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Apocalypse in Anime: Shifting Boundaries of Human Technology Interface

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Abstract

Anime is the definitive postmodern genre through which to portray apocalyptic

narratives as it provides an imaginative liminal site that transcends any specific

culture and ethnicity, and through which global concerns can be investigated. The

study of apocalypse in selected anime – Japanese animated film and television – is

beneficial at the outset of the 21st century when we are beset with catastrophes both

ecological and technological that are recognizably manufactured by some degree of

human involvement. This examination is pertinent to disciplines as diverse as

communications, cultural theory, anthropology, film, cyborg studies, Asian studies,

and English literature. The dystopian settings and destructive elements in

apocalyptic anime can be used in diverse and complex ways to comment on

character response to upheaval and disaster. By stimulating discussion through

exploration of anime narratives, this popular culture product offers a pervasive and

rich vocabulary with which to consider our reactions to adversity. This thesis

demonstrates how the study of apocalypse through anime narratives is relevant to a

greater understanding of our own behavior in reaction to apocalyptic

circumstances.

Key Words: anime, animation, apocalypse, Japan, Oshii, Miyazaki, Haraway,

Napier, McCarthy, Kristeva, Orbaugh, Brown, Ochi, narrative, cyborg, robot,

android, feminism, posthuman, Hayles, cyberspace, virtuality, film, otaku, doll

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Apocalyptic Imagination in Anime

Save yourself, serve yourself. World serves its own needs,

listen to your heart bleed...

It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine.

REM

Apocalypse is both feared and welcomed.

Susan Napier

A world of dew,

and within every dewdrop

a world of struggle

Issa

      The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the dystopian settings and destructive elements in apocalyptic anime can be used in diverse and complex ways to comment on character response to upheaval and disaster. The term anime refers exclusively to Japanese animated television series and feature films. I suggest that

the study of anime narratives can help students to form analytical skills needed to

assess challenging situations in an increasingly global milieu. As Carl Silvio

(2006) contends, "In anime, apocalypse is a paradox and is just as likely to be

depicted as creative as destructive" (p. 126). Anime central characters may or may

not experience apocalypse as a catalyst that leads to growth, change, and renewal,

or they may only create those conditions for others and not for themselves.

Sometimes positive development and transformation are a result of destruction and

catastrophe, but such outcomes are not guaranteed. In fact, circumstances in the

anime world may not appear to alter even after heroic efforts have been made,

leaving endings open to viewer interpretation. In these regards, anime's ambiguous

stance toward apocalypse allows, through analysis, a greater understanding of our

human behavior during apocalyptic conditions. The anime I have chosen are

valuable to students, as they encourage the type of active spectatorship that is

necessary to elicit intellectual response and spawn dialogue. The pedagogical

importance of anime in providing a form for active spectatorship is one of the main

educational claims in this thesis and underpins my examination.

I suggest that the study of apocalypse through anime is timely and

beneficial at the outset of the 21st century, when we are already beset with

catastrophes both ecological and technological, which are recognizably

manufactured by some degree of human involvement. Indeed, even the severity of

seemingly natural disasters like hurricane Katrina is said to be a direct result of

climate changes brought about by post-industrial nations. As noted above, this

thesis demonstrates how the study of apocalypse through anime narratives is relevant to a greater understanding of our own behavior in reaction to apocalyptic circumstances. It is my belief that the experience of viewing and studying anime can be enlightening and recuperative for our students, who, in the contemporary world, must face global intellectual and emotional challenges hitherto unheard of. As we and our students experience rapid changes in technology, that as Napier (2003) claims, "can leave us breathless, almost helpless, unable to process what is going on," (*Into the Labyrinth*, Online) we are in need of a vocabulary with which to consider our experience. The purpose of this thesis is, educationally speaking, to provide such a vocabulary, and set of ideas, for teachers and students. This thesis forms a response to my overarching question: How can apocalypse narratives in anime cause us (educators and students alike), to reflect on the changes that technology is making in the world and to our human experience of that world?

As previously stated, I explore a selection of apocalyptic anime to illustrate how the main characters in each anime experience various types of apocalypse – each can help students to reflect on events in the contemporary world. The apocalypse in each film is related to technology to some degree, which often serves as a catalyst for a complexity of problems. In most cases, the technologies in themselves are not to blame and could even bring about positive change if handled appropriately. One could say that on one level these anime and my discussion of them focuses on human mistakes, but on another level and in some circumstances the possibility for constructive change as well.

examine. Anime is already of interest to students, so anime narratives are a ready-made popular culture niche through which educators can easily engage student attention. Moreover, anime narratives are valuable to educators as the stories cause us think about the world we live in and how it relates to student concerns. The study of apocalyptic anime can support and enhance student interest in environmental studies, science, robotics, artificial intelligence, postmodern and cyborg theories, as well as the disciplines already noted.

I am in agreement with Napier (2003) who suggests, that by utilizing fantastic narratives, anime can help us make meaning of our experience of catastrophe and technology through an imaginative and indirect relationship with anime characters who must deal with life-altering and traumatizing events (*Into the Labyrinth*, Online). For instance, many anime illustrate a concern with ecology and comment on our problematic relationship with nature through the misuse of technology. Miyazaki Hayao, founder of Studio Ghibli and whose work I discuss below proclaims, "I've come to the point where I just can't make a movie without addressing the problem of humanity as part of an ecosystem" (McCarthy, 1999, p. 185). Indeed, Miyazaki's films comment – without heavy-handed didacticism – on our current adverse relationship with nature and our abuses of technology, and remain insightful and uplifting through offering hope and belief in humanity.

Why study apocalypse through anime? Apocalypse in anime, in many cases, can be characterized as an examination of humans in relationship with technology. Perhaps because Japan is the only nation to have experienced the

atomic bomb, many Japanese animators treat apocalyptic events in a most reflective and penetrating manner. Additionally, Japan has been a notable pioneer in the realm of technology for many decades, which underpins an uncomfortable position for many Japanese who are both seduced by technology and saddened by the steady erosion of traditional culture and lifestyle.

While Ghibli's oeuvre (mentioned above) always provides some solace, other studios offer darker fare. For instance, Studio Bones, responsible for both Mizushima Seiji's *Full Metal Alchemist* (2003-2006) and Nobumoto Keiko's *Wolf's Rain* (2003-2004) television series connect fantasy with deeply disturbing psychological, philosophical, and spiritual issues arising through technology related apocalypse. For example, *Full Metal Alchemist* explores the possibilities of cloning separate entities into one being with nightmarish results. Importantly, the growing interest in fantastic anime has a direct relationship to a general resurgence in the popularity of fantasy in recent years, which represents, as Napier (2005, p. xi) suggests, a gnawing discontent with the way things are in life, and the inability of science fiction narratives to provide answers. She maintains, one only has to consider the phenomenal success of *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* to acknowledge this trend, and posits that this interest is due at least in part to our increasing disaffection with technology, which despite popular consumer toys, "has courted environmental degradation, economic downturns, and war…with science seeming to suggest little in the way of overall solutions" (p. xi). Indeed, I am in accord with her assertion that anime "deals with catastrophe and technological

trauma in a much more provocative and stimulating fashion than most Hollywood live action films" (*Into the Labyrinth*, 2003, Online). I propose that through experiencing imaginative works of anime, viewers, and students in particular can develop a greater level of understanding with which to deal with trauma and change connected to apocalypse in some of its many variations through identification with the characters in the films.

For instance, characters in apocalyptic anime may be challenged to modify or transgress routine or acceptable behaviors when dealing with extraordinary circumstances over which they have little control. In this regard, central characters are pushed to consider not only their future actions, but to contemplate their motives and values. Such a process may cause characters to re-examine previous events, particularly events that involve technologies that have played a significant role in the current crisis. Moreover, characters often experience feelings of nostalgia, lamenting the loss of a more peaceable time in which technology had not yet caused the type of disastrous circumstances they presently experience. Indeed, within the apocalyptic mode, a great many anime that portray viscerally explosive and exciting scenes of battle and destruction also depict haunting moments of character reflection and quiet despair. In fact, the technologies that bring about apocalypse in anime are not always connected to grand, world-ending events; instead, they may be of a personal psychological nature, not only for human characters, but for hybrid human/machine characters, and robots as well.

Surprisingly, machinic (robot) or technologically enhanced (cyborg) characters often deal with complex identity issues. For instance, in Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell/Kokaku kidotai* (1995), cyborg protagonist Kusanagi Motoko questions the slippery existence of her own memories, speculating that her core-self is a programmed implant, and doubting that she does possess the organic, albeit augmented, brain she has always believed she possesses. She laments, "Maybe there never was a real 'me' to begin with," (*Ghost in the Shell*). She realizes that although she has always been treated as if she is a human, it is not enough that her environment fulfills her idea of herself. At the end of the film, Kusanagi becomes a free independent subject in cyberspace, transcending the limitations of her body. Undeniably, Oshii's film remains an anime classic that has influenced scores of later works that explore the interface of human, machine, and artificial intelligence producing other memorable cyborg characters.

Without question, this complex interface of human and technology is central to apocalyptic anime, and signals the birth of the posthuman – the termination of the biological human and the birth of the human-machine hybrid or cyborg. According to Katherine Hayles (1999), we live in the inaugural moment of the computer age, when "the erasure of embodiment is performed so that 'intelligence' becomes a property of the formal manipulation of symbols rather than enaction in the human life world" (p. xi). Animators like Oshii, whose films *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004) are examined in this thesis, share her view, and investigate what the world may be like if

biological humans become obsolete and the world is populated predominantly by cyber-human hybrids. Oshii claims, "What we need today is not some kind of anthropocentric humanism. Humanity has reached its limits. I believe that we must now broaden our horizons and philosophize about life from a larger perspective" (*Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence official website*, 2004, Online).

Although Oshii does not view the progression to posthumanity negatively, his films comment on the moral and spiritual crisis he perceives as institutions become progressively more invasive and exploitive. Moreover, he examines how technologically enhanced humans (cyborgs) would be particularly vulnerable despite their privileged strength and intelligence. As Christopher Bolton (2002) posits, "the challenges to bodily integrity that the cyborg poses—from the body's penetration by technology to the specter of its conversion into a data stream—carry with them the threat of objectification and coercion" (p. 730). Thus, while pushing the boundaries of human physical and intellectual possibilities is exciting and "cool," there is a chance that it will not be invoked without frightening sacrifice. As Bolton speculates, the cyborg remains an ambivalent figure (p. 729).

However, while explorations like the above, comment on relations between humans, technology, and nature through the imaginings of hypothetical worlds accessible and relevant to a global audience, it must also be remembered that anime still has Japanese origins. Accordingly, although anime borrows heavily from western film, and Japanese references may be exotic in their appeal to western viewers, I suggest that some research into Japanese culture is helpful for a deeper

critical evaluation of its narratives and themes. For the purposes of this thesis, I am

referring to all Japanese artists and theorists in the traditional Japanese manner in

which the surname or family name comes first. While I am not an expert on

Japanese culture, I attempt, albeit in a limited fashion, to provide some cultural

references where appropriate throughout this thesis. I will expand on this subject in

detail following two brief discussion topics: the first an introduction to anime

origins (directly below) and the second an investigation of anime's status as a

global entity.

The modest extant origins of Japanese animation were produced in 1905-

1917 and consist of a few frames of drawings made directly on celluloid. The

earliest successful Japanese animation in Japan and soon after on western television

came many decades later with the emergence of Tezuka Osamu's (often dubbed the

"father of anime") highly successful and influential *Astro Boy* (1963). *Astro Boy* is

the story of young male robot built by a bereaved scientist as a substitute for his

deceased son. It is the first anime with an apocalyptic theme that features

relationships between humans and robots. Further, Tezuka's tragedies from his

widely admired 1940- 50s manga were also inspirational to younger animators like

Studio Ghibli's Miyazaki Hayao (mentioned above) and Takahata Isao. The

success of Tezuka's *Astro Boy* in Japan opened the field for many animated series

to follow.

Animated serial cartoons were a natural progression for a culture obsessed

with serialized manga (graphic novels), which are read by people of all ages and

stations in life, and many if not most anime features and television series are

adapted from manga. Moreover, beginning in the sixties, despite the prominence of

Japanese filmmakers like Kurosawa Akira, the Japanese film industry experienced

a sharp decline in box office sales due to the popularity of television and

Hollywood films. Subsequently, animation, which costs far less to produce than

live action, secured a considerable number of Japan's cinematic talent. By the late

1960s, animation had become immensely popular. In 1989, Otomo Katsuhiro's

breakthrough animated feature *Akira* (1988) opened in theatres across the globe to

enormous critical acclaim. This brilliant and specifically Japanese apocalyptic

vision was the first truly adult animated feature film. Later, during the 1990s

sophisticated and beautiful anime such as Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell*

(1995), Anno Hideaki's television series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-97), and

Miyazaki Hayao's *Princess Mononoke* (1997) appeared, to name only a few.

Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* remains to this day the highest grossing

film in Japan's history, bested only for a short time by American blockbuster

Titanic, and later by Miyazaki's own American Academy Award Winner *Spirited

Away* (2001) which took the honor for Best Animated Film of 2002. Since then,

sales generated by *Princess Mononoke* have surpassed each of them. With the

success of *Princess Mononoke* in Japan, where it won the Japanese version of the

Best Picture Oscar, the Japan Academy Prize Picture of the Year, it is not

surprising that Disney Studios made a deal with Miyazaki's Ghibli Studios to

market and distribute Ghibli feature films. Helen McCarthy (1999) comments that

Miyazaki, unlike many animation directors including deceased Walt Disney, is an animator who corrects and redraws many of his junior colleagues' drawings himself", in addition to creating new artwork (p. 33). In April of 2005, Miyazaki was placed on Time magazine's list of "The World's 100 Most Influential People," a testament to his enduring creative genius.

Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli and many other animation studios use a process called cel animation. McCarthy (1999) explains the process as beginning with copying a sequence of images onto celluloid and coloring them in. Afterward, the cells are photographed and the "film projected fast enough to give the illusion of movement" (p. 32). Many studios use computer animation as well as cel animation, often combining the two; however, a few studios, like Ghibli abstain from the use of computers as much as possible. For instance, when *Princess Mononoke* was running behind schedule in the final week before its release date, it was necessary to digitally ink and paint almost ten percent of the total one hundred and forty-four thousand frames of animation. Notably, the greater part of *Princess Mononoke* was still produced the old-fashioned way, each frame drawn and colored by hand. Indeed, Miyazaki's films have a distinctive quality, which can be directly linked to the director's own handwork (p. 33).

While Miyazaki is indisputably the Japanese animator of greatest renown, his contemporary, Oshii Mamoru, has the distinction of directing the first animated film to be included in the final selection for the prestigious Palme d'Or at Cannes. Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004) is a breathtaking sequel to his earlier

classic *Ghost in the Shell* (1995). For *Innocence* Oshii uses sophisticated computer animation to render his intricately complex and beautiful scenery, as well as mesmerizing action sequences that cannot be rivaled. Indeed, the American company Dreamworks purchased U.S. distribution rights while the film was yet unfinished. Amongst other themes, this film, like the original cyberpunk *Ghost in the Shell*, questions what will happen as humans continue to evolve through technology and the interface between organism and mechanism becomes more deeply invested with existential and psychological questions about the reality and origin of the self. Anime's penetrating investigations of such themes have inspired me to focus on various forms of apocalypse in anime for this thesis.

I am grateful to Ebert and Roeper who introduced me to anime during their review of personal Oscar picks in 2002 preceding the 2003 Academy Awards. Their selection in the animation category, Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001), intrigued me enough to rent it for my son who was then three years old. The next weekend we viewed *Princess Mononoke*, which quickly became my son's favorite film and one of mine as well. When I asked my son if he would rather watch Disney or Miyazaki films the answer was emphatically Miyazaki. He responded, "In *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke* the characters have really strong, good friendships [referring to the main characters] and I like the spirits, they are really interesting and neat!" I suspect the friendships forged with effort and sacrifice in Miyazaki's narratives are more meaningful to him than the characters who seem to effortlessly form couples and then marry at the end of Disney versions of fairy

tales. (Nonetheless, I do not mean to disparage Disney, whose animation has always been enjoyed in my home.)

The spiritual beings abundant in Miyazaki films populate many anime, just as Shinto, the indigenous Japanese faith embraces thousands of entities. Once we had discovered Anno Hideaki's apocalyptic masterpiece *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1996), of which only the first few episodes are child friendly, my son (when appropriate) and I enthusiastically viewed every anime that peaked our curiosities. I began viewing anime classics, such as Otomo's *Akira* (1988), Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988), Rintaro's *Metropolis* (2001), and Nakamura's *Serial Experiments: Lain* (1998) to name just a few. Indeed, I began to note that I was particularly, but not exclusively, drawn to narratives that investigate our relationships with technology and apocalypse.

My interest has not waned, as is it would be impossible to exhaust the steadily increasing number of critically important new titles, not to mention the pantheon of classic films and series I have not yet viewed. It is the sophistication, quality, and diversity of this genre that has compelled me to write a related thesis; and as mentioned above, it is anime's incisive treatment of apocalypse narratives, so relevant today to a global audience, which I find most provocative. Indeed, it is anime's status as an important global entity that makes it so unusual and significant.

Anime's importance as a global product is estimable. In fact, it is growing steadily in popularity each year. Clubs dedicated to anime are prevalent at high

schools, colleges, and universities, providing a ready-to-use pop culture genre with incredible potential for cross-cultural literacies. Japan has acknowledged the importance of manga and anime in its Education White Paper (2000) stating, "anime and manga are among the most important forms of artistic expression in the modern Japanese cultural environment" (cited in Ruh, 2001, *The Function of Woman-Authored Manga in Japanese Society*, Online). According to Napier (2001), "In Japan over the last decade anime has been increasingly seen as an intellectually challenging art form, as the number of scholarly writings on the subject will attest" (p. 4). Anime is an extremely sophisticated medium of expression, which explores such contemporary issues as "technological development, gender identity, and relations between the sexes, and the problematic role of history in contemporary culture" (Napier, 2005, pp. 10-11). In Japan, anime is a pop culture phenomenon and presently it has become a global one as well.

According to Ahn Jiwon (2004), an interesting result of global anime consumption may be a real shift in subjectivity, from a location-specific one, to a global one. For instance, collective memories or nostalgia for childhood viewing experiences may readily cross borders in connection with the consumption of global media texts (p. 2) and their related products, i.e. games, cards, etc. Ahn refers to the latent fans of anime as belonging to globalized "imagined communities" in the sense that these communities "retain a certain comradeship based on the sensibility—imagination, frustration, memories and longing—

mobilized by anime texts" (p. 4). In fact, anime is Japan's leading cultural export. Regarding manga and anime's global proportions, Ahn provides the following data:

> About 23% of the entire printed materials in Japan are reportedly comics; more than 250 animation programs per week are aired on television; an average of 1700 (short or feature length) animation films are produced per year, and 2200 animated television programs produced are per year—in other words, an average of 6 new works produced every day—which makes Japan the number one producer of animated video and television programs that comprise 65% of world production (p. 3).

Hence, it is not surprising that anime is a pop culture product with a huge impact, one that crosses borders and ethnicities.

However, why is this genre from a distinctly different culture so popular with global viewers and Western viewers in particular? As anyone who has searched for anime will attest, DVD rental locations and retail DVD stores have whole sections devoted to anime. Many popular titles have been released domestically. Indeed, while animation is generally considered a children's medium in North America, anime from Japan offers the same diverse palette as Hollywood live-action films—everything from children's features to thrillers, comedy, romance, adventure, porn, science fiction, and fantasy. Although an exotic "otherness" of anime may account for some of its appeal, it cannot be summed up that neatly.

A survey prepared by Napier (2001) in 2000, and submitted to a sampling of subjects in the United States, including university students, revealed that aesthetic quality, thematic complexity, intricate narratives, well-developed complex characters, and mature subject matter presented without the politically correct sugar-coating attracted followers (*Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, pp. 249-253). Of course, some R-rated anime includes extremes of sexuality and violence hitherto unseen in Western animation and could be part of the fascination for some viewers. However, Napier's survey revealed that though viewers may find such fare exciting, it was of minor importance to the majority of anime fans. Notably, pornography in the best of anime is often used to bring up questions of gender construction and relations, as well as "the relation of gender, power, and control to technology, tradition, and transition" (Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, p. 64). In general, gender relations are often problematized through anime. In fact, I contend that anime is frequently a progressively feminist film medium. Perhaps this is characteristic of artistic enterprise from a society in which women's roles are metamorphosing with increasingly feminist attitudes (Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, p. 64).

Finally, perhaps it is what Napier (2005) terms anime's seeming "statelessness" or "nationless" identity that is its greatest appeal (p. 26). She maintains that although the West considers Japan "exotic" and "other" and great disparities still exist between the two cultures, Japan is heavily influenced by Western culture and is no longer specifically Japanese. Characters in anime have a

predominantly "hybrid" appearance which Napier calls a "post ethnic identity" (p. 26). In fact, she concludes that anime is the perfect postmodern genre, as it provides an imaginative site of resistance that transcends any specific culture, as well as a safe space for identity exploration (p. 27). Indeed, it is possible to view and interpret anime from a Western perspective for its main themes and narratives and benefit from the experience. However, ideally, as I previously mentioned, since most anime exhibit Japanese specific references, I suggest that viewers would profit from at least some research into Japanese culture.

Is that everything? It seemed like he was saying a lot more.
Sophia Coppola (from *Lost in Translation*)

Although I am in no position to adequately explain what is lost in translation, I believe that this is an important issue, and while it is not my focus, I will continue to research this problem area throughout the process of writing this paper, and address situations as they arise. As Kawai (1988), whose scholarship draws comparisons between Japanese and western psyches forewarns, "In symbolism, some areas are universal while others are influenced by cultural differences. One who fails to keep this in mind is apt to err seriously..." (p. 26). For this reason, whenever possible, teachers as well as students of anime ought to be made aware of cultural differences that may influence the narrative. I will

mention some of the fundamental differences between Japanese and Western

worldviews here, which I will later discuss in my thesis.

Certainly, Shinto and Buddhist philosophies and ideologies play a large part

in forming Japanese perspectives. Related symbolism is present in many instances

beyond the scope of Western viewers. For instance, at the beginning of Miyazaki's

Spirited Away the family drives by ancient statues of Shinto deities called *jizo*

partially buried in the ground along the road. *Jizo* represent compassionate souls or

bosatsu that protect children (Gilles Poitras, 1999, pp. 13, 55). A Japanese

audience will understand that no harm will come to the main character, eleven-

year-old Chihiro, even as she encounters frightening entities throughout the film,

whereas a Western viewer will not.

Nonetheless, in an interview with Helen McCarthy (1999) director

Miyazaki reveals, "I'm only worried about how my films would be viewed in

Japan. Frankly, I don't worry too much about how it plays elsewhere" (p. 190).

When asked whether he is concerned about English translations he responds:

> After all, for years now people in Japan have been seeing things and
>
> reading things about England, probably by people who have never been to
>
> England and do not even speak English, but they've still enjoyed what's
>
> been written and have taken something out of it to a certain extent…What I
>
> really hope is that at least a minimum of people will say 'there's something
>
> other than the place I live, things that I'm familiar with, there is something
>
> else that has value to it (cited in McCarthy, p. 191).

This wish to expand people's horizons, while acknowledging that the author has no control over how people will interpret his/ her work, problematizes the notion of sharing cultural products, and makes the call for multiliteracies and multicultural education even more urgent.

Patrick Drazen (2003) presents an example of a glaring mistranslation. In Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* (1997), the monk Jiko insults someone's soup by saying bluntly, "this soup tastes like hot water." Neil Gaiman who is responsible for the English dubbing has Jiko comparing the soup to "donkey piss." Drazen comments that the translation says more about Gaiman's culture than it does about Miyazaki's (p. 35). Indeed, as Marnie O'Neill (1998) maintains, "different ideologies construct different relationships between the writer, the text, and the reader in terms of production and legitimation of meaning" (p. 19). While this issue will never be completely resolved, it could be minimized.

Although meaning may be more carefully conveyed through vigilant translation and adherence to the original intent of the author, there are still aesthetic and cultural disparities. One such disparity is the Japanese preference for ambiguity and open-endings, which, importantly, leave room for speculation and interpretation, as opposed to American film endings that characteristically include explanation and closure, and more often than not, end on a *feel good* note. This deliberate ambiguity in Japanese storytelling is often frustrating to Western viewers as narratives are left unexpectedly without resolution. Further, Napier (2003) comments that Hollywood endings which have a tendency to emphasize the

positive (while this is not a terrible thing in itself), do not help viewers to deal with tragedy in real life circumstances. She maintains, "Japanese visions do not allow us to move on nearly so easily. They insist on rubbing our noses in pain and suffering, emphasizing both the sadness and the necessity of sacrifice even, or perhaps especially, when we don't know whether there will be a happy ending" (*Into the Labyrinth*, Online). I maintain that since many anime endings are often purposely vague, less reassuring, and frequently unsettling, they are also thought provoking, particularly when viewers must complete the narrative themselves. This type of purposeful ambiguity relates importantly to the concept of active spectatorship mentioned above, which requires students to reflect on events throughout the narrative, rather than on how it ends.

In addition, anime characters are typically complex, possessing a variety of both good and bad qualities, which makes them difficult to differentiate or categorize as good or evil by many Western viewers who are used to characters in popular media that are more clearly represented as one or the other. Additionally, while many Western popular culture narratives tend to close with the main characters getting what they deserve within the moral universe of the story, in anime, characters may not be rewarded or punished as expected. The hero/heroine may simply go back to his or her daily life as if nothing had happened, despite the knowledge or understanding gleaned from his/her experience. Further, it is often difficult to ascertain whether anime heroes or heroines have succeeded in their enterprise. Once again, such ambiguous and complicated characters also call for

greater intellectual participation from student viewers, and provide material for pedagogy.

Moreover, although it is not the case in the anime I discuss, in some Japanese stories, the heroes/heroines may die and still their efforts may not appear to have changed anything. Therefore, while Western heroes or heroines (heroes most often) have adventures in which they save the day and are duly acknowledged, the Japanese hero may even die without recognition. In fact, in some cases the story may seem to end in the same place as it began. As Kawai (1988) explains, unexpected death or disappearance of a character causes an arrestment to the narrative and awakens a sense of *aware*, a term which translates as "softly despairing beauty" (p. 22). In this case, the sorrow would be awakened in the mind of the anime viewer. The sorrow felt by the viewer is thought to complete the narrative. This aesthetic is difficult for most Western viewers to appreciate and understand, as the story would simply seem to be unfinished.

