frame we're seeing. Something happened that changed how they see each other, some terrible sin ("The Untold Story of Altair & Vega").

There are horrors and sins in this world and the humans have no difficulty in showing their most unsightly side. Horrors that are even more magnified by the ludicrous undercurrent permeating the series and expressed by characters such as Kikko, the klutz-like *mahou* (magical) girl working as a waitress in a maid cafe, whose incantation ("Meteorterre") allows her to transform herself; or Fuurota, the friendly and mischievous ghost who looks and acts like a young boy. Kikko is the character through whose point of view the viewer is introduced to the universe of *Concrete Revolutio*. Kikko – with the potential to turn into the Queen of the Devil Realm, and Fuurota – responsible for triggering an accidental genocide of a "subterran" species, show that not even the most innocent, are spared from the inevitable consequences of existing in a treacherously looking world. "[I]nnocence has a very short half-life in this world" (*Ganriki*).

Similarly, the main character is introduced initially as having strong convictions about being a "hero of justice", just as his childhood hero – "Rainbow Knight" (who described himself as an "ally of justice" and died a villain) – had been before him, only so that later to acknowledge how "one can fundamentally fight for good things, even if they also have negative qualities" (Bridges "Concrete Revolutio – 14-15").

Both Kikko and Fuurota, who are young and rather immature, as well as Jirō himself, are haunted by the specter of growing up and of seeing the human world for what it really is and not what they would like it to be. Earth-chan too has been "programmed with the same fiery, inflexible sense of right and wrong as a child might have" (*Ganriki*). She's this world equivalent of Tetsuan Atom (Astro Boy), "the little fighter for justice" from the 1950s, "the small, Pinocchio-like robot, [which] differs from that innocent wooden puppet of old (who could not tell right from wrong) in that Astro Boy *always knows right from wrong* (Ladd with Deneroff 124). And so does, Earth-chan. Yet a reviewer highlights the fact that in the same way that a child can only react in terms of absolute values, so "Earth-chan can only handle black and white, gross (as in 'overt') and clearly-directed "bad acts", she doesn't handle systematic injustice, how corporates act within the law to rob people of their freedoms, quality of life ..." ("Concrete Revolutio Episode 7 Notes").

After various, nefarious events, the characters arrive at the classical Manichean, binary question: "Whose side are you on?". Unlike with the sentient satellite-like Earth-

chan who can instinctively tell what is good and what is bad, the rest of the characters are left to struggle with the answer to this question and its subsidiaries: "Whose side are you on – what do you choose to fight for, and why?" (*Lost in Anime*, "Concrete Revolutio – 13"). Even Earth-chan herself – as another reviewer observed: "Whenever the cries of the distressed reach her ears, like some digital bodhisattva, she plunges from her resting place in orbit to save the day. But even by the time she dives (literally, figuratively) into the action, it's all too clear to us that just taking a side and sticking doggedly with it, is not enough" (*Ganriki*).

According to Loeb and Morris, superheroes "pursue justice, defending the defenseless, helping those who cannot help themselves and overcoming evil with the force of good" (17). When they are placed in a Cold War setting, the line between right and wrong, good and evil, is blurred to the point of erasure. A reviewer notes:

"Cold War stories" ... [a]re often stories without right and wrong, where 'your side' engages in unscrupulous behaviour, and where operatives in the field, from opposing super-powers, usually trust one another more than they do their own superiors. Cold War stories are very much stories about grey morality, of growing up and growing disillusioned with the world. They're stories about a world that has lost its innocence after World War 2, and over the decades that followed also lost belief in a shiny flash of justice that could end war, and lead to a better world ("Concrete Revolutio – Cold War, Sizzling Justice").

Like in *Doctor Strangelove* (1964) and *Metropolis* (1927 / 2001), *Concrete Revolution* "assimilates large-scale historical events to the personal motivations of a small core group" (Benzon 172), in this case the members of the Superhuman Bureau, who for all their human-like behaviors and sentiments, remain uncanny – one step or more removed from the human being. Since the world of the series is chaotic and entropic, the Superhuman Bureau acts to restore order and uphold the peace at the cost of justice and freedom.

The episodic nature of the *anime* allows for various characters of the human / superhuman, ally and antagonist varieties, to express their views, convictions, and motivations. Echoing the themes of the 1979 *mecha* genre classic, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, there is no absolute good or evil. When the main character confronts the antagonist superhuman Claude in episode 11, entitled "Justice / Freedom / Peace", "they try to convince each other of the righteousness of their causes, debating philosophical themes, such as the ideal of pacifism, the meaning of human evolution and its consequences" (Adachi 97-98). The various superhumans "speak to our ideas about ourselves and our humanity" (Davies-Stofka 413) yet must operate under humanity's umbrella of baser instincts: fear of the unknown, fear of extinction, struggle for power, dominance and control. Meanwhile the varied instances where "superheroes for justice" appear are also tangled in "a story about the abuse of power [or] the inherent difficulty of separating good and evil" (*Ganriki*).