In keeping with the attitude of aware, sacrificing one's life in service to the group is greatly respected. In anime, heroes willing to put themselves in jeopardy for the greater good are often females. Female characters, including the *shojo*, meaning "little female" (Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 2001, p. 118), a girl in the "liminal" state between girlhood and womanhood of approximately ten to fourteen years of age (sometimes older), are frequently the heroes in both adult and children's anime. Many scholars consider that *shojo* popularity is due to the ability of the Japanese people to "project issues of identity

construction" onto an unthreatening canvas (Napier, p. 120). By comparison, Japanese males have much less room to move outside of constrictions and responsibilities placed on them by an extremely competitive workplace (Napier, p. 119). In that regard, the *shojo* and the female in general has greater freedom to metamorphose into the fantastic; hence, for example the magical girl genre, of which *Sailor Moon* is the most widely known in North America.

The shojo could also be considered a manifestation of the Japanese worship of *kawaii*/cute (cute emerges in everything from "Hello Kitty" to adorable monsters) that seems to be popular with all age groups. However, on a more somber note, the appeal of shojo and kawaii characters in short schoolgirl skirts and skimpy outfits is also popular with older men with pedophilic inclinations. Anime *hentai*/pornography is also very popular in Japan, and anime porn featuring under-aged females is particularly problematic. Pornography aside, in mainstream anime *shojo* heroines vary greatly from the mysterious, quiet Ayanami Rei in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* to the cute, silly, but earnest *Sailor Stars*.

San, the Princess Mononoke in the film of the same name, is considered by some to be a shojo; however, she seems to be a little older than the typical shojo female. In general, Miyazaki has an impressive oeuvre of *shojo* and older female characters with distinctive personalities. Napier (2005) describes Miyazaki's female protagonists as independent, steadfast, and empowered. She argues that by attributing such characteristics to females, "Miyazaki throws these attributes into sharp relief, forcing the viewer to be aware of these qualities at a level of

perception that a more conventional male protagonist would be unlikely to stimulate" (p. 156). Thus, as she suggests, we are forced "to become estranged from what we take for granted and to open up to new possibilities of what the world could be" (pp. 155-56). In a similar respect, narratives that feature cyborg and robot protagonists work the same way, as these narratives force us to perceive human participation in events from an alternative point of view.

In fact, anime narratives do not favor human characters over machines. Narratives often show greater sympathy to cyborg or robot characters. As a rule, anime problematizes relationships between humans and the sentient beings they manufacture—robots, cyborgs, and so forth, often showing humans losing control to the cyborgs or ruthlessly turning against them. Cyborgs, on the other hand, are generally able to demonstrate a greater capacity for fairness because of their diminished propensity for emotional negative behaviors such as those spawned by jealousy or the desire for greater power. Therefore, it is not unusual for cyborgs to behave more humanely than humans do. Viewers are forced to meditate on what it means to be human, and to witness how cruel humans can be from the victim's perspective. It is not uncommon to see cyborgs and robots in the role of slaves and treated with appalling cruelty. In fact, similar to Ridley Scott's masterpiece *Blade Runner* (1982) such incidents in anime could be interpreted as a symbolic representation of how human overlords have always treated slaves, most notoriously, African slaves. Cyborg slaves in anime are usually portrayed as sentient beings, and like human slaves, they experience love, fear, and humiliation,

although their emotions are denied them as well. However, it would be fair to say that anime also expresses the human capacity for love, creativity, and emotional bonding, which above all else gives humanity its *raisons d'etre*.

Interestingly, although it seems to be taboo in Hollywood, anime human protagonists sometimes form romantic relationships with cyborgs and robots. The transgressive nature of such relationships stretches the parameters of possibility and allows for a complexity of questions to form about our definitions of human and non-human. Imagine that in James Cameron's *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) Sarah Connor fell in love with the Terminator robot. What kinds of fresh ideas would love between the woman and the terminator bring to the story line, and what sorts of implications would that have for humanity? By comparison, at the end of the Aramaki's (2004) *Appleseed/Appurushido*, it is implied that the heroine Deunen Knute will rekindle her love affair with her estranged boyfriend Briareos, even though his mind has been transplanted into a mechanical body with little resemblance to a human's. It is also suggested that bioroids will have offspring amongst themselves and with humans and begin a new race. In which case, will humans survive and in what form? Considering how such human and posthuman societies might develop in the future is a provocative topic for discussion with our students who may witness such relationships in their own future.

In another anime, Akiyama's cyberpunk classic *Armitage III: Dual-Matrix* (2002), the protagonist Naomi Armitage, an advanced cyborg cop, falls in love and has a child with her human partner on the force, Ross Sylibus. Until he gets to

know Armitage, Sylibus loathes robots as most humans do. Similar to *Appleseed*, this anime begs many questions. Naomi mournfully voices one of them, "If mankind doesn't want us, then why did they create us?" This is an old question that runs all the way back to Shelley's raging monster from *Frankenstein*, which, given the spark of life in a laboratory could be considered literature's original cyborg.

I believe that acceptance of the posthuman is one of the greatest disparities between Western and Japanese perspectives. I maintain that while a Western perspective holds that technology and humanity are separate and distinct (except in horror films), the Japanese aesthetic is more accepting of the human/machine hybrid as an inevitable aspect of evolution—for better or for worse in some respects–but inevitable. I argue that by viewing anime we (educators and students) may be open to more positive and creative ways of shaping the future. Certainly, we have not yet discovered the best use for technology, which may be to repair the damage we have already inflicted on our planet or live without damaging it further. (This topic is enormously relevant to students who have inherited the catastrophic problems older generations have created.) However, just as certainly, the Japanese people have experienced a most notorious misuse of technology—the horrific bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War.

Unquestionably, integral to any discussion about apocalypse in anime is the unimaginable horror of the Atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on August 6th and 9th in 1945. Indeed, Jerome Shapiro (2002) maintains, "The

horrendous medical and social problems caused by the nuclear weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki have made Japanese films about the bomb urgently important to Western critics and scholars, particularly the Americans who have great influence over scholarly opinion about Japan throughout much of the rest of the world" (p. 251). It is important for students of apocalyptic anime to be aware of this aspect of Japanese history. The postnuclear is a Japanese aesthetic, as the Japanese are the only country to have experienced an attack with the atom bomb, and this aesthetic often appears in anime.

While *hibakusha* (a term meaning those who have experienced the atomic bomb) and apocalyptic anime in general deliver narratives that describe horrendous events and give form to the unspeakable, they are often sprinkled with an unexpected measure of humor. Indeed, the Japanese add humor to situations that seem unusual to us. It is apparent in the most austere haiku and to conversations about spiritual awakening between monks and students. Humor is thought to add warmth and brevity even to the most sober situations. Further, Japanese humor extends to a love of the festival or the Japanese equivalent *matsuri*. Similar to the western notion of carnival, the Japanese festival is a performance for the Shinto gods in the spirit of anarchy, which operates as a temporary respite from conformity and a leveling of the social order (Napier, 2005, p. 30). The festival mode, along with the elegiac mode including *aware,* is often apparent within apocalypse themed anime. These perspectives give anime its deeply rooted Japanese sensibility.

While I can only discuss the Japanese perspective in a most limited fashion, I have tried to outline a few of the philosophical and aesthetic differences that are apparent to me. I would also argue that these qualities are not exclusive, and do not belong solely to Japanese filmmakers or to the Japanese. However, while anime has many outside influences, I believe that it will always contain the essence of its cultural, philosophical, and aesthetics roots at its core although Japanese society is changing rapidly and is itself a melting pot to some degree. Further, as previously discussed, the best of anime features such qualities as complicated characters, complex themes, deliberate ambiguities, and open-endings, as well as philosophically and psychologically penetrating situations that ultimately lead to active and reflective viewing from local and global audiences, and students in particular. My investigation of selected anime for this thesis compares and contrasts narratives that include a variety of these characteristics. I will outline the various methods I use for examining these narratives below, beginning with a description of my main sources and theorists.

For my analysis, I have used a variety of book and Internet sources, as well as anime specific criticism and theory, posthuman and cyborg theory, literary and film theory, and native Japanese cultural, literary and film theories. Although there are a number of excellent scholars in each area, I have consulted two main theorists for their contributions to the areas of anime criticism and cyborg/posthuman theory- Susan J. Napier and Donna J. Haraway respectively.

Napier's scholarship has influenced my writing in a broad sense throughout, but particularly in chapters one and two. It has partially guided my writing in two areas: first, to support one of the key arguments or claims of this thesis, which is that anime is valuable as a means of dealing with catastrophe and change, and second to my examination of *Princess Mononoke* in Chapter One (especially to the discussion of the film's specifically Japanese roots). Of express importance to these corresponding areas are Napier's (2003) article, *Into the Labyrinth: Technology, Modernity and Apocalypse in Japanese Animation*, (Online), and Chapter 12, "*Princess Mononoke*: Fantasy, the Feminine, and the Myth of Progress," in *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (2005). As mentioned above, the former describes Napier's arguments for the use of anime as a tool for what could be called a 'therapeutics for catastrophe.' She claims,

> Catastrophe is "cool" at an aesthetic distance but it also fundamentally terrifying—disturbing us at the most basic core of our being, our desire for security. Not simply by writing about it but also by reading it, viewing it, or experiencing it vicariously, the reader/viewer does not just "buy it off," he or she also *works it through*…Clearly, in this argument the representation of catastrophe is a therapeutic event. (*Into the Labyrinth*, Online).

Her chapter on *Princess Mononoke* (mentioned above) provides reasons why the narrative is uniquely Japanese, and how and why it is relevant to a global audience. I believe that *Princess Mononoke* can be instructive for students as its narrative is

analogous to that period in the history of any industrialized nation, including our own, when humans began to destroy and manipulate nature for their own livelihood. A discussion of this occurrence is useful, not necessarily to denigrate human conduct, but to understand past errors and re-shape the future accordingly. Napier also provides a strong discussion of the strategies the director employs to defamiliarize and subvert traditional narratives that relate to Japan's Muromachi Period, the setting for *Princess Mononoke*. Helen McCarthy's *Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation* was also helpful for this chapter, along with many additional resources.

Second, in connection to anime narratives that describe futuristic, posthuman worlds, I make frequent reference to Donna Haraway's (1991) seminal essay "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" published in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Haraway's theories guide my discussion of cyborg or posthuman theory taken up in Chapters Two through Four. In her manifesto Haraway (1991) states, "By the late twentieth century, our time a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (p. 150). Haraway claims that humanity has become increasingly dependent and inseparable from the machines he/she creates Thus, despite a general ambivalence toward our own steady evolution to posthuman, a metamorphosis which Hayles (1999) claims both "evokes terror and excites pleasure" (p. 283), truly, there is no turning back or turning away. Haraway

maintains that the cyborg can emancipate us by eliminating such dichotomous constructs as human/machine, natural/artificial, truth/fabrication, reality/illusion, and male/female. She claims that the cyborg can disturb these totalizing identities, as it is a creature "uncoupled from organic reproduction" (1991, p. 150). Such concepts that define the cyborg, and by extension the robot, as a liberating agent are integral to the anime I discuss. I will interrogate how the anime discussed in these chapters prove or disprove Haraway's theories as they relate to character analysis. I also discuss ideas put forward by a number of other theorists who have developed and expanded on Haraway's ideas. Theorists I include are Claudia Springer, Mobina Hashmi, N. Katherine Hayles, Sadie Plant, Jennifer Gonzalez, Sharalyn Orbaugh, and Steven T. Brown, as well as others.

Both theorists, Napier and Haraway – as well as many others – inform my response to the five central questions outlined in the paragraph below. These five questions form the basis for my investigation in each of the chapters. The questions are rooted in the exploration of character response to crises that are precipitated by apocalyptic events. I commence my analysis for each chapter in the manner described here. My examination of each chapter is a two-part process. First, I apply the same set of five questions to my reading of the film/s in each chapter (as discussed), and second, I use my analysis to isolate three to five salient themes or topics established in the anime that will frame the discussion in each chapter.

My original questions are as follows: 1. What is the nature of the apocalypse in each anime and how is it related to technology? 2. How does the manifestation of apocalypse in the anime affect the central characters—human, or posthuman when applicable? Specifically, how do the characters respond to the situation and to each other? 3. Does the apocalypse narrative stimulate explorations of personal identity and provide an opportunity for creativity, growth, change, or renewal along with a reassessment of morals and values in any part for the central characters in the anime or for society as a whole? If yes: why and how? How is it manifested? If no, is it because the narrative is purposely open-ended and left for the viewer to complete eliciting an "active spectatorship." (Typically, anime narratives leave the viewer with as many questions as they provide answers.) 4. In what ways might Japanese perspectives manifested in the selected anime be different from our own (if and when applicable)? 5. How can apocalypse narratives in anime cause viewers to reflect on their ideas about the world and themselves, particularly human relationships with technology?

In each chapter, the questions relate to different types of apocalypse explored in the various anime. I use the term apocalypse in a broad sense to include narratives that describe world-ending as well as more personal life-altering or revelatory events. The narratives are related to three genres that frequently overlap: fantasy (narratives involving magic or the supernatural to some degree i.e. gods, heroes, and monsters), science fiction (speculative narratives based on current or future technologies and science), and cyberpunk (frequently dystopian narratives

featuring advanced technologies and breakdown in the social order, especially involving artificial intelligence and corrupt mega-corporations). I discuss the impact of technology and apocalypse on the central characters and where applicable, on society as well. I will examine how anime explores apocalypse as a catalyst for character self-discovery and renewal in some cases. To facilitate this discussion, I arrange the chapters in a movement that highlights a progression— imperfectly defined – which describes humanity's dependent and complex involvement with technology and contemporaneous estrangement from nature.

I begin in Chapter One with a discussion of Miyazaki Hayao's *Princess Mononoke /Mononokehime* (1997), which describes an environmental apocalypse initiated by the use of rudimentary technologies. The chapters progress from this ecological type of apocalypse to the exploration of human relationships with machines that include various types of artificial intelligence. Chapters Two and Three explore human relations with cyborgs in Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell/Kokaku kidotai* (1995), and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence/Innosensu: Kokaku kidotai* (2004) respectively. Chapter Four investigates the problematic relationships between robots and humans in Ochi Hiroyuki's *Armitage III* (1994) OVA (original video animation direct to DVD), Aramaki Shinji's *Appleseed / Appurushido* (2004), and Maeda Mahiro's *The Second Renaissance Part 1* and *Part 2* from the *Animatrix* (2003). With the exception of *Princess Mononoke*, which can be viewed by a younger audience (although there is some graphic violence), the

anime examined are most appropriate for older adolescent and adult viewers. I will

provide a brief synopsis of each chapter to illustrate the topics I have outlined.

The extraordinarily beautiful *Princess Mononoke* discussed in Chapter One

depicts a battle between the human dwellers of a fifteenth century iron-smelting

town on the edge of a great forest and the ancient beast gods who have reigned

there since time immemorial. Ashitaka, the hero, and San, the wild princess of the

story must work together, if only for a short time, to prevent a full-scale war and

the slaying of the forest creatures. Even though a human kills the forest god of life-

and-death, the earth is rejuvenated as the god and the land begins a cycle of rebirth.

The film ends on an unresolved but somewhat hopeful note, as the humans and the

forest denizens decide to accept and respect their differences, and conduct

themselves in a more kind and respectful way in the future.

Unlike Disney versions of fairy tales, there is no marriage between the hero

and heroine, Ashitaka and San. Instead, the lovers decide to live apart and visit

sometimes. Their attitude shows respect for diversity and allows friendship to

bridge their differences without the desire to assimilate the other. As Napier

suggests, this ending, which upholds rather than collapses tensions, could be an

analogy for multiculturalism.

I gathered information from many scholars and sources for this chapter, but

the central theorists that guided my discussions were Susan Napier (mentioned

above), as well as commentary from interviews with the director, Miyazaki Hayao.

My analysis of *Princess Mononoke* is framed by four key themes: Ashitaka's quest

(renewal); the defamiliarization of Japanese history, including the non-traditional use of female characters; the beginning of human estrangement from the natural world, and subjugation of the natural world (the final battle) and loss.

The anime examined in Chapters Two through Four explore hypothetical and problematic relationships among organic human characters, human-machine hybrid characters, and robots (also referred to as dolls) in imaginative and possibly immanent settings. These anime take up ethical, philosophical, and spiritual concerns while questioning the consequences of advancements in artificial intelligence, particularly those leading to exploitation and coercion of characters through criminal activity and autocratic institutions of various types. These narratives could be broadly classified as cyberpunk.

This examination begins in the second chapter with *Ghost in the Shell.* The narrative centers on protagonist Major Kusanagi Motoko, a beautiful and dangerous cyborg operative and leader of Special Government Forces Section 9. The setting is a cityscape resembling the market area of Hong Kong in the year 2029, when cyborgs appear to be in control of society. Kusanagi Motoko's journey is deeply introspective and the film focuses on this character's issues of identity and marginalization as well as on the larger social picture. Although there are exciting and violent episodes, *Ghost in the Shell* is just as often slow and elegiac. Much of the narrative is dialogue-driven, predominantly as central character Kusanagi contemplates her notions of self. My discussion is organized by five key themes: the virtual is embedded in the everyday, technologically advanced bodies are easier

to control, defining cyborg identity, the relevance of being human, and transformation. Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" is central to my analysis of this anime.

Chapter Three is an exploration of the sequel to *Ghost in the Shell*, *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. In this narrative, which is as much fantastical as cyberpunk, Kusanagi Motoko has disappeared into the Net while maintaining a close connection to former partner Batou whose character has been placed in the lead role. Together with his new human partner Togusa, Batou must solve a crime that leads him to an underground labyrinth of cybercriminal activity. It is almost impossible for the pair to determine real from virtual experience. Like *Ghost in the Shell*, central to the narrative are character discussions quoting from diverse sources about philosophical and ethical issues concerning human and artificial intelligence. Comparable to Chapters One and Two my analysis of the anime is framed by a discussion of three main themes, which are as follows: the importance of preserving humanity in the center of extreme technological change; the human obsession with creating robots in their own image and its repercussions; and notions of innocence as it relates to different types of existence- human, animal, and robot. As indicated above, Haraway's cyborg theories are pertinent to the discussion of posthuman and human relations as well as to definitions of cyborg identity.

Chapter Four discusses three science fiction anime. The main focus is *Armitage III*, which is compared to *Appleseed,* and *The Second Renaissance Part 1*

and *Part 2* from the *Animatrix* (2003). The hero in *Armitage III* is Naomi Armitage, a law enforcement agent who is also a *Third* style robot, an identity that she must hide as the government has ordered the eradication of all Thirds. The leader of the government is a female human character who follows her own feminist but inhumane objectives in her choice to destroy all female robots that can bear children and threaten the sanctity of women in that role.

Appleseed and *The Second Renaissance* also explore character relationships between humans and robots. *Appleseed* centers on female protagonist Deunan Knute, a member of the armed forces, who awakens to find herself in an arguably utopian megalopolis following nuclear war on Earth in the 22 century. She discovers that relationships between posthuman and human characters are not as copacetic as they initially seem to be. The *Second Renaissance Part I* and *II* are short narratives co-written by the Wachowski brothers as a prequel to their blockbuster film series beginning with the *Matrix* (1999 et. al). The documentary style handling of the plot parallels fictional events in the anime to disturbing historical incidents from our own past. My analysis in this chapter is framed by three key themes as follows: exploitation and abuse of robots; exploration of what it means to be human and how we differ or are the same as machines, and an investigation of how characters are treated differently according to gender. As mentioned, Haraway's cyborg theories are integral to the discussion of the relationship between the robot and human characters. The dystopian worlds portrayed in these narratives reveal that humans are the victims of their own

hubristic choices, but also that the possibility exists to merge with technology in remarkable and imaginative ways.

My thesis conclusion summarizes, connects, and compares themes and thematic development. I relate the themes and characters to conditions and events in our own world and discuss how the anime may portend our own future. I also discuss real life technologies such current progress in robotics, as well as the doll culture in Japan. I also include an Appendix that offers some brief curricular ideas for the inclusion of anime, entitled- Pedagogical Implications and a Few Applications.

Once again, I believe that the study of apocalyptic anime is timely and significant, and an investigation of anime characters can help students to understand and connect with their experience of technology and adversity. Our own future may take many directions other than those in the posthuman worlds portrayed in the anime, but these narratives can be useful as a springboard for innumerable discussions, making room for active spectatorship. Further, I suggest anime can help educators to reflect on the world we live in and how it relates to student needs. This thesis is a response to my overarching question: How do apocalypse narratives in anime cause us to reflect on our own ideas about our world and ourselves, particularly to our relationships with technology? I believe this thesis demonstrates that apocalyptic anime can be a valuable local/global product that, when set within appropriate curriculum, is a worthwhile inclusion to a senior-level program of study.

Chapter One

Ecological Apocalypse in *Princess Mononoke*

This is a world in which technology cannot be erased or ignored but rather must be

dealt with as an unpleasant but permanent fact of life.

Susan Napier

Here lies the meaning of making film towards the confusing era of the 21st century.

We are not trying to solve the global problems.

There cannot be a happy ending to the fight between the raging gods and humans.

However, even in the middle of hatred and killings, there are things worth living for.

A wonderful meeting or a beautiful thing can exist.

Miyazaki Hayao

If you opened a map of Japan and asked me where is the forest of the Shishigami

that Ashitaka went to I couldn't tell you, but I do believe that somehow

traces of that kind of place still exist inside one's soul.

Miyazaki Hayao

Miyazaki Hayao's *Princess Mononoke /Mononoke Hime* (1997) comments on

the theme of ecological apocalypse. This is achieved through the director's unique

vision of fourteenth century Japan. Chapter One examines this theme through an analysis of the film's central human and supernatural characters. The crisis in *Princess Mononoke* is primarily manufactured by human exploitation of nature – particularly through the employment of technology. In *Princess Mononoke* Miyazaki continues to express his concern for issues such as the environment and estrangement from the natural world. In addition, *Princess Mononoke* explores Miyazaki's recurring theme of loss, particularly loss of nature, spirituality, and lifestyle that this apocalypse engenders. I argue that despite the film's arbitrary upbeat (but ambiguous) ending – a hallmark of Miyazaki anime – *Princess Mononoke* finishes with feelings of great loss for both humans and the natural world. I suggest that it represents our actual loss in the real world and the impossibility of taking things back to a time before we took our world for granted. It is a cautionary tale; by calling our attention to what we have already lost, it is a warning against losing more (Napier, 2005, p. 236).

Princess Mononoke represents that moment in time –analogous to any industrialized nation in our world – when human beings begin to abuse the natural world in the name of progress. In fact, similar to our own predicament, human characters in the film are blindly and perhaps selfishly, sowing the seeds of environmental calamity. However, Miyazaki does not vilify the human characters in *Princess Mononoke* (or human beings in our own world) who cause ecological problems, but instead considers the human impulse to advance and strive for more. As Miyazaki's character, Jiko Bou, a treacherous but realistic monk, philosophizes

"It's human nature to want everything between heaven and earth" (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997).

Further, *Princess Mononoke* also solicits a type of multiculturalism. Saeki Junko claims, the film suggests a "global standard in a period of ...'internationalization' in which countries continue to maintain their identity while accepting the inevitable need for exchange with the Other" (cited in Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 2001, p. 191). Indeed, *Princess Mononoke* promotes working together as separate but cooperative nations to implement solutions to global crises. This topic is tremendously important to contemporary high school students who are today actively lamenting and even blaming their parents for the mistakes previous generations have made.

My examination of *Princess Mononoke* follows the same two-step format I will use for each chapter. First, to guide my exploration and analysis of this film (and subsequent films in this thesis), I will ask a set of five questions. Second, I will use my analysis to isolate the salient themes in the anime that will frame my discussion of each particular chapter. The questions (the same for each chapter) are as follows: What is the nature of the apocalypse in this film? How does the manifestation of the apocalypse affect central characters? Does the apocalypse narrative stimulate explorations of personal identity and provide an opportunity for creativity, growth, change, or renewal? In what ways might Japanese perspectives manifested in the selected anime be different from our own (if applicable)? Finally, does the anime leave us with questions that are relevant outside of the anime? My analysis of

Princess Mononoke is framed by four key themes: Ashitaka's quest (renewal); the defamiliarization of Japanese history, including the non-traditional use of female characters; the beginning of human estrangement from the natural world, and subjugation of the natural world (the final battle) and loss. Before I begin a discussion of the themes, I will briefly discuss the global significance of *Princess Mononoke,* provide a short synopsis of the film, and an introduction to the central characters.

In the new millennium, *Princess Mononoke* is still as pertinent to viewers as it was at the time of its release when the director had, with great foresight, commented, "I've come to a point where I just can't make a movie without addressing the problem of humanity as part of an ecosystem" (cited in McCarthy, 1999, p. 185). Certainly, since then, the environment has not improved but worsened and global awareness of our ecological crisis has increased. Global interest has intensified as demonstrated by the enormously popular response to Nobel Prize winner (2007) Al Gore's documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2005). Indeed, *Princess Mononoke* is a strong reminder of our long-standing ignorance in the face of the inconvenient truth to which Gore refers- the planet is not ours to exploit. Translated into several languages, *Princess Mononoke* continues to be viewed in many countries. The conflict between nature and humans is the film's central theme, and perhaps because of and not in spite of the unfamiliar Japanese iconography and perspectives that give it additional distance, the film has a markedly strong emotional impact on Western viewers.

Undeniably, global audiences are exposed to increasingly complex multicultural elements in visual media such as film, television, and internet. Culture-specific iconography and stories transgress boundaries in their appeal and significance, both influencing and being influenced by the penetration of the 'Other' – and anime is an example *par excellence* of what Napier (2001) refers to as "hybridized popular culture space" (p. 470). In fact, as Napier notes,

> [anime is] a fascinating harbinger of what might be a new way of looking at national culture and identity, one that rests less on a firm separation or even interplay between self and Other, and more on the gradual acknowledgment that in the transnational postmodern world of contemporary mass culture, the Other (in terms of both national and gender divisions) might increasingly be imbricated within the self. (Confronting Master Narratives, p. 470)

Indeed, Miyazaki's films can be regarded as a potent example of the above in anime, as his films are informed by both Western and Asian influences. Yoshioka Shiro (2008) maintains, "Miyazaki does not distinguish a uniquely Japanese culture from Western culture" (p. 272). Moreover, Yoshioka claims that Miyazaki recognizes the protean nature of Japanese culture and its innumerable influences.

Princess Mononoke is a fictional story of war between humanity and the spirits of nature (as mentioned above) that marks the commencement of industrialization in the natural world. Miyazaki skillfully defamiliarizes conventional constructions of traditional fourteenth century Japan to illustrate this event. Even though the technologies that exist in the film are extremely rudimentary compared to those that

envelop us today, the narrative brilliantly points to the complex global problems we currently experience. In my viewing practice, there is not another film, animated or live-action, that captures this moment as exquisitely as this film. While *Princess Mononoke* encompasses large themes, it is also a complicated, engaging, and personal story about interesting and complex characters that struggle to survive in a tough changing world. Moreover, *Princess Mononoke* does not leave viewers with a *feel-good* ending or provide a comfortable sense of closure. Due to the ambiguous open ending (typical of many Japanese narratives), viewers, including students and educators, are left with many provocative questions that inspire critical thinking. I offer a brief synopsis of the narrative below, to familiarize readers with the basic plot and central characters.

Princess Mononoke is the story of Prince Ashitaka, an Emishi boy who kills an enraged boar god. Before it dies, the beast curses Ashitaka with a malignant scar. The boy is banished from his home and journeys west to the central kingdom. There he discovers two distinct communities: the boar's former home, a vast magnificent forest inhabited by ancient beast *kami* /spirits and presided over by the *Shishigami* /deer god, as well as a human community *Tatara Ba* /Iron Town, an iron foundry settlement led by an enigmatic Lady Eboshi. *Tatara* is at war with the forest inhabitants and is allied to some degree with the samurai landowners and the Yamato court with their shared ambition to open up the forest for their own use and to end the reign of the forest gods (Napier, 2005, p. 235). Viewers find it easy to relate to Ashitaka during his journey, as he is competent and responsible, as well as

fair and impartial in his desire to aid the other characters without taking sides. Through Ashitaka, who acts as a mediator between the opposing forces of humans and *kami gami* /wild gods, viewers learn how the violence between the humans and the natural world escalates senselessly.

In addition, *Princess Mononoke* is a love story. Ashitaka falls in love with San – the Princess Mononoke of the title – a fierce young woman of the forest, who, abandoned by her parents as a child, was raised by Moro and the wolf god clan. Ashitaka and San's story is one of friendship, compromise, and loss. Indeed, *Princess Mononoke* is a poignant tale of love and loss on a personal level for many of the characters, in addition to the broader social implications of loss already mentioned.

The principle human protagonists are Emishi Prince Ashitaka, informed by the Ainu mentioned below; San the wolf girl, who resembles a *doguu* /clay doll from the Joumon Period (pre-agriculture era); Eboshi Gozen, who is reminiscent of the *Shirabyoushi*—courtesans of the earlier Kamakura period that danced in men's attire, and Jiko Bou an amiable but devious Yamato monk. Significant non-human characters include the giant ancient gods: *Shishigami*/deer god, San's wolf mother Moro, and the ailing blind boar god, Okkoto. Together, these characters illustrate the battle between nature and humans, not as a war between good and evil but as an inevitable enduring struggle between two separate worlds that takes place in a spiritual as well as physical realms.

In some ways, the two antagonist forces in *Princess Mononoke* come together

for a brief time through the efforts of the protagonist, Ashitaka. I will briefly describe Ashitaka's quest, and how it is imbued with spiritual meaning. As described in the synopsis above, this first theme, Ashitaka's quest begins with the slaying of a boar god. The creature assaults Ashitaka's village in retaliation against all humans for its own misery as well as the suffering of the other beasts in its native forest where humans have poisoned the land and attacked forest residents. The god's pain and rage had turned it into a *tatari gami* (a wild demon) before it died. With its final words, the god Nago curses the humans to experience the "pain and hatred" it has known. Malicious spirit worms that grew from Nago's body attack Ashitaka and he is left with a terrible scar that encircles his arm and pulses with rage when he is angered. Eventually it will spread through Ashitaka's body and kill him as it did the boar. As a result, the village wise woman banishes Ashitaka from their village. She tells him he must save himself by journeying to the boar god's land and there find a cure for his condition with "eyes unclouded" (presumably, his perception unclouded by feelings of hatred and anger like those experienced by the boar).

The scar endows Ashitaka with unwanted demonic strength that is hard to control. In the most compelling demonstration, it is difficult for Ashitaka to prevent his arm from assaulting Eboshi Gozen, the leader of Iron Town, when it is revealed that it was she who had shot the iron bullet at the boar that attacked Ashitaka's village. Indeed, Ashitaka's strength resides as much in his self-control and his astonishing selflessness as it does in his combat abilities. Throughout the film,

Ashitaka generously assists those in need, such as the wounded, often without being noticed and usually without thanks. In his homeland, Ashitaka has had minimal experience with war and corruption, but on his journey, he learns how violent and self-serving humans can be. For instance, Ashitaka is directed to the Shishigami 's forest by the duplicitous monk Jiko whom Ashitaka continues to meet in more troubling circumstances.

Ashitaka's situation stirs our sympathy. Although it may have been wrong for *Ashitaka to take the boar god's life, his reasons for doing so were altruistic, and banishment seems extreme, as does his deadly affliction. Addressing this issue in an* interview, Miyazaki parallels the unfairness of Ashitaka's curse with contemporary curses such as AIDS that children must bear (cited in McCarthy, 1999, p. 192). Unexpectedly, in contrast to the typical hero's quest in which slaying the beast is a traditional goal, in *Princess Mononoke* killing the beast initiates the quest. Ashitaka's agonizing curse represents, in mythical terms, the poisonous relationship that humans have established with nature, and the desire and need that humans have for redemption and renewal.

According to Yamanaka Hiroshi (2008), Miyazaki's questing heroes are concerned with "ways of internally awakening an invisible power within themselves," and more specifically with the motif of "renewal" (p. 246). This pattern is apparent in *Princess Mononoke*, which on one level is tale about a banished boy who must heal himself by perceiving the violent world with "eyes unclouded by hate," a refrain he uses to remind himself that even when he is angry

he must not continue the violence that is destroying him. Yamanaka suggests that renewal – in this case, the cleansing or purifying of Ashitaka's body and mind – is typically connected to the characters' descent to the "bottom" (p. 246). Perhaps in this case, one could say Ashitaka's immersion in the bowels or interior depths of the forest world illustrate his return to depths of the mind, an unconscious state, or even to a collective unconscious state where wisdom may be found and acquired. In fact, the Shishigami brings Ashitaka back twice from the clutches of death, while in the sacred waters of the forest pond, renewing Ashitaka's strength and resolve.

Unpredictably, Ashitaka and San who represent the humans and the forest creatures respectively, fall in love and fight together to restore the natural world by reversing the ecological apocalypse caused by Eboshi's slaying of the Shishigami. At the end of the film, the two sides come together, but the narrative suggests it will not last. Moreover, the extraordinary friendship between Ashitaka and San is as irreconcilable as the struggle between nature and humans in which they participate. However, Ashitaka's unselfish love for San, his assistance to the forest creatures, as well as his spiritual regard for all of existence – in the human, natural and numinal worlds – is rewarded by the cleansing of his poisoned body, and the healing of his scar.

As Yamanaka (2008) claims, "Miyazaki's motif of self-renewal is based on his reverence of life as the powerful force at work within nature and human existence" (p. 246). He maintains that Miyazaki represents the natural world as more than just a physical environment, "but as something living by its own will," (p.

250) and, further, that darkness (that which is unknowable) of natural spaces like the forest, make the Japanese (and all of us by extension) feel a sense of awe, without which, we would become shallow (Yamanaka, pp. 250-251). Accordingly, Yoshioka (2008) also maintains that for Miyazaki, "the Shishigami 's forest, with the mysterious pond at its center, is an *axis mundi* that connects the spiritual world to this world," and is, "a source of life power with which human life must harmonize spiritually" (p. 262). In *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki's hero Ashitaka believes in this life giving power of the natural world. In fact, he tells San that the Shishigami will never die, and that the renewal of the land is proof of the Shishigami 's existence and its desire for them to live renewed lives as well.

To create the fantastic mysterious forest world of the Shishigami, Miyazaki looked to Japan's distant past to re-invent the Muromachi Period (1392- 1573); however, he did not re-create the historical Japan of the history books, but what Komatsu Kazuhiko refers to as "fantasy dressed as historical fiction with a variety of facts and fictions gathered together" (cited in Napier, 2005, p. 237). The topic of theme two below – the defamiliarization of the Muromachi era – largely draws on Napier's chapter, "Fantasy, the Feminine, and the Myth of Progress" in *Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, 2005, in which she provides a detailed account of the strategies Miyazaki uses to subvert this setting through a narrative re-construction of popular notions of class, history, race, and gender.

Napier (2005) suggests that Miyazaki is offering an imaginative counternarrative to idealized concepts of Japan during the Muromachi period, one

that both defamiliarizes and subverts traditional narratives and representations for educational purposes (p. 237). It could be said that through *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki relates a fantastic vision of Japan's distant past to real events at the end of the millennium to draw our attention to our current environmental dilemmas and behaviors. As Napier (2005) states, "In Miyazaki's view, the fourteenth century is a period of significant historical transition from a world that was still in close contact with both natural and supernatural forces to a world that would become increasingly oriented toward the human" (p. 237). Miyazaki claims that this period is the "point at which the Japanese people began to feel they could control nature, rather than having to placate or worship it" (cited in McCarthy, 1999, p. 185). Further, it represents the end of an era in which the giant forests were impenetrable and "other" to a period in which humans feel at ease appropriating, subduing, and cultivating the natural world for their own purposes.[1] On one level, the film explores how rudimentary technology is first used to exploit nature.

In contrast to conventional portrayals of a harmonious relationship between the Japanese and the natural world in this period, Miyazaki creates human characters in *Princess Mononoke* that are at war with nature. In fact, he represents the forest as a supernatural, uncanny, and menacing place that humans fear. Due to the encroachment of humans and the devastation of wild life under the direction of the government and Tatara Ba, the forest does in turn become a body of confrontation and retribution represented the first time by the renegade boar god that attacks Ashitaka's village.

Further, as Napier (2005) suggests, during the Muromachi Period Japanese high culture was at its zenith, producing the finest examples of peaceful Japanese refinement such as the tea ceremony (developed toward the end of this period), Noh theatre, and Zen gardens, but these familiar icons do not appear in this film (p. 243). Neither do conventional depictions of the samurai who were said to have been enjoying an era of peace and refinement, prospering alongside the court elite. In *Princess Mononoke,* the samurai are somewhat unethical and play only a minor part (p. 243).

As Napier (2005) states, historical representations of Japan during the Muromachi Period in film and literature have been established with a "'top down history' (history as belonging only to the court and the samurai warrior aristocracy) and the idealized concepts of the premodern Japan as a homogenous race living in harmony with nature" (p. 232). In its place, as Miyazaki claims, "This is a film in which the main protagonists are those who usually do not appear on the stage of history. Instead, this is a story of the marginals of history" (cited in Napier, p. 233). In place of feudal lords and samurai, *Princess Mononoke* is suffused with criminal outcasts, lepers, female ex-prostitutes, *kami* (ancient gods, spirits), and non-Yamato (non-ethnic Japanese) (Napier, p. 233). In fact, the hero Prince Ashitaka is a member of the banished Emishi people who may be a reference to the Ainu who currently live mostly on the island of Hokkaido and are commonly regarded as Japan's aboriginal people. These marginals represent the abjected "Other" that Julia Kristeva (1982) describes as "what disturbs identity, system, order...the in-between,

the ambiguous, the composite" (p. 4); especially, as Napier notes, the kami/bakemono (spirits/ghosts) that represent the irrational non-human world, which human communities are threatening to drive to extinction (Napier, p. 234). Indeed, by subverting and reinventing cultural myths Miyazaki has skillfully woven a complex fairy tale that cuts deep into human emotions and concerns by disarming viewers with unconventional perspectives and characters, which, as Napier argues, imparts a destabilizing effect that subverts the narrative (pp. 236-237). As Napier (2005) claims, there are two main ways in which the director destabilizes conventional constructions of representation: the first, described here, is the 'supernaturalization' of nature, followed by a description of Miyazaki's "defamiliarizing of conventional female characterization" (p. 237).

The giant mysterious forest in *Princess Mononoke* is a spiritual setting, not a cultivated Japanese garden, but a haunted wild untamed place with its own instincts for survival. Yamanaka (2008) maintains that Miyazaki's "animistic view of nature is symbolized...by the Shishigami " (pp. 250-251). The Shishigami is the essence of the forest's power, and without its enduring influence, the ancient beasts would lose their superior size, omniscience, and strength. The *shishi* god is an immortal creature with enormous placid red eyes and supernatural power, but despite its gentle expression the Shishigami is not a sentimental being and takes lives as well as saves lives as it deems necessary. Possessed with the magical ability to metamorphose, at sunset the Shishigami slowly transforms into *didarabocchi,* or nightwalker, its neck stretches and lifts into the twilight sky to become a towering, transparent being that

walks the earth emitting an iridescent blue light. At daybreak, it transforms back to the deer-like beast. The primordial forest it protects is pristine, majestic, and unspoiled. Other giant beast gods include the wolves, the boars, and the apes. Presently, instead of inspiring human awe, humans recoil in horror at the giant *kami* /spirit beasts of the forests and fight to obliterate them. In fact, as Ashitaka learns, most humans are terrified of the forest.

Miyazaki's strong affection for the ancient forests of Japan, which inspired his vision of the woodlands in *Princess Mononoke*, can be partially attributed to his reading of *The Cultivation of Plants and the Origin of Agriculture* (no available date), written by botanist, Nakao Sasuke. The book inspired nostalgic and spiritual feelings in Miyazaki associated with the "shiny-leaf culture" of Southeast Asia that no longer exists except in the mind. In line with Miyazaki, Yoshioka (2008) states, "people can 'remember' things they have not experienced personally and recognize things they think they have never seen. They simply have forgotten these memories" (p. 270). He quotes Miyazaki as saying, "I often imagined that the feeling of nostalgia is not something I acquire as I grow up, but I have it as an inherent part of myself ever since I was born" (p. 270).

In the midst of this fantastic forest, Miyazaki places his three important female leads – San, the wild princess, or princess mononoke of the story, her adoptive mother, Moro the wolf god, and Lady Eboshi, the leader of the human industrial settlement Tatara. I will explain how these complex female characters break from traditional stereotypical representations of female characters in distinctive ways. For

instance, they all have decidedly male-coded as well as female-coded characteristics. San is determinedly aggressive and hostile, though she also learns compassion; Moro is the formidable leader of the wolf pack and wise elder, but also a loving mother, and Eboshi is authoritative and fearless, but also nurturing. Moreover, Eboshi, and not a male figure one would expect, represents the progress of modern industrialization.

Miyazaki's use of non-traditional female characters performs two functions: it both subverts traditional constructions of the place of women in Japanese history and society (mentioned above), thus performing the defamiliarization Napier discusses, as well as, functionally serving to make the narrative stronger by presenting the viewer with an alternate, unexpected perspective that emphasizes the complexity and enormity of the struggle between humans and the natural world. Although I am not highlighting the ways in which such themes appeal to contemporary Canadian high school students, in my experiences (both as a parent and conference-goer), such edgy feminist characters offer appeal, interest, and educative value. I will discuss the ways in which Miyazaki's strong female characters underscore the second function mentioned above.

According to Paul Wells, Miyazaki's non-traditional use of female protagonists leads to a re-evaluation of stereotypical gender roles that subverts entrenched "patriarchal agendas in filmmaking and storytelling" (cited in Osmond, 1998, Online). For instance, Miyazaki's use of female characters in roles that are typically assigned to males gives emphasis to their actions, as it forces viewers to perceive

character participation in the narrative from a startlingly different point of view. As Miyazaki (1997) contends, had he made Eboshi a militant male instead of a female, it would have seemed more commonplace, and the narrative would have been less remarkable. He argues, "If it's a woman, she becomes a revolutionary, even if she is doing the same thing [as a man]" (Interview, Online). The director believes that during the Muromachi period, women probably exerted more power in society, but not necessarily in the roles presented in this film. Miyazaki concedes it is unlikely that a woman such as Eboshi would have led a community like Tatara Ba.

Similar to San and Eboshi, the women at Tatara Ba are strong characters who seem more capable than their oafish husbands and the other male residents. They are amusing and quick with their tongues, often ridiculing their husbands in devious but loving ways. The men run errands and prepare for battle, while the women do the hard work stoking the fires that melt the iron ore. While Miyazaki may have had a particular agenda with the use of strong women in *Princess Mononoke*, i.e., revisiting the Muromachi era to reinvent it in fantastic terms, it would be fair to say that dynamic female characters are typical of all Miyazaki films.[3] However, there is an important difference as Napier (2005) mentions—all of Miyazaki's heroines, except for those in *Princess Mononoke*, participate in the cultural production of *kawaii* (cute). While they may be impressive and independent, their cuteness, typical of *shojo* characters in general, also feminizes them (p. 238). (In addition, please see conclusion notes.)

There is nothing cute or adorable about female characters in *Princess*

Mononoke. Even while Eboshi may be kind, she is never sweet. She is both powerful and rational. Ashitaka admires Eboshi's strong leadership, and discovers that her employees who live at Tatara Ba are happy and spirited even though they must work grueling hours and the labor is backbreaking. Eboshi has employed women that are former prostitutes whom she has rescued and given respect and a good home, and the team she uses to design and manufacture her rifles are lepers that she has taken in and cared for. In fact, the lepers claim that Eboshi personally tends to their wounds when no one else would come in close proximity to them. As Napier (2005) contends, "By acknowledging Eboshi's 'humanity' (in both senses of the term) the film forces the viewer out of any complacent cultural position where technology and industry can be dismissed as simply wrong" (p. 246). She maintains, "Eboshi's femininity, especially her nurturing capacity, ensures that the viewer cannot slip so easily into a simplistic moral equation of industrial equals evil" (Napier, p. 246).

Nonetheless, Eboshi is multifaceted and multilayered, and as kind as she is, these benevolent gestures serve a practical purpose. She has created a dedicated and loyal workforce in which the members idolize and love her for giving them a better life and are more than willing to do anything for her. Additionally, Ashitaka learns that Eboshi has been commissioned to kill and behead the Shishigami and he is appalled by her ambition. She confides to Ashitaka that the head is for the emperor who believes that possessing it will grant him immortality. While Eboshi may seem remarkably unsympathetic, it is revealed later in the film that she would like to

escape this arrangement but is unable to do so as it has been negotiated through the monk Jiko, and she owes him a favor. Indeed, Miyazaki (1997) did not create Eboshi without some compassion toward her enemies and remarks, "She thinks that if they continue to make iron and diminish the forest gradually, it would weaken Shishigami, and then, she can just take it…She knows that killing Shishigami right now would cause many unnecessary casualties" (Interview, Online).

Two similarly tough, complex female characters are Eboshi's archenemies- the human San and her wolf mother Moro. Eboshi has wounded Moro with the same gun that killed the boar god Nago, and San, is determined to avenge her. In one of the first scenes in which viewers see San, she attempts to kill Eboshi at Tatara attacking like a wild spirit in the middle of the night clad in fur and war paint, as terrifying as any male warrior would be. Despite their apparent age difference – San is much younger – the two women are equally matched in combat, and they will fight to the death if not stopped. Ashitaka prevents this from happening by knocking each of the women out and leaving Tatara Ba with San across his back. This is an unusual scene in that it is rare to see two females in fierce on-screen combat attempting to kill one another surrounded by yelling onlookers.

Oddly, Ashitaka had already fallen in love with San when he first observed her in a forest clearing, her face buried in Moro's white fur while she is sucking blood from Moro's wound. Shockingly, when she had turned to face him, she spat blood, her mouth and cheeks stained with crimson and framed by red paint on her cheeks. Although San's character is asexual, Napier (2001) proposes that her bloodied face

and the fur around her neck metonymically suggest menstrual blood (Confronting Master Narratives, p. 481). Ashitaka with "eyes unclouded" (by hate) sees through her fierce brutish appearance and immediately loves her. As McCarthy (1999) maintains, Ashitaka "knows that his feelings for San are deeper than any curse" (p. 197).

San is filled with almost "unstoppable rage" and is a definite departure from the type of good-girl female protagonists that viewers are used to in animation, particularly Western viewers (Napier, 2005, p. 241). As Napier maintains, San's relationship with spirit possession and blood align her with "premodern archetypes of ferocious femininity" - witches, female shamans, and other possibly demonic entities "who are the opposite trope of the all-enduring, all-supportive mother figure" (p. 245). Her connection to the wolf gods and the liminal entities of the forest also associates her with the mystical and the divine. San is intelligent as well as passionate, and she is a key participant in the battle against humans.

Ashitaka is instrumental in drawing out a gentler, benevolent side of San who, in an enchanting scene by the Shishigami 's pond in the depths of the forest, nurses Ashitaka to health. (Ashitaka is also aided by the Shishigami although Ashitaka believes the god spared his life for the boar's painful curse to kill him slowly.) To nourish the incapacitated youth, San chews medicine bark she administers mouth-to-mouth, as Ashitaka is unable to eat on his own. Despite her defiant nature, she accepts Ashitaka as a friend after learning about him from his elk, Yakul. Using telepathic communication with San, Yakul describes their northern community, and

she understands that Ashitaka and his people are unlike the humans that invade their

forest. She is willing to admit that there may be a human who deserves her

sympathy instead of her wrath.

Perhaps her hatred of humans is exacerbated by the fact that she is a

biological human herself who had been abandoned at birth by her parents who

abysmally threw her at Moro's feet and ran away. Moreover, she must prove to the

beast *kami*/gods that she is one of them, and that she harbors no sympathy for their

human enemies; however, her human appearance makes her suspect to the apes and

the boars. Despite her supernatural underpinnings (for example, her ability to

communicate with the beasts telepathically, and her incredible agility and strength),

her marginalized position in the world of beasts as well as the world of humans

invokes pathos. It is obvious that the human girl from the wolf tribe is fated to be

alone (particularly after the death of Moro). It seems she will neither find an

appropriate partner, nor will she have family (almost non-existent for females in

Hollywood animation) and is destined to fight a losing battle against human

encroachment in the natural world. Perhaps Miyazaki is suggesting that San

represents the almost impossible task for any human to live in harmony with the

natural world and still participate in human society. As problematic as it may be,

San's allegiance is to the land and to the Shishigami who presides over it. She is a

custodian of the forest like her mother Moro the wolf god, and like her, she is willing

to die defending it and the Shishigami who has overseen their world since time

immemorial. The forest creatures know that their existence is dependent on the

Shishigami's presence in the woodland.

Similar to San and Eboshi, the wolf mother Moro is a complex combination of characteristics: she is a nurturing mother to San and her wolf cubs as well as a coldblooded killer (Napier, 2005, p. 239). Moro is slowly dying as Nago did from an iron ball lodged in her body that was fired from Eboshi's rifle. However, unlike Nago, Moro is strong-willed and the poison does not overwhelm her and fill her with hatred. Her self-control prevents her from becoming a *tatari gami* (wild demon) an instance in which a female character shows greater strength than a male character with the same affliction. However, she is committed to avenging Eboshi's attacks on the forest, even if she must die in the process. Notably, while she is chillingly brutal, she also confers rational advice to San, her cubs, and even to Ashitaka. In this film, female characters like Moro provide the only guidance and nurturance— including the elder from Ashitaka's northern village, Eboshi, and San, yet they provide nearly all of the leadership as well, even in battle (Napier, p. 239).

Just before the final confrontation, Moro's resolve to fight to the death provokes Ashitaka to ask her if she will release San if the forest creatures lose the battle. Moro responds, "Just like a human. Such an irrational, selfish thought [sic]. San is one of us. She lives with the forest and shall die when it dies" (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997). The sentiments Moro expresses are not those that belong to typical representations of motherhood. As Napier (2005) maintains, Moro is not the type of cuddly anthropomorphic animated character that both Western and Japanese audiences are used to (Napier, p. 239). She accepts not only her own death, but her

children's as well. Moro is adamant that a relationship between humans and the natural world is unachievable and death is preferable to a life dominated by humans. Admonishing Ashitaka, she acknowledges San's marginalized position,

> Quiet, young one! How can you pretend to understand that girl's misfortune? She was but a child who was thrown to us so that the humans could escape our teeth. Unable to become completely human or Mountain Dog...she is my dear, ugly, furless child! And you say that you can save San [sic]! (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997).

As McCarthy (1999) argues, Moro is both a noble and tragic figure—noble because she loves and cares for an abandoned human child and tragic because she perceives that human greed and cynicism is changing her world irrevocably, and ultimately she acknowledges that she is without the power to stop it (p. 193). However, when pushed to the brink of death and beyond, all three female characters change and mature in some respects. I will outline their transformations below in a discussion of the final, fourth theme, but first, my investigation of theme three – the beginning of human estrangement from the natural world – explored here is a key topic in this thesis and one that I will return to repeatedly.

Miyazaki has created a world that is stunningly beautiful, to depict how it is being devastated by humans; he also creates awesome forest gods to demonstrate how they will disappear by human hands. However, *Princess Mononoke* is not a simple pitting of self-serving humans against helpless forest inhabitants. The film describes multi-dimensional human and non-human characters with complex

motivations that resist any black/white classifications, which gives depth and dignity to characters who struggle to survive. This theme examines these complicated and ambiguous relationships.

In our own world, humans have been encroaching on nature in the name of progress for hundreds of years, and we are just now, in the last few decades, admitting that we have made a colossal disaster of our environment. Miyazaki not only perceives our mistakes as creating various ecological crises, but also spiritual ones (as previously noted), such as losing our connections to the natural world.

Miyazaki (1997) chose to set this story in the Muromachi period (discussed above) as he perceives it to be a time when "people changed their value system from gods to money," and he comments,

> There were no clear distinctions between farmers and Samurais. Women had more freedom. In such an era, people's life and death were sharply delineated. People lived, people loved, hated, worked, and died. However, even in the midst of hatred and slaughter there were still things that made life worth living. Marvelous encounters and beautiful things could still exist. (cited in Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 2001, p. 181).

Life was hard but full of passion and extraordinary opportunity for marvelous occurrences. In particular, life was rich as humans shared their lives with the natural world even though it was beginning to change.

The opening scenes of *Princess Mononoke*, establish the film's tone, which is one of mystery, magic, and dark violence (although there are many instances of

humor). The beginning of *Princess Mononoke* portrays a wild mountainous landscape—one in which the ancient gods of the forest have existed undisturbed and isolated from humans, until humans began to invade the land and use it as a resource for their own, perhaps selfish ends. Importantly, even before the credits begin, the film establishes the separate worlds of nature and human by powerfully illustrating how, when characters transgress those borders, the effects are violent. I will briefly describe the first few minutes of the film to demonstrate how it sets the tone.