Conclusions

The study of *anime* has never been a superfluous research activity even though this field of research still lacks a unified framework of analysis. This being said, due to the propensity and complexity of *anime* genres, such a unified framework would be difficult to attain and maintain since *anime* is medium that continuously evolves, extends past the commercial tropes *du jour* as well as beckons for a closer investigation and deconstruction of its motifs, messages, and themes. As far as *Concrete Revolutio* is concerned, most episodes can make the subject of several articles since they provide a trove of contemporaneous socio-political ideas wrapped in a series of superhuman allegories, inside a critique not only of the Japanese political, military, commercial, and protest culture but also of international aspects such as power politics, globalization, and capitalism. In this way, the series analyzed in the present article, fits Stephen Teo's observation about how "Japanese anime sets the example of a modern nation confronting scientific, social and historical concerns" (73). The overarching thesis underpinning this study has revolved around the notion of complexity framed as element essential to Japanese animation which reflects as seen in the section about nonlinearity and Japanese politics, "the complexity of Japan in particular, and of the modern nation in general – not to mention the importance of globalizing forces in the production of mass culture" (Lamarre in Teo 74). In Napier's view, *anime* explores "painful complexity over easy closure, grief over gladness, and world destroying events over world affirming ones" (Napier "Peek-a-Boo Pikachu 14). The first section has focused on the aspects pertaining to the Cold War setting in which *Concrete Revolutio* takes places, by comparing its nonlinear approach and themes to the graphic novel *Watchmen*. The *anime* replicates the moments of social effervescence and counter-reaction that had plagued Japan during the 1960s and 1970s. *Concrete Revolutio* is a throwback to the 1960s, almost echoing the feelings of leading anime film-makers like Miyazaki Hayao, Otsuka Yasuo and Takahata Isao, who at that time regarded animation "as a fulfillment practice of their socialist ideals, a means to build a new Japan devoid of pre-war imperialist values, and a medium that embodied fresh youthful stories as Japan rebuilt herself by learning from her dismal war experiences" (Hu 140). In the second part, the study explored the posthuman condition through its various iterations from horror to *kaiju* by analyzing the issues concerning the superhumans and superheroes populating the series. Heinrich argues that "[a]nime is a particularly rich medium for exploring cultural attitudes towards the posthuman, as the representations of the posthuman are extremely abundant in anime, perhaps more abundant than in any other medium" (6-7). While, finally, in the third section, the study provides a short overview of the central themes in *Concrete Revolutio* – justice, peace, freedom – by remarking the paradoxical tension underpinning them. The postwar Japan that had the potential to be a new and improved Japan like Hayao and his associates hoped for, is reflected in *Concrete Revolutio*, in a world

that for all its lost innocence, corruption, and militarist, still maintains a piece of that innocence through the various characters that inhabit it, like Jiro, Kiiko, the police detective Shiba, Fuurota, Earth-chan, only for them to inadvertently lose it in the end:

The idea of pursuing justice on a general societal level comes in regular conflict with pursuing justice as a citizen within an existing social structure, and everyone has very good reasons for how they feel. The bureau employee Jiro works within the government, but often shelters superhumans of his own accord; in contrast, the police detective Shiba values societal order above all else, and vigilante Claude seeks a broader justice by any means necessary. When heroes clash, it feels like *heroes clashing* - various people all trying to do right in their own way, truly depicting the complexity of the pursuit of a better world. At times, it feels totally understandable that many of the heroes within *Conrevo* end up seeking their *own* heroes, people who can embody the "pure, unquestioned justice" that seems out of their own reach. In a world where pursuing justice means breaking the peace, and maintaining freedom means taking unjust actions, the hero who embodies peace, justice, *and* freedom can be hard to find (Creamer "Review").

A reviewer characterised the experience of watching *Concrete Revolutio*, by comparing it "to putting together a puzzle when you don't know what the final picture is supposed to look like. By necessity, you can only fully appreciate what you're looking at in retrospect" (*Lost in Anime*, "Concrete Revolutio - 13"). This *anime* is an amalgamation of Napier's overarching modes, mentioned in the beginning: the apocalyptic, the elegiac and the carnival. The apocalyptic is represented by the looming specter of the Cold War arms race where the superhumans are the WMDs (weapons of mass destruction). The elegiac appears whenever the innocent or the harmless is led into perdition or into harm's way. When the fear of the unknown compels the military forces to unsuccessfully eliminate an extended family of immortal superhumans because while "they cannot harm anyone, no one can harm them, either" - a fact deemed "beyond human comprehension" (Bridges, "Concrete Revolutio - Episode 9). There is sorrow interspersed in most episodes, especially when man's fear-based actions are so predictable yet never quaint. *Concrete Revolutio* is "a work infused with cynicism depicting a world still fresh with innocence" (Creamer "Review"). Finally, the carnival is reflected in the carefully established neon-bright *mis-en-scene* with its 1970s' esthetic sensibilities, in the characters' quirks and fluid, choreographed-movements: "The art is bright, the design distinctive, and the animation dynamic, using Studio BONES's trademark shifting cameras and smeared motions to demonstrate the characters' larger-than-life speed and strength. It's a series that never stops moving" (*The Josei Next Door*). Or as another reviewer explains:

CR leverages, and not merely includes or replicates, the aesthetics of the material it's drawing on. When Grosse Augen shows up, or when a team of young super-powered detectives pops into the story, or when Earth-chan zooms in for the rescue, the

bright colors and nostalgia-generating character designs have a deliberate emotional effect. We want things to be as upbeat and straightforward as such imagery would suggest, but we know they're not (*Ganriki*).

This study has attempted to uncover several levels of interpretation in a series that runs the gamut of characters, situations and motifs. A willfully convoluted piece of animation, *Concrete Revolutio* challenges the "less is more" contention while echoing the "concern with the troubled state of the postmodern self, a self that finds its gender, identity, even its very human nature called into question by the new technological environment it inhabits and that seems to be inevitably reshaping ... identities" (Telotte 114). The technological environment becomes the superhuman terrain in *Concrete Revolutio*. The supernatural, the superhuman and the superanimal (*kaiju*) provide the context for a commentary whose deep stroke reaches multiple layers: from the national and international, the public and the private, the activist and the corporatist, the militarist and the reformist, the human and the superhuman. Outside its critical dimension, *Concrete Revolutio* revolves around interrogations on what it means to be a human and who can access human-like potential as well as "what side does one choose?" As a character tells Earth-chan: "It's always better to know clearly which side is right" (*Lost in Anime*, "Concrete Revolutio – 13").

In conclusion, the study has shown how the series nonlinear approach succeeds in creating a Bizzaro version of the Cold War that is on an entropic downturn and where the timeskips highlight the fragility of the *status quo* and the long term effects of one's actions. Second of all, by referencing posthumanism and works inspired by it, the study has looked at the uncanny in the superhuman that thrives to be a "hero for justice" and has highlighted the fear-made obstacles in the posthuman's attempt at recognition and legitimacy. Thirdly, the debate between justice, freedom, peace highlights what can only be described as the real life "fantasy of postwar pacifism" (Saito 39) and how pacifism itself is corrupted in the context in which together with militarism, they "go hand in hand so far as to serve as two side of the same coin called Japanese pride" (Saito 38).

In the end, *Concrete Revolutio* is a cautionary tale of past and present deeds that have mostly gone unaccounted for in the eyes of justice, while in the meantime, freedoms have started to be curtailed and peace is irrecoverably lost amidst nuclear-charged (super)powers, global wars on terror, internationalized civil wars and warfare hybridization. The world of *Concrete Revolutio* is visited by all the real world's ailments and affectations ("Japan can't move past the war, it can't move past the riots, and it can't move past its traditions") ("Concrete Revolutio Episode 16 – The Impossible") yet it provides through its superhumans, a metaphoric respite from the assault of various types of human evil: lawful (militarist), neutral (corporate / for profit) or chaotic (anarchism).

Notes

- 1 See Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture. Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- 2 See Christopher Bolton, "The Quick and the Undead: Visual and Political Dynamics in Blood: The Last Vampire", *Mechademia 2: Networks of Desire*, ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007): 125-142.
- 3 See Trish Ledoux and Doug Ranney, *The Complete Anime Guide*. Issaquah, WA: Tiger Mountain Press, 1997.
- 4 See: Steven T. Brown, *Tokyo Cyberpunk: Posthumanism in Japanese Visual Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- 5 Satoshi Kon's most notable works are: *Perfect Blue* (1997), *Tokyo Godfathers* (2003), *Paranoia Agent* (2004), *Paprika* (2006).
- 6 See Robert Pepperell, *The Post-Human Condition*, Exeter: Intellect Books, 1995.
- 7 The opening scene in *Patlabor: The Movie*, showcases "a small army of men and machines [that] hunts down an elusive quarry, but what they finally capture is an absence that lies at the heart of the film's fears. The hunters are a mixed group of soldiers, tanks, and the "labors" of the film's title—giant humanshaped robots with living pilots. Their target is a rogue labor, but when they finally capture it and open its hatch to apprehend the pilot, they find only an empty cockpit. The labor is unmanned" (Bolton 123).
- 8 Reference to Mamoru Oshii's 1995 movie, *Ghost in the Shell*, based on a manga (Japanese comic) *Ghost in the Shell / Kōkaku Kidōtai* by Masamune Shirow (1989-1990), who has influenced movie-makers from Steven Spielberg (*A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001) *Minority Report* (2002)) to the Wachowskis siblings (*The Matrix* trilogy).
- 9 See Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory (Third Edition)*. Harlow, U.K.: Pearson Longman, 2004.

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