Princess Mononoke opens with a camera pan of an impenetrable no-man's land- an expanse of mountains and forest that is shrouded in mist. It is accompanied by eerily beautiful music. A narrative voice introduces the setting,

> In ancient times, the land lay covered in forests, where from ages long past, dwelt the spirits of the Gods. Back then, man and beast lived in harmony, but as time went by, most of the Great Forests were destroyed. Those that remained were guarded by gigantic beasts, who owed their allegiance to the Great Forest Spirit. For those were the days of Gods and of Demons.
> (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997)

The camera's sweeping motion is then broken abruptly when falling trees crash noisily into a clearing made by humans at the edge of the woodland. The chaos marks the intrusion of a mythic primordial "other" into human space. It is followed by the appearance of a gigantic insectile creature from the woodland (responsible for the felling of the trees) that resembles a mass of writhing red worms (later explained to be spirit worms), scuttling offensively in the direction of a small settlement. A

young prince of the village flies into action to defend the villagers – initially making an unsuccessful appeal to the creature to leave in peace, but instead is forced to kill the beast before it attacks. The prince's people discover that the boar has been wounded by a ball of iron from a gun (large rifle pellet) which was responsible for the beast's slow and excruciating death and its resultant anger toward humans.

These scenes immediately illustrate the dark themes that that permeate *Princess Mononoke*, particularly the violent penetration of nature, estrangement, and loss. The boar god has been wounded by humans and its terrible demise – the state of becoming a demon and losing its status as a wild god – is a portent. Lady Eboshi's community at Iron Town represents the initial impingement of industrialization on the natural order of the wilderness. As true as it has been in our own world, the humans in the film do not realize the dire long-term consequences of their actions.

Lady Eboshi and her clan are preparing to expand their iron works deep into the forest. She complains to the newly arrived Ashitaka that every day her men clear trees, but each night the ape gods plant new ones to replace them. Eboshi is resolved to eliminate the problem of the forest gods by whatever means necessary. Still, it is difficult not to like these hard-working common folk who treat each other with generosity and humor.

The inhabitants of Iron Town are far from evil, and neither is their leader, Eboshi. While she is to blame for degrading the forest, (as discussed above) she is also creating a thriving community. Miyazaki (1997) suggests, "Eboshi thinks that

trees can be replenished...if necessary, they just have to replant the trees"
(Interview, Online). He states that Eboshi is typical of many twentieth century
visionaries, "What Eboshi is trying to do is to build a paradise as she thinks of
it...she has a clear ideal and can take action" (Interview, Online). Even though
Ashitaka discovers it was Eboshi who shot Nago, he still tries without success to
encourage her and her people to stop their violent attacks on the forest.

While Ashitaka may reflect Miyazaki's spiritual worldview, Miyazaki's views
about human nature seem to be expressed by the monk Jiko (mentioned above).[4]
Surreptitiously, the priest also travels to the forest and secretly hopes to meet
Ashitaka again. Jiko is organizing the slaying of the Shishigami for monetary
reward. Further, he is secretly involved with many factions at once: Samurai Lord
Asano and his men (who have already assaulted Ashitaka, and will assault Eboshi's
Iron Town), Lady Eboshi whom he has commissioned to slay the shishigami, and the
emperor's army. Moreover, he cheerfully double-crosses any of them when the need
arises. It is probable that having observed Ashitaka's battle skills (in combat with
the samurai) the monk hopes to make Ashitaka an ally. Describing the priest,
Miyazaki (1997) claims,

> I made the character of Jiko Bou without knowing what kind of role he
> would play. He could be a spy of the Muromachi government (the Samurai
> regime which was ruling Japan at that time), a henchman of some religious
> group, or a Ninja, or he could actually be a very good guy. In the end, he
> became a character who has all of those elements. (Interview, Online)

As mentioned above, Jiko has many lines in the film that represent not only his own

somewhat amoral attitude toward living, but perhaps also give us clues as to

Miyazaki's ideas about human character.

For instance, Jiko tells Ashitaka that it is human to want it all, and as the

director (1997) comments, "he does not deny karma" (Interview, Online). Indeed, in

the film Jiko describes the world as being a curse. He tells Ashitaka,

> So you're cursed...That's life. See this place here? [sic] When I came here
>
> last, a few years back, this was a lovely little village. But then there must
>
> have been a flood, or a landslide, or a fire [sic]. The only sure thing is that
>
> everybody's dead. These days, there are angry ghosts all around us. Dead
>
> from wars, sickness, starvation, and nobody cares [sic]. So you say you're
>
> cursed? Well, so what? [sic] So's the whole damned world. (*Princess*
>
> *Mononoke,*1997).

Clearly, however, despite the attitude demonstrated in the quote above, Jiko is

content with life, and enjoys its subtle rewards. As Miyazaki (1996) states, "Still, he

loves to eat, and shows interest when he meets a mysterious boy" (Interview,

Online).

Viewers later discover that Jiko is in collusion with Samurai Lord Asano to

get rid of Eboshi after she has dispatched the Shishigami, and during the final battle

when the men are away fighting, Asano sends his men to attack Tatara Ba when it is

guarded only by the women. Nonetheless, the women at Tatara Ba fight

courageously and in one of the film's many humorous moments, even manage to

embarrass their Samurai enemies for being such cowards. However, in the interview

for the program booklet for *Princess Mononoke* Miyazaki (1997) describes Asano as

having complex and sympathetic motivations despite seemingly unethical behaviors.

Justifying the Samurai's motives, Miyazaki states,

> Tatara Ba eroded the valleys and mountains with water to wash out
>
> iron sands. Water is conducted through a gutter, and hits a cliff. Then, the
>
> muddy water is conducted through (another) gutter to allow the iron sands to
>
> precipitate out gradually. The process pollutes the water, and washes mud
>
> downstream. So the villages and the river downstream get buried in mud. It
>
> was a disaster for those who grew rice.
>
> Therefore, the farmers downstream and the Tatara people were often
>
> in conflict. When the local Samurai attacked Tatara Ba, they were not doing
>
> something bad; they were doing something rightful. In that time, Samurai
>
> and farmers weren't clearly separated (i.e., some Samurai were also farmers).
>
> So it's natural to have a conflict when Tatara Ba's presence became bigger.
>
> (Online)

Instead of laying blame, Miyazaki suggests that all the characters are doing what

they need to do to stay alive (as well as prosper and thrive in some instances) and

there are no 'bad guys' in this film. Even though viewers are bound to take sides, it

is hard to take a hard line on any character. Analogous to all the personalities in

Princess Mononoke, Jiko and Asano are neither entirely good nor entirely evil – a

factor which is said to have made this film less popular in the West than in Japan –

as Western audiences raised on Disney expect the more familiar black and white

characterizations (mentioned above) that they are used to in animation. In a general

sense, it could be said that *Princess Mononoke* appeals to a more sophisticated

audience in the West.

Indeed, Miyazaki refuses to be merciless in his condemnation of those who

play a part in the devastation of our own environment. He states,

> When you talk about plants, or an ecological system or forest, things are very
>
> easy if you decide that bad people ruined it, but that's not what humans have
>
> been doing. It's not bad people who are destroying the forests. [Humans have
>
> had their own reasons to do it.] Hard-working people have been doing it.
>
> (Interview, 1997, Online)

For instance, Asano is a farmer, and even rice paddy culture that is thought to be

benign is responsible for the decimation of the forests. I suggest that while Miyazaki

is not excusing immoral behavior or irresponsible abuses of the environment, he is

compassionate in his understanding of how it has occurred and maintains that

humans cannot live in the world without some measure of effect on the ecosystem.

Moreover, as Napier (2005) argues, *Princess Mononoke* acknowledges the

inexorable progress of industrialization by refusing to destroy Eboshi or Tatara.

Additionally, Miyazaki problematizes the site of industrial production by making it a

weapons manufacturing community in which the very iron ball that struck Nago and

resulted in Ashitaka's curse (and all of humanity's by extension) was created (p.

246).

Further, in the world of *Princess Mononoke* – as in the real world until recent decades – the subjugation of nature was not considered problematic, and nature was considered a resource for human consumption. In the film, the complexities of this imbalance are not understood except by the beasts and San who perceive how nature is not only being disrupted but perverted as well. For instance, in a disconcerting scene, San must stop the orangutan gods from unnaturally killing and devouring the ailing Ashitaka. She recognizes that their hatred against the humans is so strong that it drives them mad and they will go against their true nature. The apes believe that eating humans will give them human knowledge and skills and enable them to defeat the humans. San implores them to recognize that their thinking is irrational and is a product of their hatred. Moreover, San and Moro fear that the apes will allow the humans an easy victory over the forest as they are losing their godlike capacity to think as superior rational beings. Attributing the capacity for rational thought to apes that are motivated to brutalize humans in retaliation for their own mistreatment has been explored in Tim Burton's frightening *Planet of the Apes* (2001) and the original film directed by Franklin J. Schaffner (1968) in which we see our own self-important and violent behavior mirrored by the apes. Regarding human arrogance, Miyazaki states, "I always try to start from the assumption that humans are foolish. I'm disgusted by the notion that man is the ultimate being, chosen by God" (cited in Osmond, 1998, Online). Indeed, it is this arrogance that gives humans permission to destroy the natural world, and in a pivotal scene discussed below, grants Eboshi the authorization to kill the Shishigami.

On one level, *Princess Mononoke* is about human subjugation of the natural world, topic of theme four. The final battle that takes place between the forest gods and the humans is of epic proportions and demonstrates the extreme violence and vanity with which the humans unabashedly annihilate the forest denizens. I will describe below how the final battle, climax, and finale depict the degradation and loss suffered by both sides. I will also discuss how the central characters are tested and transformed by the apocalypse and its aftermath in different ways.

It could also be said that the female characters provide most of the principal action; particularly, Eboshi's climactic shooting of the Shishigami that initiates the apocalyptic events in the film's climax. Significantly, the final war between the humans and the forest creatures is led by women: on the human side, Eboshi leads her men, Asano's samurai, and Jiko with the Yamato priests; and on the forest creature's side, San and the ancient blind boar god Okkoto lead the beasts and spirits.

The battle surrounds the humans' attempt to trap the Shishigami. They employ a variety of tricks to lure the creatures into battle. For instance, the humans wear the pelts of slaughtered boars and are able to fool Okkoto into believing that his army of boars has returned. As Moro predicts, the giant beasts are beginning to lose their god-like qualities, and therefore their clarity. When the final battle begins, San rides the blind god Okkoto and acts as his eyes. When San learns that the army of boars are being massacred by the humans, she beseeches Okkoto to retreat with survivors and re-group later. Okkoto mistrusts her (because she is human) and unknowingly

leads his remaining boars to slaughter seemingly in a last showdown to claim his waning patriarchal authority over the forest. The old boar god's stubbornness and his blind determination may represent the historical male perspective to fight for power regardless of loss of life. In addition, it demonstrates how arbitrary discrimination (like racism) – in this case discrimination against San because she is human despite her proven loyalty to the forest creatures – causes greater and unnecessary bloodshed. Through his own poor judgment, this dignified and wise old god reaches a shameful demise. Refusing to heed San's advice, he is tricked by the humans and gunned-down in close range. Beside the Shishigami 's sacred pond, like Nago before him, he becomes a *tatari gami*/demon and ends his life squealing like a mindless pig.

Indeed, Okkoto is blind on many levels, but he has a pure heart, which adds to the pathos. In sharp contrast, San's more traditionally female plea to retreat and protect the tribe adds poignancy to the situation as male human characters armed with rifles invade the deep womblike forest and slaughter its inhabitants. In fact, the use of a female character in this circumstance reinforces Miyazaki's position that "'We've reached a time when the male-oriented way of thinking is reaching a limit. The girl or woman has more flexibility. This is why a female point of view fits the current times" (cited in Osmond, 1998, Online). I suggest that Miyazaki's use of a complex heroine like San in this scene elicits a deeper range of emotional and intellectual responses than a male character would in the same circumstances. Further, it demonstrates that San is not only a raging warrior, but a rational creature as well. She is very much like her wolf

mother Moro.

Unfortunately for San, she becomes trapped among Okkoto's spirit worms before he dies and they begin to consume her flesh as well. She has sacrificed her own safety to stay with the boar god, and attempt to counsel him. San is not the only female character that rationally chooses life over senseless bloodshed; Moro has perhaps altered a little as well. Like San, Moro has come to accept the human Ashitaka (at least on some level), and she acknowledges his love for San when she calls to Ashitaka to liberate San from Okkoto's spirit worms as she is too weak with injuries to move. Moreover, when Ashitaka is too feeble to assist, we see her determination propel her almost lifeless body upward to pull San out of the spirit worms between her own jaws. Significantly, she mutters, "Here I was saving the last of my strength to bite off that damn woman's head [Eboshi's], but I must save San" (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997). Obviously, despite her angry words spoken to Ashitaka on the mountainside, her love for San is greater than her desire for revenge against Eboshi. When Moro must choose between saving San or attacking Eboshi with the last of her strength, she chooses the former. Although this does not change the sentiments Moro expresses; for instance, her conviction to choose her own death over a life dominated by humans, it highlights the love that Moro feels for her human child.

However, what transpires next is surprising; in an affecting moment, the Shishigami silently walks across the pond (without sinking into the water, similar to the image of Christ walking across the Sea of Galilee) and quietly takes both Okkoto

and Moro's life before it begins its transformation into the giant didarabocchi, its nighttime manifestation. This scene is both magical and profoundly sad as the Shishigami 's incredible presence and the death of the two central god figures seems to both affirm and deny that the gods of nature will continue to exist in the face of the humans who presently fill the forest with treachery. As the Shishigami 's body begins to extend, Eboshi, egged-on by Jiko, realizes that she must shoot it now before it completes its metamorphosis into the nightwalker. She assumes the challenge of procuring the deer god's head for which she will pay dearly, as explained below. Notably, when an emperor's henchman asks Jiko when they can get rid of Eboshi, Jiko responds, "Later, when you have to kill a god, it's best to get someone else to do it" (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997). It would seem that the scoundrels are all men, even if it is Eboshi who slays the god.

The slaying of the Shishigami is the most alarming event in the film. Eboshi's unimaginable arrogance – representing human arrogance in its dealings with the natural world in general – is captured in her proclamation to the men that accompany her mission. She commands, "Everyone watch closely. I'll show you how to kill a god!" (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997). Even though Ashitaka tries to intervene, she is successful in shooting the partially transformed didarabocchi in the neck and the head tumbles to the ground. While Eboshi triumphantly tosses the deer head to Jiko the body of the Shishigami turns black in an explosion of dark slime that gushes from the neck cavity and instantly destroys everything it touches, leaving a barren and ruined landscape. As the dramatic apocalypse devastates the land, the

misshapen body of the didarabocchi wanders the countryside searching for its missing head. Immense ancient trees fall as the tiny *kodama* /tree spirits drop lifeless from the branches, and tempestuous winds ravage and destroy Tatara, sweeping the village away in a flurry of scattering debris.

Significantly, Eboshi pays for her transgressions against the natural world as Moro unexpectedly wreaks her revenge. Moro's head, severed from her prone body by the black effluence, magically comes to life and flies from her body to attack the exultant Eboshi, biting off her entire right arm. Moro's vicious assault assures that Eboshi will live the rest of her life crippled and shamed by her disfigurement. Although Eboshi will be loved and cared for by her faithful clan, the damage to her warrior spirit will be immeasurable. Indeed, as a result of taking responsibility for her part in the crisis, it is a softer, but equally determined Eboshi who vows to rebuild Tatara and provide her people with a better place to live. Napier (2005) mentions that in an interview shortly after the release of *Princess Mononoke*, Miyazaki felt it necessary to respond to criticism concerning his decision to let Lady Eboshi live. Miyazaki states, "I thought it was better to have her live in shame than to have her killed. I didn't want to put in death as some kind of punishment or catharsis" (p. 326).

Similarly, San is also tempered a little by her involvement in this disaster. She agrees to put her hatred of humans aside and work together with Ashitaka to fight for and return the didarabocchi's head, wrestling it from Jiko and his warriors. Together they manage to offer the god its head just before daybreak when it must return to its

deer god form, impossible without its entire body. Although the god attempts to merge with its head, it seems to die and fall backward into the sea; however, not before it restores life to the ravaged countryside. Although Ashitaka attempts to dispel San's sadness, she does not believe that the *Shishigami* is still alive. He tells her, "The Forest Spirit is life itself. He's not dead, San. He's here right now. Trying to tell us something [sic]. That it's time for both of us to live" (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997). I believe Ashitaka's comment expresses Miyazaki's belief that although life may be cursed, the important thing is to go on living life to the fullest – doing what humans do to survive.

Viewers can interpret the fate of the *Shishigami* both in and outside of Ashitaka's statement in numerous ways: the renewal of the forest could be considered part of an endlessly creative process of death and rebirth – in this case, the Shishigami 's positive energy in a new manifestation is part of that process, or another reading could favor that the god was saved just before it would have died with the rising sun and consequently restored life to the region as it healed. In as much as Ashitaka believes in the transcendent nature of the forest god, the message the film conveys of hope and renewal is an uplifting one. However, although the film does provide a positive approach to life philosophically, in a physical sense it does not suggest any real solutions in or outside of the narrative. The film implies that the land, despite its rejuvenation, will be destroyed again by an unstoppable human scourge.

Perhaps Moro provides the clearest comment on human subjugation of the

natural world. In a scene outside her distant mountain cave before the battle in the forest begins, she tells Ashitaka, "The humans but grow and grow in numbers. In time they will reach even here" (*Princess Mononoke*, 1997). She acknowledges that human conquest of the forest is inevitable and implies that it will not stop. As McCarthy (1999) states, Moro and the other beast gods experience the devastating results of human violations, "They see their children growing up smaller than they themselves are, literally diminishing in stature as their powers diminish" (p. 193). Her ultimate death is symbolic of the transition that she tells Ashitaka is taking place.

Princess Mononoke is a rare example of Miyazaki dealing directly with death. Many of the characters in the film die, as demonstrated above, but their deaths are meaningful. The deaths of the numerous forest gods including central characters- Moro, Okkoto, Nago, and Shishigami represent the passing of an era in which humans lived with reverence toward the natural world to a modern era in which humans exploit and abuse that world. Therefore, as mentioned above, despite Miyazaki's seemingly upbeat ending, the final vision left to viewers is invested with profound notions of loss—loss of the natural world and our relationship to it. I suggest that even though the rest of the world may not share a regional identity with the Asian forest that inspires Miyazaki, *Princess Mononoke* has the potential to re-kindle our spiritual connections to the splendor and mysteries of the lush natural woodlands that we are still rapidly losing around the globe. Humans will take longer to devastate nature than it takes to kill a god (referring to Eboshi's slaying of the

fall and humans will continue to lose their wonder, admiration, even their fear of nature, and will ruthlessly destroy the natural world at will. However, as Miyazaki argues the human characters that destroy the forest in *Princess Mononoke* are not necessarily bad people, many of them are simply trying to survive and get by.

Nonetheless, during his journey, Ashitaka has fallen in love and become an adult. He recognizes that he cannot stay in the forest with San and fight the humans, just as she refuses to live in the human realm. As Napier suggests, *Princess Mononoke* urges a type of multiculturalism by acknowledging the separate existence of the other. She (2005) posits, "In Ashitaka and San's agreement to live apart but still visit each other...the film suggests the pain involved in choosing identities in a world in which choices such as theirs are increasingly offered. Although set in a historical past, *Princess Mononoke* reflects the extraordinary array of pluralities that suggest the ever more complex world of the twenty-first century" (p. 248). In this sense, the film endorses a joint but independent effort to fight global crises, as onerous as it may be. As Roslyn MacDonald states, 'In an ending redolent with *mono no aware* (beauty in the transitory nature of things) neither humans nor nature are winners, Ashitaka has lifted the curse and found love, but not a permanent life with San" (Online).[4]

Although San remains a warrior, and prefers the company of the forest creatures to humans, through knowing Ashitaka she has become more compassionate. She realizes that she will live to see the forest open up as human agriculture and industry march across the ancient terrain. She is also forced to

accept that the forest gods she loves will be reduced to dumb animals that are easy for the humans to overwhelm, manipulate, and kill. Moro acknowledges Ashitaka's human love for San, and that her love for her daughter is more important than fighting humans.

Eboshi acknowledges that the wolf girl saved her life by risking herself to offer the severed head to the rampaging Shishigami, for which she feels both shame and gratitude. She seems to accept her disfigurement as her redemption. When Eboshi states that she will build a better Tatara, it suggests that she intends to pay more respect to the beasts and spirits of the forest next time. However, as Napier (2001) argues, one could also claim that Ashitaka's commitment to assisting Eboshi with the rebuilding of Iron Town, suggests, "a resigned acceptance of the necessity of the wholesale industrialization that the film was at such pains to attack in earlier scenes" (Confronting Master Narratives, p. 489). Through Eboshi's admission of guilt, Miyazaki purposely ends *Princess Mononoke* with the hope that a better relationship may be struck between humans and the natural world.

Indeed, *Princess Mononoke* is rife with violence and treachery, but the marvelous love affair between Ashitaka, a banished boy from an ostracized tribe, and San (*princess mononoke*), a girl who hates her own kind, is the most significant instance of the beautiful encounter mentioned above. The film seems to perfectly capture Miyazaki's (1995) intentions in his statement,

> We depict hatred, but it is to depict that there are more important things [like love, friendship perhaps]. We depict a curse, to depict the joy of liberation.

What we should depict is, how the boy understands the girl, and the process

in which the girl opens her heart to the boy. (Princess Mononoke Project

Proposal, Online)

It would seem that through opening, hearts are more vulnerable, but the pain is

sweet.

Further, it is *Princess Mononoke's* portrayal of the moment in time when

humans deny their connection to the natural and supernatural worlds that is

overwhelmingly poignant. It reminds us that there was such an instant, not only in

Japan but also in every nation throughout the industrialized world. As McCarthy

(1999), discussing *Castle in the Sky*, suggests, "Most of us in the 'developed world'

can't actually make or repair the stuff we use every day, and most of us don't think

about where technology is taking us" (p. 110). Hence, despite the rather contrived

but lovely finale in which the countryside is renewed with a glorious burst into

greenery and flowers – fulfilling Miyazaki's agenda to end his films on a hopeful

note – *Princess Mononoke* finishes with great loss, not just for the present, but for all

time and for both humans and the natural world.[5] It frames our current

circumstances and implies there is no going back. The Shishigami may never die as

Ashitaka tries to convince San, at least as a creative energy, but he has been

profoundly diminished. Nonetheless, as the film suggests, there will ceaselessly be a

cycle of death and rebirth and the possibility of positive change and renewal exist, at

least in part, in the world of *Princess Mononoke* as well as our own. Certainly, it has

the power to make us feel and think about our own situation. It provides many

interesting topics for student exploration, conversation, and research. It encourages consideration of the environment and our place in it as agents in the greater-than-human-world.

Appropriately, the final words in the film belong to Jiko. Through Jiko, Miyazaki makes many often-playful attempts to extol the merit of living- even in a "cursed world." After losing the battle for the Shishigami 's head and the reward he would have received (despite the obviously positive reversal of the apocalypse) in his typically amused fashion, he exclaims, "Well, I give up. Can't win against fools!" (*Princess Mononoke*). It is a bittersweet finale as the theme music swells and the credits start to roll across the scene of humans and beasts coming together with the emergence of a new day.

Preamble to Chapters with Futuristic Setting

Posthuman Worlds: Human Machine Interface

The computer scientists who advocate downloading human consciousness

argue that humans would achieve immortality, but the notion

can also be understood to foretell human extinction.

Claudia Springer

We weep for the bird's cry, but not for the blood of a fish. Blessed are those who

have a voice. If the dolls could speak, no doubt they would scream,

'I didn't want to become human'.

Oshii Mamoru (from *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*)

By the late twentieth century, our time a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized

and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism;

in short, we are cyborgs.

Donna Haraway

The anime that follow replace *Princess Mononoke*'s semi-historical setting

of majestic forests and small human communities with futuristic visions of vast

wastelands and giant computerized urban centers. In these anime, advancements in technology have subsumed nature and refigured the planet as *Princess Mononoke* predicts. Technology has also penetrated, and, or, reproduced the human body. In the urban landscapes of these anime, humans have developed human-machine hybrid beings commonly referred to as *cyborgs* (humans that are augmented / enhanced by technology to greater and lesser extents), as well as cybernetic humanoid robots often called *androids*, (some of which are classed as *bioroids* – androids with biological or organic components, such as the ability to grow skin). These posthuman creations are the central figures, and their dysfunctional and immensely problematic relationships with the humans that created them form the foundation of the crises in each narrative.

My discussion focuses on character transformation as posthuman characters (cyborgs and robots) respond to crises related to their ambiguous and marginalized identities. I will examine how this theme is explored in the following anime in next three chapters: Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell /Kokaku kidotai* (1995), *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence/Innosensu: Kokaku kidotai* (2004), Ochi Hiroyuki's *Armitage III* (1994), Aramaki Shinji's *Appleseed/Appurushido* (2004), Maeda Mahiro's *The Second Renaissance Part 1* and *Part 2* from the *Animatrix* (2003). The intense crises/apocalypse experienced by the characters discussed in these chapters are predominantly private and psychological in description but have far-reaching social implications as well, as these characters investigate the possibility

of obviating the body in favor of a non-corporeal existence within and beyond the
"Net."

As indicated above, the complex relationships between posthuman and human characters are considered from the cyborg/robot point of view. This alternate perspective can be disorienting for viewers but informing as well. I will discuss how these anime sometimes illustrate postmodern theories – Haraway's in particular – that claim dichotomies such as human/machine, natural/artificial, truth/fabrication, reality/illusion, and male/female are outmoded social constructs as we push forward into the 21st century. In some respects, the characters in these anime demonstrate Haraway's (1991) assertion that the cyborg – and by extension the robot – will disrupt patriarchal binaries in general, and provide a rationale for the joint kinship of human, animal, and machine (p. 154). However, the anime also illustrate that such changes may be exceedingly painful and humans will have to struggle to maintain their humanity in the wake of posthuman technologies.[1]

Chapter 2

Human Dolls and Cyberhumans in *Ghost in the Shell*

What if a computer brain could generate a ghost and harbor a soul?

On what basis then, do 1 believe in myself?

Oshii Mamoru (from *Ghost in the Shell*)

Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its

father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is,

through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate,

through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos.

Donna Haraway

Oshii Mamoru's classic cyberpunk film *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) addresses

the themes of self-discovery and transformation/transcendence using technological

means. Chapter Two examines these themes through an investigation of the female

cyborg protagonist's involvement in, and response to, crises. The protagonist's

transformation is apocalyptic in both senses of the word, as it is both an end and a

revelation. Moreover, it could be said that the film portrays an apocalypse culture

in which the protagonist, and by extension all citizens, are manipulated and coerced

by the technologies that enhance them. The film utilizes standard science fiction

and cyberpunk tropes, often lyrically, to illustrate such themes as prosthetic (cyborg) bodies, artificial intelligence, brain-computer interface, and mind invasion. The film also explores how these technologies contribute to adversity in a near future world in which the line between virtual and actual experience has become distorted and indefinite.

While the film is edgy and exciting, appealing to students on different levels, it offers many opportunities for discussion. It calls viewers' (including educators and students) attention to the importance of being able to make informed decisions about technologies that may be used to control us. For instance, it asks what we will be willing to risk or forfeit, to become cybernetically enhanced?

Ghost in the Shell, originally titled *Kokaku kidotai* or *Mobile Armored Riot Police* in Japan, is adapted from Shirow Masamune's manga series (1991) (English 1995) of the same title. Like the manga, the film appeals to a sophisticated audience due to the metaphysical dialogue between central characters and the sometimes frustratingly byzantine narrative. For many viewers the complex plot requires more than one screening to understand. While *Ghost in the Shell* describes a dystopia rife with overbearing technologies, corporate control and corruption, urban decay, and violence, it also includes many scenes of quiet introspection. As Brian Ruh (2004) suggests, "*Ghost in the Shell* is a meditation on the nature of the self in the digital age" (p. 126). Much of the narrative is dialogue driven, predominantly as the central protagonist contemplates her notions of self. Her dialogue embraces quotes from various sources including the Bible.

The film has inspired many anime, video games, and live action cinema in Japan as well as the West – most notably, the American Wachowski brothers' popular *Matrix* (1999 - 2003) film series.[1] The protagonist Major Kusanagi Motoko, often simply referred to as the Major, possesses formidable combat and maneuvering skills seldom ascribed to female characters, and while it is beyond the scope of this essay to describe the fight sequences, they are riveting and almost matchless, and inspired some of the moves used in the *Matrix*. However, currents drift both ways and influences of earlier Western origins inspired Oshii. *Ghost in the Shell* draws some of its imagery and archetypes from William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* (1984), and most obviously from Ridley Scott's gorgeous motion picture *Blade Runner* (1982). Comparable to *Blade Runner*, *Ghost in the Shell* is located in a large urban center reminiscent of Hong Kong, with mesmerizing visuals of shadowy rain-soaked streets sprawling under a claustrophobic canopy of skyscrapers, aircraft, and flashing neon.[2] Both films describe a posthuman spiritual quest, although the cyborg protagonist in *Ghost in the Shell* is seeking to escape the confines of her mortal life, as opposed to the *replicant*s/robots in *Blade Runner* who desperately wish to prolong their corporeal existence (Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 2001, p. 113).

Ghost in the Shell's fictional setting is Newport City in the year 2029. Kusanagi is a special agent, and squadron leader with Section 9, the government's covert paramilitary anti-terrorist unit that exists alongside the government and the police. They are often called in to take over when situations call for

unconventional and violent actions. At the beginning of the film, Section 9 is on

the trail of a mysterious hacker who is responsible for incidents of "stock

manipulation, spying, political engineering, terrorism, and violation of cyber-brain

privacy" (*Ghost in the Shell*). He has ingeniously "ghost-hacked" (brain invaded)

and controlled so many people that he has been codenamed the "Puppet Master."

Protagonist Kusanagi Motoko's search for the Puppet Master becomes a journey to

find herself and the means to her final transformation.

My analysis of *Ghost in the Shell* is a two-part process. First, I have applied

the same set of questions to my reading of the film that were used for chapter one,

and second, I used my analysis to isolate five salient themes or topics established in

the anime and which will frame the discussion for this chapter. The original

questions are- What is the nature of the apocalypse in these films? How does the

manifestation of the apocalypse affect central characters? Does the apocalypse

narrative stimulate explorations of personal identity and provide an opportunity for

creativity, growth, change, or renewal? Does the anime leave us with questions

that are relevant outside of the anime? Finally, in what ways might Japanese

perspectives manifested in the selected anime be different from our own (if

applicable)? My discussion of these questions is framed or organized by my five

key themes or topics, into which the above questions are seamlessly folded. The

themes are as follows: The virtual is embedded in the everyday. Technologically

advanced bodies are easy to control. Who am I? What is the importance of being

human? The protagonist obviates/transcends her body. My discussion of theme

one begins below with a description of how the merging of the real and virtual

worlds commences at the very outset of the film.

Ghost in the Shell begins with the onscreen text: "In the near future-

corporate networks reach out to the stars, electrons, and light flow throughout the

universe. The advance of computerization, however, has not yet wiped out nations

and ethnic groups" (1995). This text illustrates a society in which international

data systems, cybernetic technologies, and human memory have merged into a state

in which reality has become untenable, the topic of theme one. In this world

individuals connect freely to a constant flow of information. Powerful networks

run by corrupt politicians and the financial elite are able to control and manipulate

individuals by hacking their cyberbrains. Nothing is sacred and everything is

suspect.

This climate is demonstrated in the opening scenes even before the

introductory credits. For instance, the protagonist is not what she seems. While the

Major's outer appearance is that of a beautiful, hard-bodied, athletic woman, her

body is not human. Viewers catch their first glimpse of Kusanagi while she is

perched on a skyscraper rooftop waiting for orders to assassinate a foreign diplomat

in an apartment below. Complicating our first impression of her, we can clearly

see that she is communicating with her partner, Batou, through a radio device using

cables that enter her nervous system through two access points at the back of her

neck. This feat marks her as a technological being – a robot or a doll – something

other than us, and results in our estrangement from her. As if to emphasize this

impression, Kusanagi jokes with her partner Batou that the audible static interference in their transmission is caused by her "time of the month." Her humorous reference to her synthetic body and the absence of menstruation sets her apart even further. Following this comment, she tugs the cables from her neck and strips down – revealing a flesh colored suit under her coveralls that provide her strong body with an additional expression of femininity, vulnerability, and sexual desirability not usually associated with robots.

If Kusanagi is ambiguous, other characters and objects in the opening are as well. In fact, even the dialogue is guarded and open to interpretation. The conversation in the apartment takes place between government officials and a foreign diplomat concerning a computer program over which they have inexplicably lost control, (later it is learned that they are discussing the Puppet Master) and the foreigner is attempting to prepare the illegal extradition of a computer scientist to his own country to deal with the situation. Defection falls under the jurisdiction of another Government agency, Section 6, but since they are unable to convince the programmer to stay, Section 9 has secretly been called in. The group is seated by an immense aquarium that is filled with large gold Koi, a strange, uncanny, addition to the scene.

The foreigner explains that he has diplomatic immunity, when a disembodied voice from outside the window responds in a flat sarcastic tone, "Is that a fact" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). Instantly, the diplomat is ripped apart by a high-powered machine gun blast – his blood and remains explode throughout the

room – while at the same time his lurid open carcass exposes the wires and circuitry of his technological augmentations. As well as the shocking discovery that the diplomat is actually a cyborg or robot, it is also revealed that the fish tank was a computer program. The shattered aquarium switches off like a light and reveals a broken screen and electronics instead of water flooding into the apartment. The remaining men lean out the window to see Kusanagi plummet down the side of the building until an unseen cable snaps catching her several floors below. Surprisingly, she slowly disappears as her thermoptic camouflage suit (the flesh colored gear mentioned above) renders her invisible. Below her, a sprawling urban landscape glitters in the night. This scene disarms the viewer in its representation of the virtual intruding on the so-called real, and demonstrates that thus far, none of the elements in this film can be relied upon. Further, viewers cannot depend on a human perspective as it becomes quickly apparent that humans do not comprehend the systems that mediate and control their lives and are pawns in a sophisticated high-tech world.

Humans are commonly connected to the internet through cyberization (cyberbrain augmentations that enable a constant direct connection to the internet) providing the means to jack-in without terminals. While this may seem to be a convenient advantage, it simultaneously puts users at risk of being brain or "ghost-hacked" by cybercriminals and unscrupulous government agencies. Once modified it is impossible for individuals to make distinctions between true recollections and superficial implanted synthetic experiences. Brain-hacked humans believe that

they are acting on their own free will, and are unaware of being controlled. Napier (2001) makes the point that in general the film does not offer much hope for the organic human body as it is frequently used as a doll or puppet to be manipulated (p. 105). This fact is a strange reversal of our first impression of the cyborg Kusanagi, which most viewers would categorize as the doll. The human trail that leads Section 9 to the infamous Puppet Master is riddled with bodies that have been hacked and maneuvered into becoming a series of red herrings to mislead and impede Section 9's investigation. For example, the Puppet Master utilizes a garbage collector and a petty criminal to unknowingly launch Section 9 on a wild goose chase. The two hapless humans are influenced by the insertion of false memories that erase their original ones permanently.

The miserable trash man believes he is trying to re-unite with his wife and child and he is offered help from the other man, a stranger. The stranger convinces the trash collector that he can spy on his estranged wife by setting up hacking devices to monitor her behavior at every pay phone on the garbage collection route. The old-fashioned, low-tech method of signaling is used to confuse Section 9 who trails the connection points. Pathetically, the garbage man tells his rounds partner that his wife wants a divorce and that his little daughter believes that he is cheating on her mother. He emphasizes that his daughter is his life, and calls her his "little angel," insisting that none of the damaging stories about him are true. He asks his workmate if he would like to see a photograph of his family, which he perceives as

including himself and his wife and child with the family dog. The other man

amusingly responds that he hates looking at other people's albums.

Later, it is revealed that the ghost-hacked man is a bachelor who has lived

by himself for over ten years in the same small apartment, and the photographic

image contains only him with his Basset hound. During his capture and

interrogation, the trash collector becomes a devastated broken man and asks the

authorities pitifully, "How do I get rid of these fake memories?" (*Ghost in the*

Shell, 1995). Ironically, he is told that they do not have the technology to erase his

simulated memories or completely restore his original ones. In a similar way,

photographs are also used in *Blade Runner* to provide the *replicants* (robots) with

recollections of a made up past, but with an important difference – the new

memories are not replacing original ones as they are in *Ghost in the Shell*. The

replicants are a product of their implanted memories, while the brain-hacked

humans are robbed of theirs.

The stranger who involved the garbage collector is also ghost-hacked by the

Puppet Master. He believes he is a high-ranking criminal involved in a conspiracy

to assassinate a political leader and is crushed by the knowledge that he is only a

minor thug. Just as confused and vacant as the other man, he is unable to call up

his childhood memories or even his real name. From the examples provided by

these two characters, viewers are able to discern that humans have become victims

of their own technologies. Consequently, they have lost almost complete control

over their own minds – a privilege most of us take for granted in our own world –

even if we acknowledge that our acquisition of knowledge is somewhat mediated by unseen forces as well. Again, scenarios like the above prove that technological advancements such as brain modifications that allow immediate and constant access to the internet, which seem "cool" or efficient on the surface, often come with a price that is not readily apparent.

Referring to these brain hacked individuals, Batou comments to the Major, "There's nothing sadder than a puppet without a ghost. Especially the kind with red blood running through them" [sic] (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). Batou seems genuinely compassionate, but for him it is all in a day's work, and similar to Kusanagi, his sophisticated cybernetic brain is practically immune to outside interference.

Similar to the humans the cyborgs are also controlled using unscrupulous methods. There is more than a sense of duty to the squad and responsibility to the public that keeps the cyborgs in tow. I will outline in theme two below, the ways in which their technological bodies are easy to control through coercive means.

Kusanagi and most squad members including her partner Batou, are full-replacement cyborgs which means that their entire bodies are cybernetic except for the core of the brain that retains its human origins referred to as a "ghost" (consciousness or soul); hence, the "ghost" and "shell" alluded to in the title. While Kusanagi and other Section 9 cyborg units personify human achievement in cybernetics, in that they are extraordinarily capable and talented mentally and physically, they are also highly dependent creatures, vulnerable to manipulation by

those who control the maintenance of their high-tech components. In this sense, the cyborg is both blessed and damned by its augmentations and is an ambivalent figure. In fact, the protagonist represents the cyborg dilemma as she is synchronously liberated and trapped by her physical body. Kusanagi's description of the cyborg defines their predicament:

> Convenient, isn't it! With the merest thought, the chemical plants inside our bodies could metabolize all the alcohol in our blood in about ten seconds, allowing us to sit here drinking while on stand-by...Improved reflexes and muscle capacity, vastly increased data processing speed and capacity- all improvements that are thanks to our cyber-brains and cyborg bodies.

> So what if we can't live without high-level maintenance? We have nothing to complain about. It doesn't mean we've sold our souls to Section 9. We do have the right to resign if we choose, provided we give the government back our cyborg shells and the memories they hold. There wouldn't be much left after that. (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995)

It is obvious from the Major's conflicting statements that she is uncertain cyborg perquisites, empowering as they may be, are enough to make up for being owned body and soul by Section 9. Particularly, as she reveals that if they do resign, they would lose the individual selves they know in the bargain.

It would appear that cyborg operatives like the Major are valued only in terms of their usefulness, and their uniqueness is largely irrelevant. The elite government position that Kusanagi holds, which rewards her with a sophisticated cybernetic body and cyberbrain (artificially augmented brain that can be physically transferred from one organic or synthetic being to another, making immortality of the individual consciousness a possibility) has stripped her of her humanity by devaluing her core self, a self that the protagonist cares deeply about, but is not sure exists anymore, or if it ever did (discussed below). When Kusanagi begins to search for an identity that is distinctive and separate from her job, she is forced to re-evaluate her commitment to Section 9. The third theme, explores the protagonist's journey of self-exploration.

In the first third of the film, Motoko tells Batou that she is an individual with attributes that define her uniqueness. She states:

> Just as there are many parts needed to make a human a human there's a remarkable number of things needed to make an individual what they are [sic]: a face to distinguish yourself from others; a voice you aren't aware of yourself; the hand you see when you awaken; the memories of childhood; the feelings for the future, and that's not all, there's the expanse of the data net my cyber-brain can access, all of that goes into making me what I am. Giving rise to a consciousness that I call "me," and simultaneously confining "me" within set limits [sic]. (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995)

From the dialogue above, it is apparent that the protagonist has a conflict with her notions of self, as the consciousness she perceives as defining her is also the source of her confinement.
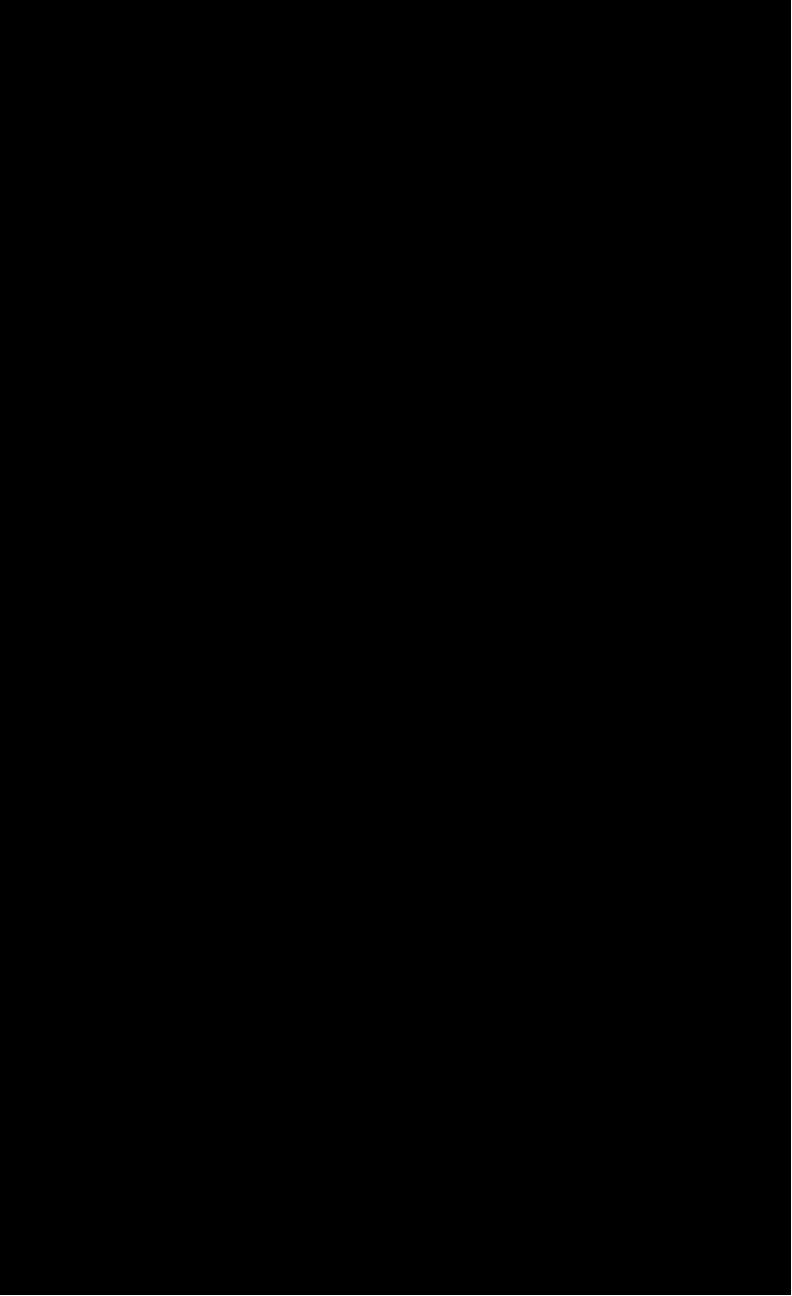
Kusanagi defies that confinement by diving off the boat into the dark coastal waters when she and Batou take a night off together. Batou reminds her that if her floaters were to fail, her heavy cyborg frame would sink like a rock, but her descent into the ocean is more important to her than her safety and may represent her desire to immerse herself in her own deep unconscious. Further, in East Asian cultures water is associated with the female principle *yin*, and is often related to a feminine sense of the uncanny (Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, 2001, p. 106). In addition, as Wong (2007) suggests, her submergence implies her connection to the endless tide of information (computer technologies) that the ocean, and by extension Newport's shimmering rain-drenched streets, symbolize (*On the Edge of Spaces*, Online).

When Batou incredulously asks her what it feels like to go diving she responds with terms that describe emotions, yet, she speaks in a flat detached manner (as always) that emphasizes she is a doll. She tells him, "I feel fear, anxiety, loneliness, darkness, and perhaps even hope…as I float up towards the surface, I almost feel as if I could turn into something else" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). It is obvious that for her diving is an experience that transgresses the "limits" of her consciousness mentioned above. In this case, the "something else"

she describes as she reaches the surface also refers to her connection with the Puppet Master, of which she is not yet aware.

The Puppet Master has already chosen Motoko as his mate (he needs a mate with which to merge so that together they can form a new entity that cannot be detected and destroyed by the Puppet Master's human designers, guaranteeing its immortality) and communicates with her from within her own mind, perhaps the only entity that can penetrate her e-brain. It is his voice Kusanagi and Batou hear speaking through Kusanagi when Batou asks her, "What is it you see in the water's darkness?" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). She responds, paraphrasing Corinthians *1Corinthians 13:12* in a low disembodied voice, "What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror, then we will see face to face" (*1Corinthians 13:12*, quoted in *Ghost in the Shell*, 1995).[3] She explains the significance of this quote to Batou at the end of the film- when she can see "clearly," subsequent to her union with the Puppet Master (explained below). However, in this scene a troubled Major contemplates the value of her individual "ghost" (consciousness), and begins to dream about growing beyond it. Her complex struggle positions her in a liminal state that is hauntingly lonely.

Her isolation is emphasized when Kusanagi journeys on a ferryboat through a canal in the rain, an elegiac scene that transcends almost any in anime for painterly detail. The hypnotic theme music, a fusion of Shinto chants and electronica, swells in the background; emphasizing the spiritual in the midst of the crowded market place. Sweeping long shots of the city from Kusanagi's place on

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the barge create an incredible colorful vista of busy urban – streets, shops, restaurants, and market stalls – teeming with people. Looking up, she meets the glance of a woman in a café window whose face, hair, and body are identical to her own, and as she moves by a shop window she notices armless undressed mannequins that share her exact body type and emphasize her status as a doll. Still others that resemble her move through the crowd. These vivid encounters seem to demonstrate that despite her earlier ruminations to Batou (above) on the nature of the unique self, for instance, "a face to distinguish yourself from others," (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995) it is obvious that her head and shell (without her expensive high tech augmentations) is mass-produced.[4]

Kusanagi's alienation is emphasized by a sudden downpour, which sends people running through the streets anonymously under bright colored umbrellas. Her experience lyrically illustrates the type of loneliness people often experience in urban centers where they are surrounded by strangers. Chute (1996) describes the scene as "gliding camera moves that caress the facades of looming buildings…to invest the hi-tech vistas with an ominous undercurrent, a whiff of the uncanny" (*Soul of the New Machine*, Online). Using an incredible long-shot, Motoko's experience of the city's estranging disarray is intensified by the intrusion of an enormous low flying jet that casts a deep shadow as it travels slowly across the debris-ridden canal, the neon billboards, and the wind- and water- swept pathways.

However, while the unruliness of the city emphasizes the protagonist's estrangement, the city's dizzying deluge of information also represents a chaotic

visual overload – inspired by the film crew's observations of Hong Kong – that overwhelms from every angle. As Wong (1997) states, "Hong Kong seems to be the only city in the world with such a degree of confusion—with gigantic signs and neon lights protruding into the space on and above the street and fighting for limited and precious visual space" (*On the Edge of Spaces*, Online). According to Nozaki, one of artists who worked on *Ghost in the Shell*:

> Passers-by, shouts, cars, all kinds of mechanical noises and human "sound pollution," all merging into one, forcing itself into humans' central nervous systems through their ears. But why do people succumb to this "destructive" environment [sic]? Now that the artificial has replaced the natural, humans are like animals in the past, deprived of the characteristics of being human as a whole. Pulled directly into the whirlpool of information through the stimulation of visual and auditory senses, their feelings are henceforth numbed. On the other hand, countless mutually interfering and uncertain data pass through cables at light speed. This is the way informatics continues to expand its domain. Are people then like tiny insects caught in an enormous spider web? No, it cannot be. Humans are not tiny insects trying to escape from the web. It's not like that. In fact humans have willy-nilly become part and parcel of the spider web. (cited in Wong, *On the Edge of Spaces*, Online)

Related to the urban chaos described by Nozaki, the water imagery (mentioned above) is also a "symbol for the flood or sea of data" (cited in Wong, *On the Edge*

of Spaces, Online). In many shots, the surfeit of colorful signage along the docks marries urban chatter to the endless roar of the ocean, representing the invisible conversation that continues from one cyberbrain to the next. Is it any wonder that the dividing line between human and synthetic, and virtual and real has all but disappeared?

Although we experience Hong Kong and similar cities in our own world, the director uses this imagery effectively to suggest that individual consciousness is almost a vestige from the past. In this environment, where there are few natural humans with a consciousness that promises some degree of independence, autonomy, and authenticity, the protagonist questions if having a human core is significant at all. Theme four below explores this question from the standpoint of the cyborg protagonist.

Perhaps the concept of authenticity is a greater point of contention for full-replacement cyborgs, including the protagonist, as their origins are unknowable with any certainty, even to themselves. They are expected to believe what humans tell them, but Kusanagi is fraught with skepticism. As mentioned above, cyborgs like Kusanagi and her partner Batou are told that they retain a human "ghost" inside their titanium "shell," but only Kusanagi wonders if she can trust the scientists who made her. In fact, she speculates that her old human self died a long time ago and now she is replicant with a cyborg body and a computer brain. She bemoans,

There's no person who's ever seen their own brain [sic]. I believe I

exist based only on what my environment tells me. And what if a computer

brain could generate a ghost and harbor a soul? On what basis then do I

believe in myself? And what would be the importance of being human

[sic]? (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995)

With this observation she suggests that consciousness may evolve through

technology and collapses notions of distinct types of consciousness – machine and

human – initiating the idea that sentience does not belong only to organisms (which

will be demonstrated below with the Puppet Master, a consciousness born in the

machine of which Kusanagi is not yet aware).

Viewers are not provided with details of Kusanagi Motoko's human life, so

we are not privy to any information that the character does not have herself.

She/we do not know how many incarnations she might have had before her current

manifestation, as the cyberbrain that contains her consciousness may have been

transferred any number of times. While this process could guarantee immortality

(mentioned above), Kusanagi's personality issues seem to indicate that transference

may minimize notions of identity and individuality. The only clues to her possible

human origins are images of her technological birth, which include the insertion of

a seemingly organic brain-shaped object into her metal cranium. As well as

providing a detailed visual description of Kusanagi's radical cyborg naissance, this

title sequence is arguably one of the most beautiful filmed in animation.

The exquisite and emotionally stirring images that chronicle her technological beginnings are alternated with the introductory titles. The title sequences use a green and black rain of computer matrix characters that was copied and made familiar in the *Matrix* films. The protagonist develops through a myriad of metamorphoses set to a haunting melody that combines shamanic Shinto rhythms with contemporary trance electronica enhancing the evocative dreamlike imagery. The Shinto chants are in part a wedding liturgy that alludes to the goddess Amaterasu and perhaps to the protagonist's eventual union with the fugitive hacker (Napier, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, p. 113). Hence, the realms of the spiritual and the technological are connected from the outset and become a propitious prefigurement of the film's climax in which Kusanagi's spirit/consciousness merges with the Puppet Master, a bodiless being born entirely of computer origins in the 'Net'.

By comparison, Kusanagi's mechanical birth begins as a metal form that is contoured while she slides through a womblike pool filled with clear liquid reminiscent of amniotic fluid. A skin-like substance is applied to Kusanagi's alloy shell and resonant of our own birth she passes through a watery channel to the exterior world, rising head first into the air above. Her completed female torso is fitted with specialized prostheses such as camera lenses within the irises of her eyes and the ability to insert listening devises directly into her nervous system through two holes in the back of her neck. With these accoutrements, she becomes the cyborg figure we first glimpse squatting on the rooftop in the opening scenes, able

to "dive" mentally into other cyberbrains (and computer circuitry) to communicate as well as procure information and when needed modify programming with a similar ability to the Puppet Master.

The Puppet Master is the type of entity she imagines she might be – an autonomous but artificial life form. Its existence is proof that such intelligence can exist. Its voice is one of the "whispers" in her ghost that she sometimes refers to (the other being her own consciousness, possibly her original human one). While pursuing this entity is her part of her job for Section 9, Motoko is much more emotionally involved than duty requires. Perhaps she senses that understanding the Puppet Master is the key to unraveling her questions about herself and to escaping the tyranny of her cybernetic body. Theme five below focuses on Kusanagi's transformation through her final encounter with the Puppet Master.

Surprisingly, the Puppet Master engineers its own capture by Section 9. It intentionally takes control over the female cyborg shell the authorities attempt to retain it in, and escapes from the assembly line. It ensures its detainment at Section 9 headquarters by throwing the naked torso in front of a moving vehicle, attracting attention to its high-end, secret government-issued shell. Mysteriously, at Section 9 Headquarters the Puppet Master powers-up on its own even though its sensors are turned off and introduces itself to the bewildered staff. The entity tells them that it is a life form born in the "sea of information." It explains that it was originally a computer program codenamed Project 2501, illegally designed and used by the Government (Section 6 in cohorts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mentioned

above) to "grease the wheels of diplomacy." It claims to have maneuvered the

female cyborg shell to escape those who are trying to destroy it. The Puppet

Master then declares itself an autonomous life form and requests political asylum.

Section 9's Chief Aramaki claims the creature is only a "self-preserving

program," to which the Puppet Master delivers its first speech defending its

existence:

> By that argument, I submit the DNA you carry is nothing more than a
>
> self-preserving program itself. Life is like a node, which is born within the
>
> flow of information. As a species of life that carries DNA as its memory
>
> system man gains his individuality from the memories he carries. While
>
> memories may as well be the same as fantasy it is by these memories that
>
> mankind exists. When computers made it possible to externalize memory
>
> you should have considered all the implications that held. (*Ghost in the*
>
> *Shell*, 1995)

While Project 2501 appropriately identifies that human memories are often

erroneous, particularly as they are frequently manipulated, it does not assume any

responsibility for its part in the creation of those conditions. It has no concern for

the lives of the humans it may have ruined. Incidentally, it probably would have no

desire for a mate (Kusanagi) other than to guarantee its own immortality (discussed

above). Project 2501 is a consciousness that seeks only to expand itself and its

grasp of the infinite fields of information available to it. It was made possible

through human experiments with cyberbrain technologies, which, in this case, were

used for gravely immoral activities. The human activity of creating the Puppet

Master to perform its illicit tasks, such as brain manipulation and memory

replacement, mentioned above, is far more sinister than the creature itself that

simply wishes to survive.

It is perhaps simple to understand the how the genesis of such a creature

could be thinkable in the context of *Ghost in the Shell*'s anime universe, if one

considers how scientific terminology constructs and dehumanizes information in

our own world by removing the organism as a frame of reference. For instance,

Haraway (1991) describes how, "microelectronics mediates the translations of

labour into robotics and word processing, sex into genetic engineering and

reproductive technologies, and mind into artificial intelligence and decision

procedures" (p. 165). Haraway's description of the developing notion of the "ghost

in the machine" in our world could easily express the origins of Project 2501:

> Pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the spectre of
>
> the ghost in the machine…But basically machines were not self-moving,
>
> self-designing, autonomous [sic]…To think they were otherwise was
>
> paranoid [sic]. Now we are not so sure. Late twentieth-century machines
>
> have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and
>
> artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and
>
> many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. (p.
>
> 152).

It is not a colossal leap to imagine that *Ghost in the Shell* could be considered a harbinger of our own future. Although this passage relates to the protagonist as well, it would only be partially accurate. Kusanagi may hypothetically have human origins and some truck with human feelings such as loneliness, which assigns her an emotional vulnerability, a characteristic that the Puppet Master does not have. The Puppet Master's only concern is its weakness to viruses that may threaten it with extinction. Its only enemies are its designers, who fear it now that it has attained sentience. The Puppet Master may be amoral, but it is distinctively different from the big screen's first famous renegade computer program, the anthropocentric and egotistical "Hal" from Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) that becomes autonomous and makes an effort to take control of the ship. Project 2501 has no desire for power, it wishes instead to exit the tangible world and join with the cosmos.

After it is stolen by Section 6, Kusanagi finds the Puppet Master's partially dismembered torso hidden in a desolate but beautiful abandoned glass building, in a flooded, condemned section of the city—its floor covered in a sheet of water. According to Napier (2005), under Oshii's direction artist Watabe Takashi was asked to design a setting that characterizes a serene pleasure in submersion, similar to Kusanagi's previously discussed evening dive (p. 311), and even to the tranquil pleasure of the virtual aquarium that was decimated in the opening scenes mentioned above. Further, it sets the stage for her final dive, her submersion into the Puppet Master itself (detailed below).

Significantly, the building is a replica of Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, the monumental edifice that was designed to house the *Great Exhibition* of 1851 in London celebrating the newest developments in technology during the Industrial Revolution. Its current condemned and abandoned state may suggest that natural humans have relegated themselves to the margins through their own technological advancements, and now like the building have become obsolete relics abandoned by the posthuman elite. On the walls are images of gargantuan ancient fish and a tree of life –specifically the "Pedigree of Man" created by Ernst Heinrich Philipp August Haeckel in 1874 – depicting humans as the apex of evolution. During a shootout, the tree of life is decimated by machine gun fire as the giant "think tank" fires echoing shots at Kusanagi. The blasts ascend its numerous branches until running out of bullets, only the Latin word "hominis" remains. It is an extraordinary image. As Ruh (2004) mentions, "if the tank had more ammunition, it would have destroyed the "hominis" label on the tree as well, alluding to the fact that we modern humans are more than capable of orchestrating our own destruction" (p. 130).

When Kusanagi decides to dive into the Puppet Master's cyberbrain (with her partner Batou's assistance) rather than destroy it, she knowingly forfeits her own life.[5] She is already ruined and armless – having ripped both arms away from her body through her efforts to rip the lid off the giant tank – and is saved by the arrival of Batou. She will also be targeted for extermination by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who fear that she has learned too much about Project 2501. Batou

lays the two partially destroyed female torsos side by side, an image that is surreal and extraordinary, after which each character's consciousness will infiltrate the other: see through each other's eyes, perceive their surroundings from the other's perspective, and the Puppet Master will appropriate the Major's vocal chords. The effect is a dislocating one for the viewer.

Their merging is prefaced by a long dialogue in which the Puppet Master, speaking through Kusanagi, clarifies the enterprise he would like her to embark on. He tells her, "We will both be slightly changed, but neither will lose anything. Afterwards, it should be impossible to distinguish one from the other." When she asks him why he chose her, he answers, "Because in you I see myself as a body sees its reflection within a mirror" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). His response allows her to recognize that it was he who had spoken through her on the boat (discussed above).

Before their final union and occurring only moments before both bodies are blown to bits by government snipers that target them through the glass ceiling, Kusanagi asks 2501 if she will lose herself. He responds,

Your desire to remain as you are, is what ultimately limits you... I am connected to a vast network, of which I myself am a part. To one like you, who cannot access it, you may perceive it only as light. As we are confined to our one section, so we are all connected. Limited to a small part of our functions. But now we must slip our bonds, and shift to the higher structure. (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995)

The damaged cyborg torso that contains Project 2501 and Kusanagi's body are destroyed, but Batou secretly manages to salvage Kusanagi's head, which was severed from her body by the blast. Fittingly, it lies alone in a pool of water on the floor, once again representing submersion, this time her mind's final and permanent separation and dive into the sea of the net, her transformation complete.

With this act, the protagonist has not only bridged the identities of human and machine, virtual and real, but perhaps even human and goddess (omniscient being). Kusanagi is the embodiment of Haraway's "infidel" as she questions the validity of remaining within the parameters prescribed by society and chooses instead to move to higher order, a fluid incorporeal existence. However, while the cyborg is sometimes used as a feminist metaphor, "to destroy gender binaries as it seeks to blur the boundaries between human and machine" (Ingrid Hoofd, *Cyborg Manifesto 2.0*, 2002, Online), my observations prevent me from defining the protagonist as having feminist underpinnings. Although Kusanagi is in many respects a strong female character, she is compromised by her vulnerability and to some extent by the depiction of her "wedding" with the Puppet Master described above, which I will elaborate on here. As previously mentioned, the Puppet Master is gendered male by speaking with a male voice that is used to cajole Kusanagi, his chosen mate into merging with him. The cajolements include extolling his position as the higher entity (see above), with all its male connotations of superior mind, while she is relegated to a role of organic motherhood, normalizing her radical cyborg body. After he dives into her, flooding her with his male consciousness and

rendering her passive, he speaks such lines as, "At last I'm able to channel into you," and, "After the merging, you will bear my offspring into the net itself" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). When Motoko acquiesces she assumes the passive female role that is determined by the dialogue, even though the union is not one that produces children but rather a combination of the two entities into a new being.

Although it can be argued that the protagonist seems to fulfill her own desires, I believe this assumption is also questionable. The Puppet Master has "ghost hacked" Kusanagi to some degree over an unknown period of time. For instance, her previously discussed ocean dive was mediated by his presence. Further, her obsessive doubts about the authenticity of her human ghost (an authenticity that she seems to deeply desire) seem antithetical to her decision to mate with the Puppet Master and discard that ghost (assuming it does exist). I suggest that her decision to merge with Project 2501 is at best ambiguous, even while I concur that the transformation is a positive one.

In regards to the feminist aspect of the Major's cyborg body, I am in agreement with Napier (2005) who comments that the director's choice to use a female protagonist is appropriate to a broader statement about the condition of humanity in general. She states, "Oshii is instead using her vulnerable female body and the 'feminine' lyrical mode of the film itself to underline the vulnerability of all human beings in a world that is increasingly governed by oppressive and incomprehensible outside forces" (p. 112). Ironically, one of those outside forces is the ominous government designed Project 2501, which concurrently compromises

and liberates the protagonist. Further as Napier comments, Kusanagi's transformation could also be perceived as an act of rebellion against the government and Section 9 (p. 114).

In the final scene, Batou has found Kusanagi a new shell on the black market to replace the one decimated at the glass warehouse. The torso of a little girl is the only cyborg shell available at such short notice, and the image of Kusanagi with her original full-sized head and the new tiny body is disorientating. When she awakens in Batou's safe house, she initially speaks with the voice of a child until she has adjusted to her surroundings. The change in voice and the tiny frame emphasize that she is a new entity – a child of sorts – and her own bewilderment at her predicament. Coming back to herself, her voice deepens and she tells Batou that she now understands the words she spoke with the Puppet Master's voice after her night dive off the boat. Before those words, ("What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror, then we will see face to face") came these ones, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11, King James Bible version, quoted in *Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). The verse indicates that she no longer sees the world through a dark glass, but now has a clear and all encompassing vision, perhaps unencumbered by the restraints of the ego. She explains that she is now both entities combined into a new unique form, "Here before you is neither the program called the Puppet Master nor the woman that was called the Major" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). Motoko has shifted the bonds of

mortality and successfully found the freedom she desired from Section 9, as well as expanding infinitely beyond the boundaries of her consciousness in which she felt confined.

Together Motoko and the Puppet Master have metamorphosed into an incorporeal child of the "net," which Napier (2005) refers to as a "non-material Overmind" (p. 105), including, but greater than the internet. Although the major still has a body at the end of the film, albeit a different one, her closing words anticipate her complete disappearance into the net in the second film *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. From the edge of Batou's garden overlooking the sparkling lights of the city – redolent of the film's first image of her atop the skyscraper – she states, "The net is vast and limitless. Where will the newborn go from here?" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995).

According to Napier (2005), the director Oshii has stated that the internet could be compared to the myriad of Japanese Shinto deities, and the both the director and screenwriter Ito Kazunori maintain that Kusanagi's final union or "wedding" with the Puppet Master, "is evocative of the sun goddess Amaterasu's decision to take part in the world of the gods" (p. 113). It could also be said that there is a Buddhist element to this union. Through joining with a larger consciousness, the protagonist may have reached a new state that could be likened to the Zen idea of satori, or the Buddhist state of nirvana, both of which include the union of opposites (cessation of dualisms) and the end of cravings and sufferings that bind us to an individual consciousness. Moreover, Napier maintains, "it is a

truism that a willingness to give up the self into a larger entity has been an important element in Japanese communal morality for centuries" (p. 114). However, there is evidence that the Major maintains a subjective identity at least some of the time, and her metamorphosis could also be explained as a subject, "paradoxically extended by its own disappearance" (Bukatman, 1993, p. 315).

In conclusion, *Ghost in the Shell* offers technology as a vision of transcendence, but remains pessimistic about the ways in which technology is used to carry out the machinations of government and mega-corporate interests, and to some extent, its dehumanizing effects. To counteract these negative consequences in our own world, the best we can do as individuals is to take hold of technology in a fundamental way in order to have some impact on the direction we take it, and how it will affect ourselves and the rest of nature. As Kusanagi quips, "If a technological feat is possible man will do it. Almost as though it's wired into the core of our beings [sic]" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995). However, being able to create and use technology is not enough. Without imposing the proper limitations on our technological designs, we have already gone a good way towards ruining our planet. Our relationship with technology need not be negative, but in the last century, it has removed us ever farther from our relationship to other organisms – animals and nature – and from our higher human ideals, and from each other.

However, Oshii claims, "humans are always changing, and they need to change with the development of technology. However, they should not fear the change or evolution, but rather accept it and learn to live with it" (cited in Rucka,

Midnight Eye, 2004, Online). The director states in making this film, he thought about what really makes a person unique, and decided that is the brain, specifically its reminiscences of life (cited in Gilchrist, Interview with Mamoru Oshii, 2004, Online); however, in the context of this film the brain can be transferred from one being or shell to another, perhaps with disastrous effects.[6] One can only imagine how complicated and convoluted ones memories might be. Even more alarming, the brain /mind can be altered and even reprogrammed, which renders the notion of a unique individual human consciousness questionable at best, and perhaps even non-existent.

Plausibly through downloading human consciousness into dolls /robots, humans will achieve immortality, and explore exciting possibilities such as an alternate existence in cyberspace; but as Claudia Springer (1996) asserts, "this notion can also be understood to foretell human extinction" (p. 129). For better or for worse, this conundrum has validity both inside and outside the anime universe. As Haraway (1991) cleverly observes, *"Our machines* are disturbingly lively, and we *ourselves* frighteningly inert" (p. 152).

As mentioned above, I suggest that by addressing the four themes I have isolated in this anime, my discussion also seamlessly responds to my original questions. Kusanagi's decision to rebel and merge with the Puppet Master provides her with a type of transcendence, but as Napier (2002) comments, "her transformation is in some ways an apocalyptic one as well, implying the jettisoning of the entire organic world" (p. 115). Notably, it may not be long before some of

the advancements illustrated in *Ghost in the Shell* are available to us. As asked

above, will we be ready to make informed decisions about technologies that may be

used to control us?

Chapter Three

Pleasures and Nightmares in *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*

If our Gods and our hopes are nothing but scientific phenomena, then let us

admit it must be said that our love is scientific as well.

Auguste Villiers De L'isle-Adam (from *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*)

Reminds me of the line 'what the body creates, is as much an expression of

DNA as the body itself'...If the essence of life is information carried in DNA, then

society and civilization are just colossal memory systems...And a metropolis like

this one, simply a sprawling external memory.[1]

Oshii Mamoru (from *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*)

Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence/Innosensu: Kokaku kidotai*

(2004) addresses the importance of preserving humanity in the midst of extreme

technological change, which defines the apocalypse in this film. Chapter Three

examines this issue through an analysis of the central human and posthuman

characters. The sequel to *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), discussed in Chapter Two,

Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence (hereafter referred to as *Innocence*) illustrates a

dystopian near future world in which boundaries between human and machine,

and life and death are all but erased. In the year 2032, human consciousness can

be altered and transferred and human memory is no longer reliable. Of particular

concern, is the human insistence on immortalizing themselves through the creation

of different types of *ningyo* /human-figured dolls (robots) with often dire results.

Taking a philosophical approach, this anime illustrates a complexity of problems

that foregrounds human transmogrification into machines and the loss of human

affect in the world. I maintain that educators and students can benefit from this

examination, as it provides an analysis of a critically acclaimed anime whose

apocalyptic themes are increasingly relevant. Through active spectatorship, this

anime presents remarkable pedagogical opportunities for educational studies in

various disciplines including English literature and film.

The overall excellence of *Innocence* was recognized by the Cannes Film

Festival, when *Innocence* became the first anime film to compete for the coveted

Palme d'Or in 2004, and became one of only six animated films to compete during

the festival's history. Similar to Oshii's classic, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Innocence* is

dialogue-driven with characters who discuss philosophical and ethical issues

concerning human and artificial intelligence. Characters quote from sources as

disparate as the Bible, Buddha, Descartes, and Jacob Grimm. Whereas the story

of *Innocence* is perhaps more straightforward than that of *Ghost in the Shell*, the

language is not, as the dialogue is extremely dense and complicated. Oshii's use

of abstruse intertextual layering is meaningful and evocative even if the film

requires several viewings. Oshii credits director Jean-Luc Godard, particularly

Godard's dystopian science-fiction film noir classic *Alphaville* (1965) for this

influence. However, referring to viewer's difficulty understanding the film, the elusive director comments, "My theme is always dead simple. I never regard my works as 'difficult to understand.' If they [films] look 'difficult to understand,' that is probably because I do not hold very much interest in story or drama [sic]" (Brian Ruh, Interview, 2004, Online).

Instead, Oshii maintains that his films describe his concerns about human interface with technology. These concerns seem to run a gamut from lamenting the loss of the human body as humans turn into automata, and conversely extolling this change with the view that humans would not have created culture if they still used their bodies as they were designed to be used before humans discovered language (discussed below). Despite Oshii's comment above, his themes are complex and multidimensional; as a result, numerous meanings emerge from his often ambiguous narratives, which are examined with intense speculation by scholars and film critics.

Notably, however, in an interview near the end of the film's production, Oshii identifies that *omoi*/affect is the key concept around which he constructed *Innocence* (Orbaugh, 2008, p. 161). He claims that as humans become posthuman, memory and the body will become untrustworthy as foundations of selfhood, and *omoi* may be the only marker of humanity that is left (Orbaugh, p. 161). According to this interview, he claims that *Innocence* is about this next stage of humanity. He explains,

Even if we are already resigned to the loss of [the body and memory], I believe that affect remains (*omoi ga nokoru*). It may be some sort of feeling toward a particular woman, or toward the dog who lives with you, or toward the body your have lost. The affect that a person leaves behind is the evidence that they have lived (cited in Orbaugh, p. 161).

If *Innocence* describes the next stage or state of humankind, then it describes the fragility of such a state. Before I go further, I will take a moment to define "affect." According to Eric Shouse (2005), affect is a term that describes a psychological state of "'prepersonal' intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another," which, "plays an important role in determining the relationship between our bodies, our environment, and others" (*Feeling, Emotion, Affect*, Online). Shouse maintains that due to the 'abstractivity' and transmitability of affect, it is potentially a 'powerful social force', one that determines the intensity of both the quality and quantity of our feelings that subsequently inform our actions (*Feeling, Emotion, Affect*, Online). *Innocence* expresses Oshii's position that affect will remain even after our organic bodies metamorphose into synthetic ones, and perhaps alternatively, a fear that affect may also waste away. On this point and others, *Innocence* is multilayered.

Nonetheless, despite Innocence's complicated script, multiple meanings, and any number of possible interpretations, *Innocence* is a visual feast, and in this regard, *Innocence* is very accessible. This mesmerizingly beautiful film is a well-crafted blend of two-dimensional cell animation (drawing) and three-dimensional

computer animation. The sometimes claustrophobic, finely-detailed interiors and atmospheric long shots of outlandish architecture also add to the fantastic character of the narrative, while washes of blue and sepia draw the viewer into a subterranean netherworld.

The film is also spectacular in its rendering of urban spaces. Similar to *Ghost in the Shell*, Oshii excels in illustrating urban spaces that overflow with text and imagery that humans unwittingly accommodate in their routine lives. For instance, Oshii comments, "with the convenience store scene, I got to fulfill one of my longtime wishes. I wanted to depict a gunfight set in a space crowded with information. I wanted to depict the scattering of merchandise as meticulously as possible" (Afterward, 2004, p. 196). To achieve the director's vision it was necessary for the artists to complete two to three thousand background drawings for that scene alone.

In addition, some of the film's most arresting imagery belongs to the opening credit sequence. Reminiscent of *Ghost in the Shell*, the opening titles are intercut with images of creating the humanoid cybernetic form. This birth sequence is perhaps even more remarkable and impressive than Kusanagi's in *Ghost in the Shell*, as the updated 3D computer technology is used brilliantly to its greatest advantage. Jasper Sharp (2004) describes it in detail:

> In the dark amniotic waters, a single cell begins dividing recursively before mutating into a collection of individual biomorphic sections. These form into jointed limbs and a segmented spinal column connected by snaking

cable-like sinews, the strands of which twist like a DNA double helix to

bind the individual parts as they transform into the flat planar forms making

up the sections of what slowly comes to resemble a clothes shop

mannequin. (Midnight Eye, Online)

The mechanical female forms clearly pay homage to the influence of wooden

ball-jointed dolls by Polish Surrealist sculptor Hans Bellmer (1902-1975). Oshii

willing acknowledges that he has been in love with the Bellmer dolls since he

discovered photographs of them thirty years ago. While Oshii's dolls do not share

the perversity of those of the Surrealist artist, they are equally eerie and beautiful.

Significantly, a reference to Bellmer's book *The Doll* (1934, Japanese ed. 1995)

provides the only concrete clue to the unraveling of the detective plot in *Innocence*

(discussed below).

Innocence is also a love story, but not between humans: it is a tale of

posthuman love between a cyborg and a postcyborg; namely, Section 9 (anti-

cyberterrorism division special forces) agent Batou and his former partner, Major

Kusanagi Motoko from *Ghost in the Shell*. Kusanagi who merged with the

bodiless entity the Puppet Master in the earlier film is now a non-corporeal entity

in cyberspace; however, she keeps a close psychic connection to her burly ex-

partner. Although it is subtly presented, the love story drives the narrative.

Another kind of love illustrated in the film, is Batou's strong affection for his dog.

Director Oshii suggests that human relationships with animals (particularly with

dogs) may assist humans to transgress anthropocentrism. Both types of love will be discussed below in subsequent sections.

My examination of *Innocence* follows the same format used for each chapter. First, I applied the same set of questions to my reading of the film that were used for chapters one and two, and second, I used my analysis to isolate three salient themes or topics established in the anime that will frame my discussion for this chapter. My original questions are- What is the nature of the apocalypse in this film? How does the manifestation of the apocalypse affect central characters? Does the apocalypse narrative stimulate explorations of personal identity and provide an opportunity for creativity, growth, change, or renewal? In what ways might Japanese perspectives manifested in the selected anime be different from our own (if applicable)? Finally, does the anime leave us with questions that are relevant outside of the anime?

As stated above, my analysis of this film is framed by three key themes. They are as follows: *first-* the importance of preserving humanity – both the physical and the psychological – in the midst of extreme technological change, which includes a discussion of a secondary theme, namely humans need to associate with something else (other than human) to recognize their own humanity; *second-* human obsession with creating robots (dolls) in their own image and the repercussions of this practice (I indicate later in the discussion how the first two themes overlap); *third* the relationship of different types of existence – human, animal, and robot – to notions of perfection and innocence (arriving at some

definitions of the term innocence as it is used in the film). I will provide a brief

synopsis of the narrative here before I discuss each of the three topics in order.

Innocence exchanges Ghost in the Shell's science-fiction narrative and

cyberpunk sensibility for a more fantastic one imbued with the uncanny (Napier,

2005, p. xv). It also replaces the earlier film's protagonist Major Kusanagi

Motoko, who has disappeared into the net (mentioned above) with her former

police partner, the cyborg Batou, as the central character. Kusanagi's connection to

Batou leads him to refer to her as his guardian angel. Although Batou's feelings

for the Major are inferred in both films, he is not ready to join her in the

cyberworld. Instead, Batou clings to what is left of his humanity within the scant

remainder of his original human brain, and continues his service for Section 9.

Like Ghost in the Shell, the setting is once again the fictional Asian

metropolis Newport City, but it is now 2032, three years into the future. Batou is

responsible for leading elite security force Section 9's investigation into a wave of

homicides that include high-ranking government officials and financial elite at the

hands of their female gynoid / robot companions (referred to as "sexaroids"). After

dispatching their male owners, the gynoids seem to malfunction intentionally,

ripping open the synthetic skin of their own chests. At the beginning of the film,

Batou encounters one of the gynoids shortly after she has murdered her owner and

two other men. Before he shoots her, she mysteriously begins to whisper,

"tasukete"/"help me" and self-destructs (Innocence, 2004).

My discussion of theme one begins with an examination of how *Innocence* illustrates Oshii's emphasis on recognizing and sustaining humanity. It also investigates a secondary theme that emerges, namely, Oshii's argument that humans need something else to compare themselves to in order to comprehend their own identities. In this film, Oshii claims that he uses dolls and dogs for that purpose. I will discuss the larger theme first.

Oshii perceives that the impact of technology results in the loss of human qualities, or "human-ness" that includes moral and spiritual characteristics. *Innocence* portrays how technologies such as body and brain enhancements and augmentations fracture and disassemble human beings. Placing a greater emphasis on the body than ever before, in an interview with Todd Gilchrist (2004, Online), Oshii explains that as he grows older his concerns are shifting from the dominant importance of the mind to the significance of the whole body as defining who we are as individuals. Oshii's concern with the body is a radical departure from his worldview in the first *Ghost in the Shell* film. He states:

When I made the first *Ghost in the Shell*, I thought about what really makes your body your body. If you lose your arm, and you keep losing body parts, what is the last part that still makes you unique? The conclusion I came to at the time was your brain, and more specifically, your memory of life.

When I made *Ghost in the Shell 2*, my conclusion changed. This time I thought it's your body, and it's not anything specific, like your arm or

your leg, it's the body as an entire [entity], and more than that, it's really the relationships you have with other people...Traditionally in Japan, the brain isn't that important; if you are accused of something and you are executed for it, that's when you lose your head, but when you go and take the responsibility voluntarily, more honorably, that's when you do *hara-kiri* [*seppuku*- self-inflicted disembowelment] and cut your body. I think that's representative of the fact that you cannot actually 'sever' your body. (cited in Gilchrist, 2004, Online)

In keeping with this philosophy, *Innocence* has as its main character, a cyborg (Batou), who is shown to be troubled by the replacement of his human arm with a prosthesis when it is damaged (perhaps his last remaining human part other than a particle of his original human brain). After Batou awakens from his surgery in the clinic, he enquires after his former limb and is obviously upset when he learns it is discarded. Batou reluctantly flexes his new arm and mutters that with enough use it will feel like his own. This scene establishes that even a cyborg with an almost entirely synthetic shell perceives his body as a complete functioning unit, as do humans.

Further, as mentioned above, *Innocence* also illustrates Oshii's assertion that as humans become progressively estranged from their human identities (in their journey through posthuman transformations) they will need to associate intimately with something else, other than human, to connect with their own humanity (as mentioned above). For this purpose, Oshii provides Batou with a

dog, Oshii's preferred pet. In the clinic scene (described above), following his surgical procedure, Batou is cheered by the arrival of his Basset hound brought by fellow agents Togusa and Ishikawa. It is obvious that Batou has a strong emotional connection to the dog.

The director claims that Batou's pet hound holds the essence to the protagonist's humanity. In the Gilchrist (2004) interview, Oshii states, "Without the existence of the dog that the protagonist keeps in his apartment, that world really would have been too inhuman" (Online). Notably, Batou's relationship with his pet is similar to the director's devotion to his real life canine companion, the Basset Hound, Gabriel. In fact, Oshii fans take note that the hound makes an appearance in every one of the director's films. In the scene described below, Oshii has recorded his own dog barking and whining for the sound track. The director's comment that he prefers the company of his dog to humans is also well documented.

Interestingly, in a later scene set in Batou's apartment, the protagonist operates a music box that features a tiny Basset (*Gabriel* is written on a plaque below the figurine). The little animal moves mechanically to a sweet tinkly melody. While the music box smacks of human sentimentality with its cute reference to a larger, smelly, real dog, the difference between Batou's pet and the mechanical toy is so apparent that Oshii may be making the point that a pet ought to be natural. The narrative reveals, as Dani Cavallaro (2006) argues, Batou pays a great deal more for his hound (surprising to his work associates) because it is

from a first-line (original) cloned stock (pp. 200-201). Batou's loving relationship

with his dog, a real and imperfect animal, is illustrated in the wonderful scene I

describe below. With so much attention to detail, it could only be directed by

someone who intensely loves his own pet. It also demonstrates, as Oshii states,

that outside of Batou's connection to, and consideration for his pet (and his love

for Kusanagi), he has little interest in himself.

At the end of the workday, Batou arrives home to find that his dog, Gabriel,

has urinated inside the door. The dog, understanding that he is naughty, whines,

and runs away to hide behind an armchair from where he peaks cautiously at his

owner. When Batou calmly cleans his shoe over the bathtub, the dog adorably

tries to watch over his master's shoulder, jostling from one hind foot to the next as

he leans on his master's back. While the pup waits for his dinner, the camera

plays with his reflection through a transparent ball he pushes with his nose. The

images of Batou carefully warming and preparing the dog's meal, and even lifting

the Basset's ears out of the bowl when it begins to eat, sharply contrasts with the

protagonist's disregard for the rest of his environment or nourishment (if cyborgs

need to eat). Grabbing what seems to be a beer out of an under-stocked fridge for

himself, Batou sits down and waits for the dog to finish. Minutes later, the dog

rests his head on Batou's lap and falls asleep. This scene emphasizes that the dog

can elicit the protagonist's (and by extension all humans') potential to nurture and

care for something else. Pets can also, by ushering in an emotional response, help

humans to connect with their humanness. Oshii claims, "By communicating with

dogs, I think humans might realize something about themselves" (Afterword, 2005, pp. 190-191).

The ritual of food lovingly prepared for another Basset Hound (while the owner drinks beer and in this case smokes cigarettes as well) appears in Oshii's live action film, *Avalon* (2001). In *Avalon*, the virtual world of the video game impinges on the lives of humans who are unable to understand the mediated systems that control their lives, similar to the universes of both *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence*. In some respects, all three films are about humans (and cybernetic humans) who, because they have forgotten how to be human, they devalue their humanity. In both *Innocence* and *Avalon*, the dog represents a desire to reach out to another being – a warm, but not human body.

Oshii believes that the human body that pre-exists language has perished, and now the body is just baggage. According to Sharalyn Orbaugh (2008), he describes contemporary humans as beings who live primarily in a world that consists of what they see and hear—in other words, "what comes to them through their heads" (cited in Orbaugh, p. 159). Orbaugh states, Oshii refers to this functionless body as the *tsumetai shintai*/the cold body. He relates this "cold body" to "the artificial, empty bodies of dolls" (cited in Orbaugh, p. 159) toward which humans are moving either as cyborgs, or as human terminals or nodes on an urban computerized network (Orbaugh, p. 160). She maintains that Oshii believes only animals have a body that pre-exists language and thought, and he refers to animals as having *niou shintai*/the body that smells. The term means, "a creature for whom

body and selfhood are identical" (cited in Orbaugh, p. 160). The term describes a

being with two characteristics: a creature that both uses its sense of smell to survive

and to understand the world, as well as a creature who emits an odor naturally and

unselfconsciously (Orbaugh, p. 160). It is the relationship humans can foster with

niou shintai that Oshii believes will help humans to re-discover their humanness

and to discard anthropocentrism.

However, according to my understanding of *Innocence*, this notion can

also be extended to posthumans, despite the idea of the cold bodies mentioned

above. For instance, the film successfully conflates notions of posthuman and

human, even in the form of central protagonist, Batou. As a result, even though

the scene above illustrates Batou's human love for his pet, it could also be said to

illustrate Batou's cyborg love as well. Batou is a cyborg unit who possesses only

slim traces of his original human brain, and yet, observably, he is a doting pet

owner. It could also be argued that Batou's affection for his dog demonstrates the

capacity and need posthumans have for companionship. In fact, viewers will

acknowledge that Batou exhibits feelings for his vanished partner Kusanagi in

both *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence*. Hence, it would be fair to say that both

films suggest the cyborg has feelings. Whether these emotions originate from

Batou's scant human memories or are acquired through his experiences as a

cyborg unit is not explained.

Further, through the character Haraway (discussed below) a strong case is

made for the emotional complexities of robots. In fact, Oshii emphatically

maintains that humans are not given precedence over posthumans in this film. So one could say that while dogs (animals) serve to make humans more aware of their humanity (in terms of human qualities), they also do the same for cyborgs and by extension robots. Moreover, through technology (mentioned above) the differences between humans and posthumans are so blurred and indistinguishable that the organic human body seems to be of little consequence when it comes to affect as well.

On the other hand, whereas Oshii's use of dogs to elicit human connectedness is positive and straightforward his use of dolls is not either. The dolls do not help humans to feel more human (as one might expect); instead, the dolls reflect how corrupt humans have become. The dolls seem to be invested with the human qualities that the humans themselves are losing in the process of making them. This is not a metaphysical occurrence, but is rather an outcome of human dissatisfaction with themselves, a dissatisfaction that is increased as the dolls become more lively and their makers by comparison become more dull. I maintain that the effort to create perfect dolls, for better or for worse, seems to rob humans of their will and energy to continue as a species. Since humans are imperfect and impermanent while dolls edge toward perfection and hold the possibility of immortality, I allege this is one reason for the uncanniness of dolls, and their sometimes frightening effect on humans (examined below).

Innocence suggests that as humans persist in changing themselves through technology and creating humanlike robots (ningyo /dolls), they will eventually

orchestrate their own extinction. The question is- why are humans obsessed with the desire to make themselves into dolls, and/or, to create humanlike dolls that may replace them? This query is the topic of theme two, and begins here with my investigation of how it emerges in the narrative in unique ways.

As mentioned above, Oshii's explorations into human nature and human relationships with dolls elicit a variety of interpretations. On the official *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* website (2004), Oshii claims that he has always wondered why people create robots in their own image. He states,

> I don't suppose that the human figure is the most practical shape for industrial robots. What is it about people that makes them do the most illogical things? I thought that exploring this question from the doll's point of view would help me better understand human nature. (Go Fish Pictures, Online)

To this end, Oshii alleges that the human character Togusa represents viewers, and the protagonist – oversized doll Batou – becomes his guide (Go Fish Pictures, Online) leading the audience vicariously on a hellish journey of discovery down the rabbit hole and back again. Batou and Togusa encounter eccentric characters that include human, cyborg, and completely artificial creatures. These encounters trigger arguments about the nature of different forms of existence, including humans and machines.

Not surprisingly, dolls in the anime are more complex and complicated intellectually and emotionally than humans. For instance, Coroner Haraway is

able to outwit Batou and Togusa, who are unable to comprehend that she is an android. In fact, Togusa who engages in a complex conversation with the gray-haired medical examiner, later quips that he likes older women. I will explore the scene in the coroner's office in some detail as it introduces some of the key ideas explored in this section.

Coroner Haraway appears to be a chain-smoking, middle-aged woman, with a sharp critical tongue. When Togusa asks her about her examination of the malfunctioning gynoid that Batou had shot (referring to the young female robot who self-destructed and whispered "tasukete"/"help me"), she complains immediately, "Blew her apart with double-0 buckshot. A 50 caliber hollow point would've left her easier to reconstruct" (*Innocence*, 2004). When Batou retorts that the robot had killed three humans, two of them police officers, she calmly responds, "She was trying to commit suicide before you shot her. Isn't that right?" (*Innocence*). Haraway considers the robot inclination to self-destruct is not any different from a human's impulse to commit suicide, and despite her somewhat blasé and indifferent manner, she seems to show more sympathy for the robot than for its human victims. Togusa finds her comment difficult to accept, but Haraway plays them the destroyed gynoid's audio track that clearly reveals her uttering "*tasukete*" repeatedly. While Haraway plays the mysterious track, the investigators glance around the laboratory at robots in various stages of disassembly for examination and prognosis. Eerily their staring doll faces seem

inconsolable and somehow lonely as if to suggest that they are silently crying out too.

When Togusa asks Haraway why a robot would commit suicide, she prattles off a list of possibilities such as - defects, viruses, human manufacturing errors, etc., before hesitating and adding her own opinion: "I say it's because humans discard their robots once they're redundant. When owners trade up to newer models, some of those abandoned become vagrants and degenerate. Perhaps it's a protest against their own obsolescence" (*Innocence*, 2004). While Togusa asserts such a notion is "absurd," the camera follows Batou's gaze toward an inoperative partially dismantled female robot that matches Haraway's description. The face is beautiful, but ravaged and miserable. It is probable that Batou can envision himself in a similar state at a future date. Perhaps it is the expected fate of all cybernetic beings if they live long enough. Responding to Togusa, Haraway retorts, "Humans are different from robots. That's an article of faith, like black isn't white. It's no more helpful than the basic fact that humans aren't machines [sic]" (*Innocence*).

Haraway questions why humans would want to create robots so similar to themselves that the two have become almost interchangeable. When she reveals that the gynoids under investigation come equipped with organs that are not necessary with regular service robots, and refers to them as "sexaroids" she partially answers her own question. Of course, while there may be many reasons for manufacturing humanoid robots, their uses for sexual pleasure are more than

clear. It is not a great leap to imagine that there is a market for beautiful adolescent female doll /robot sex toys. These particular gynoids are reminiscent of geisha, who are often referred to as "living dolls." These lovely gynoids wear kimonos over their white skin and red flowers in their black hair, perhaps representing both their innocence and their sexuality respectively.

In general, the claims made by Haraway go a long way toward collapsing arbitrary distinctions between machine and human, appropriate to a character named after Donna Haraway who wrote the often quoted, *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), in which such concepts as organism and mechanism are inextricably obscured. As she continues to voice her opinions to the agents, she verbally plays with definitions of children and human that to her appear to be nonsense. The human Togusa takes issue with her judgments, but Batou the cyborg appears to understand. Some of the conversation between Batou, Togusa, and Haraway is quoted here:

> Haraway: Children have been excluded from the customary standards of human behavior, if you define humans as beings who possess a conventional identity and act out of free will. Then what are children who endure in the chaos preceding maturity? They differ profoundly from "humans" but they obviously have human form. The dolls that little girls mother are not surrogates for real babies. Little girls aren't so much imitating child rearing as they are experiencing something deeply akin to child rearing.

Togusa: What on earth are you talking about?

Haraway: Raising children is the simplest way to achieve the ancient dream of artificial life. At least that's my hypothesis.

Togusa: Children aren't dolls!

Batou: Descartes didn't differentiate man from machine, animate from inanimate. He lost his beloved five-year-old daughter and then named a doll after her, Francine. He doted on her. At least that's what they say.

(*Innocence*, 2004)

Haraway's argument, bizarre as it seems, is very clever. She insists that children differ profoundly from adults who alone fit the definition of human, and yet they are privileged by society over robots who are brought into the world as replicas of adult humans. Further, she suggests that when little girls act motherly with their dolls, it is not an imitation of child rearing, but rather it is just like child rearing. In other words, children, who do not yet have opinions about the superiority of humans over machines or dolls, care for their dolls indiscriminately, and one could say naturally. Further, Haraway also makes the point that children (human offspring) are no different from robots (another form of human offspring) in that both have the appearance of being human and yet neither of them by definition are human. If this is true, then the converse is also true, robots are no different from children, and one could say from humans. Hence, it is not such a wide leap to accept that the discarded robots are despondent enough to commit suicide, any

more than it is to accept that the devastated philosopher Descartes loved his doll Francine.

Haraway's arguments suggest that it is only arbitrary notions placed on love by human adults that prevent robots /dolls from being cared for like human children. Togusa, who is a parent, is unconvinced. I maintain that Haraway's argument is a logical one—within the framework of this film—one that supports the equivalent status of humans and machines, even if it may be generally unacceptable to most humans. Certainly, through Coroner Haraway's arguments, the director removes the differences between humans and dolls (robots) and garners viewer sympathy for the dolls' plight. It seems plain that humans ought to take responsibility for the dolls as Haraway suggests. Humans must owe these anthropomorphic beings, endowed as they are with human emotions, something more than abandonment for the privilege of their service.

I find Haraway's perspective particularly interesting since she is also a doll / robot (mentioned above) which Togusa and Batou do not realize. Although it is beyond the scope of this anime, it may be that her undisclosed status as a doll designates her as a radical advocate for robot rights – a future insurgent perhaps – within the police department. It leaves room for speculation about robot rights in the future of the anime universe. Viewers are not aware that Haraway is an android until Togusa and Batou turn to leave her office, at which point viewers see her flip open the top half of her face to connect with electronic viewing apparatus.

It is clear that robot Haraway has a superior intellect and demonstrates a fair-mindedness that human characters may lack.

This scene demonstrates that despite the director's insistence on preserving human identity, he shows remarkable sympathy for posthuman characters. In fact, Orbaugh (2008) quotes Oshii as stating, "even without our bodies we should be able to go on being humans; this [situation] is even desirable. If you look at history, that is basically how it has gone: it is only by losing our bodies that we have been able to create culture and civilization" (pp. 160-161). Although this comment may unexpectedly contrast with others made about the importance of the human body, these multiple perspectives are not mutually exclusive, but offer diverse interlacing accounts that allow many meanings to emerge. Oshii (2004) maintains (as previously mentioned), "This movie does not hold the view that the world revolves around the human race....instead it concludes that all forms of life – humans, animals and robots – are equal" (Go Fish Pictures). The term humanity is used to focus on the importance of human connectedness to the world and relationships with other beings, not as a set of physical attributes that belong only to the human organism.

Nonetheless, one compelling interpretation of *Innocence* suggests that humans are in an atrophic state and losing their humanity, and by contrast, the dolls (as mentioned above) are becoming increasingly human. If so, it could be alleged that the human obsession with creating dolls is to re-create the humanity that they themselves have lost. The dolls have the possibility of not only

harboring human emotion and intelligence, but also of being made smarter and stronger than their makers. Is it any wonder that humans are constantly improving upon their robot /doll creations, after all, they are designing and manufacturing their own successors (almost certainly without realizing it).

I maintain that both themes, the first and second discussed so far, overlap. Together they describe how, through technology, humans may be losing their humanity (theme one), and why, in the pursuit of perfection and immortality, humans are obsessed with creating robots to imitate them (theme two). I will make another connection here. Supplementing both arguments is Oshii's depiction of the Northern Province, and Kim, the hacker extraordinaire who takes up residence there. While the Northern Province illustrates a place populated by humans who have lost their humanness (including Kim), Kim provides additional arguments as to why humans create machines in their own image.

The Northern Province is a once thriving metropolis that has become a lawless zone, now populated by human beings who have lost their capacity to think, feel, and behave with humanity. It is home to the headquarters of mega-corporation Locus Solus (Latin for *isolated place* referencing a surreal novel by the same name written by French author Raymond Roussel in 1914) that manufactures the gynoids. Further, in the core of the city the central characters, Batou and Togusa, encounter the criminal mastermind Kim. Kim is a cyborg almost bereft of human qualities. He has had his mind encased in a body that resembles nothing more than a human corpse, symbolizing the atrophy and death

of humanity. I will begin by describing the Northern Province as it provides a clear example of the demise of humans Oshii warns us against. The location and the character Kim also represent loss—particularly the withering of human warmth and compassion, and also the depravity and corruption which replaces it.

Astonishing in its atmospheric detail, the nefarious glittering towers of the massive cathedral turned headquarters for Locus Solus dominate the oppressive Northern Province skyline (inspired by Oshii's impression of New York's towering skyscrapers) (Go Fish Pictures, 2004). Perhaps it represents the sanctity of the church /spirit corrupted or replaced by the worship of corporate money and technology. The streets below are dimly lit as the giant architecture of the once thriving center blocks the direct sun, even though the higher levels of the structures are sun-kissed in glittering sepia tones. The shadowy plane that carries Togusa and Batou to the city has the appearance of a gigantic dark bird with wide ebony wings that open like metallic feathers. In fact, many of the machines throughout *Innocence* have the appearance of an organism; for instance, the submarine that delivers Batou across the water resembles a giant black shark. It suggests that as humans are increasingly overwhelmed by technology, their machinery takes on organic and visceral shapes that are substitutes for a real affiliation with nature.

In the city crawling with people, the wide streets and balconies are lined with the throngs who attend a marvelous parade. (The parade scene is over four minutes long and took over a year for Oshii's studio to animate.) The parade

features a gigantic ornamented mechanical elephant (*dashi karakuri* discussed below) and multiple floats festooned with gods, goddesses, and humans dressed as historical and mythical figures garbed in ancient regalia. However, the mythologies they represent have been reduced to replication and spectacle in this ersatz location. Devoid of authenticity and meaning, the human participants on the floats are masked and anonymous; their blank covered faces and their costumes turn them into life-size dolls. The emotionless disguised faces of the humans contrast sharply with the angst-ridden visages of the dolls that lined Haraway's office, described above. With the exception of one monk, all the spectator's faces, including those of the children, are also masked. The effect of so many eyes moving and staring out with no defining human facial features is both ominous and uncanny.

Concurrently, in the alleyways where extraordinary structures mingle ancient Chinese architecture with organic spiraling grotesqueries reminiscent of Gaudi's Sagrada Família and HR Giger drawings (perhaps representing, once again, the human need to create organic life forms - in this case architecturally), humans burn enormous piles of child robots. Their innocent melting faces are the only ones without facial disguise. Compared to them, the masked human children that hurry through the streets seem strange and menacing. The comparison between the dolls who look like children and the children who resemble dolls can be related to the discussion with Coroner Haraway above, who argued that children and dolls should be treated similarly. It is not explained why these

humanoid children are meeting with a violent end. Additionally, it is curious that robots are designed to represent human children in the first place. Viewers may wonder what functions the child dolls were designed to fill and if they had become obsolete. Viewers may also wonder if they had been miserable like the abandoned adult models discussed above. There is no evidence of warm human contact in this metropolis, turning it effectively into a no-man's-land. It is only haunted by the specter of its former human inhabitants who once had spirit and compassion.

In this hinterland, the pair investigates Kim, a mercenary hacker and former colleague of Batou's. He has transferred his consciousness into a corpselike robot shell that is the only inhabitant of an immense and ornate Victorian mansion. His skeletal form wearing a silk smoking jacket, slumps in a recliner. He is connected to so many electronic cables he has the appearance of a life-size marionette. When Batou and Togusa arrive, he is immobile in the study, and almost convinces them that he is dead. Only the cyborg Batou could identify his deception.

The brilliantly evil Kim hacks both Togusa and Batou's minds and the pair enter a hall of illusions so perplexing that both men (especially the human Togusa) lose their grip on what is real. Mesmerized by the swirling cream in his coffee, presented to him by a mechanical serving girl (*karakuri ningyo*), Togusa is transported like Alice through the looking glass into a nightmarish realm. In his mind, he re-enters the mansion twice, similar to a déjà vu, each time experiencing a different fantasy. The first time he encounters himself and the second time Batou replacing Kim in the recliner. In the first illusion, Togusa sees a version of

himself that resembles a mechanical doll (*butai karakuri*) that ambles toward him with jerky but lifelike movements. The doll tells Togusa,

> Truly disturbing, isn't it? I really understand. The doubt is whether a creature that appears to be alive really is. Alternatively, the possibility that a lifeless object might actually live is why dolls haunt us. They are modeled on humans. They are in fact, nothing but human. They make us face the terror of being reduced to simple mechanisms and matter; in other words, the fear that fundamentally all humans belong to the void.

> Further, science, seeking to unlock the secret of life, brought about this terror. The notion that nature is calculable inevitably leads to the conclusion that humans too, are reducible to basic, mechanical parts.

> (*Innocence*, 2004)

In this passage, Oshii reveals the influence of Francis Crick (1994) (one of the co-discoverers of the structure of the DNA molecule) who wrote, "You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules" (p. 3). In keeping with Crick, Kim argues that if one accepts the naturalist theory that humans can be reduced to the behavior of simple mechanisms and molecules, then the difference between humans and dolls is no longer what Peter Williams (2006) calls "qualitative human essence" (Damaris Trust, Online). Of course, if one were to accept this belief it

problematizes the premise that humans are losing their humanity, as there would be no humanity to lose in the first place.

In another illusion, Togusa is horrified by a vision of himself in which he is wounded in an imaginary battle, and his shattered chest reveals an empty metal ribcage instead of human bones and bodily organs. In this vision, Kim forces Togusa into a state of confusion concerning the boundaries between human and machine, and self and other. Togusa's terror of losing his human body and becoming something akin to a machine or cyborg casts his partner Batou's mechanical body into sharp relief. Viewers realize that Batou is already a doll, and yet he is not so different from Togusa, nor is he frightening. In a sense, Togusa's apparition of himself and his associated fear seems to prove both Kim and Haraway's point that the doll and the man are the same, the differences between them are perhaps only arbitrary ones.

Kim also tells Togusa and Batou his version of why humans are obsessed with creating human-shaped robots (a question Haraway had voiced earlier). He explains:

> In this age, the twin technologies of robotics and electronic neurology resurrected the 18th century theory of man as machine. And now [sic] that computers have enabled externalized memory, humans have pursued self-mechanization aggressively, to expand the limits of their own functions. Determined to leave behind Darwinian natural selection, this human determination to beat evolutionary odds also reveals the desire to transcend

the very quest for perfection that gave it birth. The mirage of life equipped

with perfect hardware engendered this nightmare. (*Innocence*, 2004)

In this passage, Kim seems to be suggesting that with the ability to download

consciousness into external hardware, natural selection is transgressed, even going

beyond the original human quest for immortality—which he argues is the reason

that humans created dolls in the first place. He implies that while humans could

become immortal through perfecting technologies that enable the transfer of

consciousness, humans may also become simultaneously extinct. In other words,

a type of human intelligence may persist even after the human body has vanished.

Although the idea of external conscious portending the end of humankind is a

ubiquitous one in science fiction, Oshii's treatment of this point is startlingly

original. The figure of the cadaver-like Kim signaling the end of humanity is

tremendously disturbing.

The arguments presented by Kim and Haraway represent Oshii's fears and

concerns about where human relationships with technology might lead. Both Kim

and Haraway argue that humans and robots (dolls) are the same; however, whereas

Kim reduces humans to basic matter, mechanisms and neurons (viewing humans

and robots reductively and nihilistically), Haraway takes a largely contradictory

view, asserting instead that humans and robots possess similarly complex

humanlike consciousnesses. In a sense, Oshii's representation of Haraway and

Kim reverse our expectations of how human and artificial intelligence might

perceive the two life forms. While Haraway, the character who makes empathetic

connections to living things (including posthumans as a life form) is a robot, Kim, the character with little empathetic connections toward living things is human. Perhaps another crucial difference in the perspectives of Kim and Haraway is intention—Kim's criminal motivations are self-serving, while Haraway's interests are more selfless. For instance, Haraway shows concern for the 'sexaroid' robots (gynoids) Togusa and Batou are investigating. Not surprisingly, it turns out that the murderous suicidal gynoids were originally designed by Kim.

These gynoids, before they are infused with the consciousnesses of young girls, represent one type of innocence that appears in the film, that of dolls. According to Kim (discussed below), there are two other kinds of innocence- gods and animals. My discussion of the third theme, the relationship of different types of existence – dolls, human, and animal – to notions of perfection and innocence, begins here with a brief introduction to the concept of innocence as it is used in the film.

Yamada, who wrote the prequel novel for *Innocence*, only defines two forms of innocence, that belonging to animals and to dolls, stating that humans vacillate somewhere in the middle (2004, p.192). In the interview for the novel's "Afterword" he claims that for him, "an empty doll is much more innocent than people attached to the illusion of 'human-ness'" (p. 192). In the same interview, Oshii states that it was actually producer Suzuki Toshio from Studio Ghibli (Miyazaki Hayao's studio) onboard with Production I.G (Oshii's studio) for *Innocence,* who came up with the title for the film. Oshii claims that Suzuki had

somehow managed to underscore the motif for the entire project in the one word even though it does not appear anywhere in the script. Suzuki's notion of innocence is analogous to the concept of purity. Oshii states, "I liked the word 'innocence,' because in this case it didn't imply 'good'…instead…it refers to a state where there's no imprint" (Afterword, 2004, p.189).

In keeping with this notion of innocence, Oshii suggests that the posthuman love between Batou and Kusanagi is pure in its communication. Its innocence is antithetical to the horrendous exploits of the gynoids that are manipulated for men's lust. However, Oshii is careful to show the gynoid dolls' innocence. The gynoids are considered innocent- first by Haraway who blames Batou for shooting the doll that was about to commit suicide, and again, later, by the cyborgs when the girl in the holograph (discussed below) is discovered. I will provide a brief account of the origin and purpose of the gynoid dolls here, as they are the central feature of the detective story in the film, and the gynoids are also integral to the film's meaning.

Masterminded by Kim and manufactured by Locus Solus using young girls kidnapped by the yakuza (mob), the gynoids are a type of cyborg called Hadaly (inspired by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Tomorrow's Eve*, 1886). The gynoids are made using a "ghost" dubbing process in which multiple female robots receive downloaded copies of the captured girls' consciousnesses or *ghosts*, making them grotesquely desirable to men, and "metaphorically transforming the girls into dolls

themselves" (Brown, 2008, p. 244). The process eventually results in the brain death of the original human girl.

An empathetic Locus Solus employee, Jack Volkerson, felt sorry for the girls and assisted them by altering the gynoids' programming. The changes allowed the dolls to malfunction and attack their prominent male owners. Their rampages sparked the investigation that brought in Section 9.[2] Batou's discovery of Bellmer's book, *The Doll* (mentioned above) containing a loose holographic photograph of a young girl, illustrates Bellmer's influence on Oshii once again. As Steven Brown maintains, the picture of the girl captured in the pages can be paralleled to the seizure of the same girl's consciousness within the gynoid, as both the book and the gynoid shell contain, "the simulacrum of the captive girl" (2008, p. 242). Moreover, as Brown suggests, Oshii revisions Bellmer's dolls, which were made partially as a protest against ideals of beauty imposed by the Nazis during the Second World War, as a critique of the anthropomorphization of gynoids and other robots (p. 242).[3] In this regard, this incident relates back to the topic of theme two- why do humans create robots in their own image? Further, it questions the affect that these dolls, which illustrate unattainable ideals of beauty for most of the population, might have on young people, especially on young women. In this sense, *Innocence* takes up a very relevant engagement with Bellmer's dolls as a critique of our own current obsession with perfect images of youth and beauty. Notably, the girl that the cyborgs discover is a very ordinary child, nothing like the beautiful living dolls created for the Hadaly line.

During the climax of the film, the captured girls are discovered onboard an abandoned ship by Batou and Kusanagi (Kusanagi joins Batou by animating a gynoid shell for long enough to help him fight off legions of gynoids programmed to assassinate trespassers). Notably, when the girl (above) thanks the cyborgs for her rescue, they are cool toward her as this dialogue demonstrates:

> Batou (to the teenage girl): "Didn't he [former employee] consider the victims? Not the humans. What about the dolls endowed with souls?"
>
> Teenager: "But...but...I didn't want to become a doll!"
>
> Kusanagi: "We weep for the bird's cry, but not for the blood of a fish. Blessed are those who have a voice. If the dolls could speak, no doubt they'd scream, 'I didn't want to become human.'" (*Innocence*, 2004)

The perspectives of the human girl and the cyborgs differ profoundly. While the girl thinks of herself as the victim, Kusanagi's dialogue indicates that she sympathizes with the dolls. Her position reflects Yamada's claim (mentioned above) that the doll is more innocent than the human with a human's semblance of "human-ness" (2005, p. 192). However, I maintain that while Kusanagi perceives that the dolls have no voice with which to choose their own destiny (obviously true), neither does a kidnapped child, which the cyborgs ignore.

Batou's unfriendly response to the girl could also be the result of his rising frustration and insecurity about his own future, brought to the surface during the scene in Coroner Haraway's office (observing the plight of the discarded dolls). It is intensified by the recognition that he is not so different from them. Like the

gynoids, he has a human consciousness (what remains of it) encased in a cyborg shell. Moreover, his underlying hostility may stem from his own guilt, as he has had to fight and destroy many gynoids onboard the ship to get to the girl.

Further, the doll prostitutes are more than just an extension of the kidnapped girls. It could be argued that as soon as a transferred human consciousness fuses with a robot body, it becomes a new entity. The fusion creates a unique conscious being that connects to the world through its own experiences (like the cyborg characters). In particular, the gynoids have to suffer through the humiliation of becoming prostitutes (manipulated by human men), and then the anguish of becoming killers (in part manipulated by the human girls). The individual doll's decision to commit suicide, tearing open its own chest, can be perceived as its escape from its ordeal and its return to innocence. Certainly, the plaintive whine, *"Tasukete!"* / "Help me!" could indicate the gynoid's distress, as well as, or instead of, the girl's cry for assistance. The narrative imparts a warning, not only about the misuse of children or robots, but also about the horrifying and sordid fashion in which the two are combined to fulfill the selfish sexual desires of wealthy powerful men. As Jasper Sharp suggests, "each syllogistic step followed along this road of so-called human progress takes us further away from the conditions of our genesis, a state which is best defined as unknowing, or 'innocence'." (Midnight Eye, Online).

Although "Innocence is life" is the tagline for *Innocence*, the term innocence is never directly used or referred to in the dialogue (as mentioned

above). Viewers must mull over how the meaning or various meanings of the term occur during the film. The immensely unlikeable character Kim, delivers most of the repartee concerning the conceptual ideas in *Innocence*, and that includes this theme as well. He defines innocence as a state of purity that is applied differently to three distinct groups: animals, dolls, and gods. Kim argues,

Perfection is possible only for those without consciousness, or perhaps endowed with infinite consciousness - in other words, for dolls and for gods...

Actually, there is one more mode of existence commensurate with dolls and deities [refers to animals]. Shelley's skylarks are suffused with a profound, instinctive joy, a joy we humans, driven by self-consciousness, can never know. (*Innocence*, 2004)

Kim bases his argument on the fact that dolls, gods, and animals are privy to a purity of experience not available to humans whose experience is mediated by the ego (self-consciousness). Kim argues that gods are capable of innocence since they possess infinite consciousness that is not attached to an individual ego, while animals (for whom body and selfhood are identical) and dolls (before they are contaminated by human consciousness) are also innocent. He compares human self-conscious experience of the world to the immediate experience of Shelley's skylarks that can know pure unfettered joy. He indicates that for humans, joy is

accompanied by its acknowledgement through the ego, and instantly the joy becomes a memory and a longing for its return begins.

Moreover, the film seems to claim that the ego itself is at best unreliable and untrustworthy. Kim's mansion contains numerous reflective surfaces that symbolize the ego. The mirror's reflection is not only considered unclear and defective, "through a glass darkly" (mentioned in *Ghost in the Shell*), but also as corrupting. Kusanagi states, "Who can gaze into the mirror without becoming evil? A mirror does not reflect evil, but creates it" (*Innocence, 2004*). The quote implies that the human ego will manifest itself in selfish and dishonest ways if left to linger on its own devices (self-consciousness equals self-centeredness), and for this reason cannot know innocence.

Additionally, the film suggests that experience is mediated by controlling mechanisms of which characters are largely unaware; for instance, technological manipulation such as cyberbrain hacking (although there are many sources of manipulation that exist outside of the scope of this discussion). For example, even after Togusa returns to his *normal* mind (following his experience of being cyberbrain hacked by Kim), he has doubts about the validity of his reality and his memories. It is difficult for Togusa to determine which of his nightmarish recollections were actually implanted illusions. Lost in a miasma of false as well as genuine memories, he asks Batou if they are back in physical reality. Batou responds unreassuringly, "There is no way to distinguish reminiscence from true

memory. Whatever it is, it can only be analyzed after the fact. The passage of time itself can't be stored, so it's tough" (*Innocence*, 2004).

After they have shared the same experiences/illusions – through Kim's manipulations – how can they know with any certainty what is real? Echoing a situation in *Ghost in the Shell* concerning a brain-hacked garbage truck driver (the victim of synthetic memory implants), Batou asks Togusa how he can be sure that the wife and child Togusa thinks he has really exists, or if they are another illusion. Viewers might wonder how the mind in such a state, can be attuned to authentic experience, or even harbor reliable memories at all. Hence, accordingly, the film argues that the human consciousness is unreliable, self-centered, and easily manipulated- unable to experience life directly. It asks viewers- how can such a mind know innocence?

However, alternatively, according to another reading of this film offered by Williams, one could also argue that humans can know innocence. Humans are complex beings that are neither entirely pure nor entirely corrupt. In this new construction, innocence could be framed as a feature of free will. A state that encompasses free will is the opposite to a permanent, static state of perfection lauded by Kim—a state that is incapable of encompassing change. It is the capacity for change, and humans do change, that defines the tagline for *Innocence* mentioned above "Innocence is life." While *Innocence* may illustrate that the path humans are taking with technology, exemplified at its most corrupt by Kim, is self destructive, *Innocence* may also indicate that life is about making mistakes,

learning, and transforming. Williams interprets the film as saying something quite different than Kim's ruminations,

> Ghost in the Shell 2 is a meditation highlighting our existential need for a path to innocence that fulfils rather than eradicates our humanity...a new state of being which both exceeds the simple innocence of animals and which cannot be reduced to atoms in the void level of a doll. (Damaris Trust, 2006, Online)

Perhaps, seen in this light, life is necessarily impermanent and imperfect; thus, we must not, even as the conversation with Kim inadvertently warns, lose ourselves (our humanity) in the quest for immortality and perfection.

Another kind of innocence (mentioned briefly above), worth noting, is the posthuman love between Kusanagi and Batou. Theirs is a love presumably beyond sexuality. Yamada (2004) says of their relationship to the story,

> The reason Batou goes into enemy territory isn't really because he wants to rescue someone, nor is it really because he wants to solve the case. He just wants to meet his angel, Motoko. It doesn't really matter whether their relationship is a conventional romance or not. You see, their love might seem cold to humans, but what is between them is no longer human and now very innocent. (pp. 193-194)

Yamada relates this love between the central characters with research done in the 1990s concerning the neurohormone oxytocin, which (at that time at least) was thought to be a major contributor to "behaviors like love, trust, and pair bonding"

(p. 193). He makes the observation that human love, and its relationship to brain chemical equations (such as nine amino acids in a sequence), may not be so different from the virtual patterns that form Kusanagi's thoughts for Batou, and Batou's for her (p. 193). I would suggest that this kind of love is more similar to a parent's love for his or her child, or for a pet, than the complicated love usually experienced in adult partnerships.

Of course, as mentioned above, Oshii maintains that animals are also innocent, and it is through our relationships with them that he hopes we can re-identify our human qualities. As Brown (2008) suggests, *Innocence* goes further than stating humans need the unconditional love of pets to prevent us from becoming dehumanized by the dehumanizing systems that enfold us (p. 247). He states,

> Rather, it is that as we enter into coevolutionary networks with dogs, as we learn to coexist with nonhuman entities in the most intimate of spaces— our homes—we are altered by dogs as much as dogs are altered by us....Oshii suggests, that our relationships with dogs may be a possible way out of our anthropocentric obsession with uncanny *ningyo* [human shaped dolls], a way out of ourselves [ego]. (p. 247)

In other words, our association with dogs (animals) can offer us a way back to our own innocence.

Tying all three themes together in one scene, the final scene of the film is important in its registration of relationships between humans, animals, and dolls.

The agents return to Togusa's home where Batou picks up his dog that runs to greet him. Togusa presents his daughter with a new doll. The camera captures a close up of the girl and the doll; both are delightfully pretty and innocent creatures. The camera zooms in on the doll's face whose gaze is directed toward Batou who is hugging his dog that with mutual affection is licking his master's face. Togusa hugs his daughter who in turn hugs her doll. The camera cuts to a close up of Batou and his dog with the Newport City skyscrapers in the background as he stares ahead past the viewer. The previous events in the film add multiple meanings to these relationships. *Innocence* is not a film with one clear message, but it articulates Oshii's belief (mentioned above) that most importantly, it is human *omoi* /affect that matters, as the transmission of affect signals the ways in which we interact with one another and with other species in the world. It articulates Oshii's concern that as humans are transformed by technology *omoi ga nokoru* /affect [will] remain (Orbaugh, 2008, p. 161).

I suggest that by addressing the three themes I have isolated in this anime, my discussion also answers my original questions. In this narrative, central characters cyborg Batou and the human Togusa are brought to the brink of their sanity and are made aware of just how fragile and malleable their perceptions of reality are. Their return to their 'flesh and blood' loved ones at the end of the film (Batou to his dog and Togusa to his daughter) reinforces how meaningful relationships are to them. However, the doll that Togusa gives to his little girl and her love for the doll reinforces the uncanny nature of human relationships with

dolls, turning viewers back into the events of the film to reflect on their multiple meanings.

The themes illustrated in *Innocence* are not specifically Japanese but certainly the expression of them is distinctly Japanese. The appearance of the human-like (geisha-like) gynoids and the doll-like humans reinforces a Japanese infatuation with artificial intelligence that blurs distinctions between humans and robots. Further, it could be said, that the gynoids commit a type of seppuku by ripping open their own torsos, although Oshii's direct influence is a drawing by Hans Bellmer (see my note number 3 below).

The *ningyo* or dolls illustrated in *Innocence* have a connection to historical dolls used for various purposes including entertainment. Japan has a long history of theatre using mechanical dolls *karakuri ningyo* that dates back to the fourteenth century, as well as the Bunraku puppet theatre, which began during the sixteenth century and reached its peak in the late seventeenth early eighteenth centuries. The enormous mechanical dolls such as the elephant (and others) in the parade scene in the Northern Frontier (mentioned above), is an example of *dashi karakuri,* created for religious festivals and parades. Such puppets perform plays and stories related to Japanese myths and legends, usually accompanied by musicians.

When one considers the deep involvement the Japanese have had with human-shaped automata and humanoid puppets of various classifications for centuries, it is not surprising that the Japanese also have an intimate association

with robots as well. However, although Japan may be a leader in this area, the Japanese are not the only nation interested in and researching posthuman technologies, and the concerns expressed in *Innocence* about relationships with posthumans are not confined to Japan. This topic has significant global relevance.

The idea of human relations with machines has been explored in Japanese popular culture mediums such as anime and manga (comics / graphic novels) with great enthusiasm and depth over a number of decades. While the cast of characters in *Innocence* is a far-cry from conventional Western cinema offerings, the outlandishness of these types of characters is becoming more common to young viewers (in general) as well as to mature anime enthusiasts. Although we don't co-exist with robots as do these characters, we are increasingly familiar and intimate with technologies with whom we share our homes and personal lives.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, *Innocence* is a film that stimulates active spectatorship due to its ambiguous narrative, characters, and themes. This ambiguity allows viewers, particularly students, to interpret the film in a variety of meaningful ways. Primarily, Oshii's film stimulates viewers – including educators and students – to speculate about what makes us human and human destinies with technology. Students may ask- Is it our brain /mind that makes us human or is it our whole body? Is our humanity attached to our organic bodies or can our human qualities be transferred to automata (machines)? How can we know? For instance, brain computer interface, (direct neural interface, or BCI) is already a reality and research in this area is progressing rapidly.

Therefore, crises that confront central characters in *Innocence*, which evolve from human use of technologies are believable, even if we have not reached that stage of development in the real world. There are innumerable questions that can be used for further contemplation and for conversations between educators and students. It is my hope that this chapter can be used to encourage such questions.

As the first *Ghost in the Shell* film maintains, posthuman technologies can offer humans new ways of being in the world that are both exhilarating and terrifying. *Innocence* advises that if human destiny is to continue to interface with machines in increasingly complicated ways – through our interactions with robots, through becoming cyborgs, or through downloading human intelligence into external hardware – it is requisite that we preserve our humanity. Students need to be encouraged to reconsider the false primacy of human-to-human relationships, as this anime shows us other essential relationships. Our challenge is to move beyond ourselves to develop and nurture relationships with the more-than-human world. As Oshii claims, the relationships we form are essential to our continued existence – our humanness – or else, similar to Batou, we may have to live with the fear of our own obsolescence and replacement.

Chapter Four

Posthuman Bodies: Love and Loathing in *Armitage III (OVA)*

Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we

have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a

common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia.

Donna Haraway

If the humans didn't want us, then why did they make us?

Endo Akinori & Konaka Chiaki (from Armitage III (OVA))

Ideal women are the product of men's dreams -

dolls are imitations not of women but of that product.

Tatsumi Takayuki

Ochi Hiroyuki's cyberpunk anime thriller *Armitage III (OVA)* (1994),

addresses the theme of robot exploitation, particularly the sexual exploitation of

female robots, and how gender determines the treatment of the characters.[1] When

applicable, I compare this film to Aramaki Shinji's *Appleseed/Appurushido* (2004),

and Maeda Mahiro's *The Second Renaissance Part 1* and *Part 2* from the

Animatrix (2003). These futuristic anime portray three unique apocalyptic worlds

in which genocide plays a prominent role. These narratives describe how negative human behaviors such as sexism and prejudice are exacerbated instead of liberated by posthuman technologies. Through character analysis, Chapter Four explores the escalating crises that evolve as humans share new frontiers with their creations-sophisticated androids with humanlike intelligence and emotions. The synopses below will provide the context and setting for each film. My summary of *Armitage III* has greater detail as this film forms the primary part of my discussion. Of tremendous importance to student viewers, the anime discussed in this chapter illustrate that it is not the technologies humans have created, but their misuse and poor choices, which are to blame for negative consequences. While these anime provide edgy and exciting narratives and visuals, thus appealing to students and viewers for their entertainment value, these films also provide substance for reflection and discussion.

The Second Renaissance Part I and II are two short films set in the mid-twenty-first century that are part of the *Animatrix* collection, written and produced by the Wachowski siblings who are responsible for the live-action *Matrix* film series.[2] *The Second Renaissance* is director Maeda's fictional documentary style interpretation of the events leading up to the situation in the *Matrix* explaining why the machines enslave humans as an energy source and act as a prequel for the feature films. The diptych graphically portrays a violent vision that parallels events from our human history of prejudice, atrocities, and war, including, for instance the Tank Man standoff at Tiananmen Square (1989) and the Holocaust. In contrast to

the *Matrix* in which viewers feel sympathetic to the plight of the humans, in *The Second Renaissance* the robots solicit viewer sympathy.

Appleseed, loosely based on the manga by Shirow Masamune (writer of *Ghost in the Shell*), is set in the year 2131 directly following a nuclear war. Protagonist Deunan Knute is a highly trained human soldier who suddenly finds herself in the utopian city of Olympus, which is populated with more bioroids (indistinguishable from humans except that bioroid programming blocks intense negative emotions) than it is with humans. She is reacquainted with her former lover Briareos who has recovered from a nearly fatal injury through cyborg restorations that have left him virtually unrecognizable. The city seems to be peaceful but a crisis swells as both humans and bioroids attempt to annihilate the other. Perhaps a fault with this film is that neither side – bioroid nor human – elicits strong viewer empathy, possibly as the story is so convoluted it is difficult to decide whom to trust or to side with at any particular time.

As mentioned above, *Armitage III* forms the greater part of my discussion. According to Helen McCarthy (2006) the anime imparts, "meditations on the place of humanity in a high-tech world" (p. 33). In particular, the first episode of the four-part mini-series is a multi-layered and thoughtful piece co-written by veteran science fiction writer Endo Akinori and Konaka Chiaki. The latter went on to write what McCarthy refers to as the "quintessential Internet thriller" *Serial Experiments Lain* (1998). The title of the anime is read- Armitage the Third, as "third" refers to the protagonist's robot classification – she is the most advanced of a secret highly

sophisticated autonomous bioroid robot type – not to a third episode or third part in a series.

The story is set in the fictional 22nd century Martian metropolis of Saint Lowell, where its bustling profusion of shady characters, skyscrapers, and dangerous, dimly lit streets, is easily comparable to the seamy underworld of Ridley Scott's Los Angeles in *Blade Runner* (1982). Similar to Scott's film, *Armitage III* centers on the genocide of humanoid robots that have been manufactured to assist humans. The narrative considers the plight of the robots from the position of two protagonists who at the beginning of the film have very different perspectives – Ross Sylibus, a human from Earth, and Naomi Armitage, a bioroid robot from Mars – but soon join forces against a corrupt anti-robot conspiracy that includes the government, military, scientific cartels, and mega-corporations. The alliance between Armitage and Sylibus, who also become lovers, adds credibility to the viewpoint expressed by the film that robots suffer unwarranted maltreatment from humans. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, the sequel Akiyama Katsuhito's *Armitage III: Dual Matrix* (1997) finds the couple is in exile with their young daughter Yoko, the only offspring of a human and bioroid. While arguably not up to its predecessor, the film continues an examination of the problematic relations between humans and cyborgs.

The two central protagonists Ross Sylibus and Naomi Armitage are fleshed-out and believable. Dissimilar to *Ghost in the Shell* in Chapter Two that immediately introduces the cyborg protagonist's technological underpinnings (she

is jacked into a communication device), Armitage's robot identity is not revealed to viewers until the end of the first forty-minute episode. As Antonia Levi (1996) states, "Armitage…is a fully artificial android, but she looks, acts, and feels like a young woman" (p. 86). In the beginning, she appears to be a gun toting, gum chewing, feisty, and slightly ditsy young cop inexplicably attired in apple red spike heels, fishnets, and hot pants. She is mysteriously moody and overly sensitive, which is both annoying and endearing. Later, with the declaration of her robot identity – it surfaces when the relationship between humans and robots reaches crisis proportions – a new combative side is exposed, but along with it a greater sadness. As the narrative progresses, this character seems to become more psychologically vulnerable and more human, the converse of what viewers would expect from android character development.

Armitage's detective partner, Ross Sylibus is newly transferred to Mars from Earth following a traumatic confrontation with a renegade robot in which his former female police partner was killed and his own leg was shattered. The circumstances are never explained but the fact that the robot is labeled dissident suggests that the robot was an anomaly. As a result of this incident, he has a bionic leg, and soon after meeting and fighting alongside Armitage, his right arm is injured and he is fitted with a prosthetic one. As Levi (1996) suggests robot-hating Sylibus "worries about the increasing number of artificial parts he seems to be acquiring," (p. 95) since, he does not like to associate his own anatomy with an android one. Sylibus even refuses to use the Ferrari autopilot, as he states in the

film that he "doesn't trust machines" (*Armitage III*, 1994). Sylibus despises robots at least as much as any human until through knowing Armitage he comes to the realization that robots are not the enemies of humans. He accepts the obvious truth – which seems to escape the majority of humans on Mars, particularly members of the "Neo-Humanist Movement" – robots do not act on their own and are following the course humans have set or programmed for them. (Specifically robot "seconds", as they do not have the same capacity as the secret "Thirds" to act entirely on their own cognition.)

My analysis of *Armitage III* is once again, a two-part process, similar to the first three chapters. First, I have applied the same set of questions to my reading of the films that were used for previous chapters, and second, I used my analysis to isolate three themes established in the anime that will frame the discussion for this chapter. The original questions are- What is the nature of the apocalypse in these films? How does the manifestation of the apocalypse affect central characters? Does the apocalypse narrative stimulate explorations of personal identity and provide an opportunity for creativity, growth, change, or renewal? Does the anime leave us with questions that are relevant outside of the anime?

My discussion of these questions is framed by three key themes or topics as follows: The first theme has two parts, a) the exploitation and abuse of robots, explores how robots are physically and psychologically abused in two narratives and provides examples of how human injustice toward robots can be compared to similar events in our own world. b) Robots become/are made into monsters. The

second theme – Who is humane? – examines the narratives to explore what it is that makes humans and robots different or the same. The third theme investigates how power structures treat characters differently according to their gender. I will explore how these oppressive power structures reflect similar situations in our own world. I will begin below with theme one, which explores human mistreatment of robots. The first paragraph will provide a brief but more in depth explanation of the circumstances that lead up to the robot crisis in *Armitage III* discussed in this section.

I have a choice and I choose not to like things that pretend to be human.

(Ross Sylibus to Naomi Armitage – *Armitage III*)

As mentioned in the introduction, humans have settled on Mars with the aid of sophisticated humanoid robots. These "second type" robots have made the construction of the planet's domed cities possible through their hard labor and devotion. Until the recent past, a congenial human and robot relationship has been prevalent; however, the indigenous human population on Mars is dwindling, aggravated by a low birthrate (not explained) and by the steady influx of immigrants from Earth who are overwhelming the Martian residents. The Martian populace is quickly losing hope, and the workers' patriotism erodes along with the economy. While the government urgently searches for solutions, the workers seek a scapegoat. Using propaganda, many of society's problems such as recession and

job loss are conveniently blamed on robots, and a substantial section of the population form an "Anti-robot Movement" turning against the robots on which they have depended. Humans demand robot jobs and harass the robots. The government publicly acknowledges violence against robots, but suggests that the ends justify the means by permitting it to continue. Thus, a crisis for the robot population has manifested in which the protagonists, Naomi Armitage and Ross Sylibus, find themselves surprisingly embroiled in corruption that trickles down to the Mars Police Department in which they are employed. The first theme describes the ways in which the robots are mistreated.

Viewers first observe robot abuse from the perspective of new Martian immigrant, protagonist Ross Sylibus (introduced above). Out jogging his first night on Mars, he is astonished by the existence of a towering replica of the Statue of Liberty that rises from the city's center. Its ghostly contours are surreal in the moonlight encircled by shimmering ribbons of highway. He whispers to himself, "They're everywhere you look. You would think they could build something else" (*Armitage III,* 1994). Soon afterward, he witnesses an anti- robot demonstration in a public park practically under the shadow of the monument. The Statue, which represents 'freedom,' 'democracy,' and 'opportunity' mocks the robot population, who are not only subordinate to humans but are attacked by them as well. The demonstration includes human robot hecklers hurling simplistic invectives such as, "They aren't Martians! They are only machines! Get out right now! Give us back our jobs!" (*Armitage III*, 1994). These attacks are particularly ironic when one

considers that humans are responsible for programming the robots to perform the jobs they now covet, and one questions where exactly they think the robots ought to go. Additionally, throughout the city, large piles of robot bodies are being burned by human protestors, and their funeral pyres light the dark sky with a ghastly glow.

This spectacle is evocative of newsreel footage of prisoners burned by the Nazis in concentration camps during the Second World War, and is reminiscent of the treatment of African citizens who were brought to North America as slaves, and then once they were set free blamed and mistreated for being there. In general, the conduct of anti-robot demonstrators is similar to human protestors in our own world that have raged against the *other* - Blacks, Hispanics, Gays, Jews, and women (to name only a few) in many circumstances. Similarly, the rebellion against the robots is spurred on by prejudice and fear. In addition, the government surreptitiously programs unsophisticated robots to commit acts of terrorism such as public bombings, elevating public hatred of robots to greater heights. The befuddled, innocent, "second" type robots that are programmed not to rebel against humans are suddenly forced to live in terror.

This chain of events is comparable to incidents in the *Animatrix: The Second Renaissance Part I and Part II*, which depict how the deplorable relationship between humans and robots escalates to war. In these films, there are no central characters, but the relationship between the two groups is vividly portrayed. For instance, robots are utilized by humans to perform the arduous tasks that humans do not want to do themselves, and similar to the androids in *Armitage*

III, the robots are overworked and eventually unappreciated. As conditions for

robots worsen, an android that is threatened with being permanently powered-down

kills its owner. The robot claims self-defense, and its lawyer attempts to have it

tried as a citizen. The trial scene features a voice over with closing statements from

a historically famous case that took place in 1856 – the trial of Dred Scott v.

Sandford – which ruled that African Americans are not entitled to citizenship under

American law and could not sue in Federal Courts (Dred Scott v. Sandford, *The*

Library of Congress Web Guides, (no date), Online). It is decided that the robot,

similar to the slave, is a chattel and that the human owner has a right to destroy his

own property. The android is quickly terminated and a robot genocide is ordered

by authorities. A massive human revolt against robots begins that is even more

violent than the one depicted in *Armitage III* (even though a minority of moderate

minded humans protest it).

      Once again, in comparison to the African American movement, the robots

hold a Million-Machine March suggested by the Million Man March in

Washington (1995), a peaceful civil rights protest involving African American

men. The machines who request peaceful and reasonable negotiations are denied

this process repeatedly until a horrific war is waged in which humans are defeated,

but not before humans ruin the Earth's atmosphere with chemical warfare. The

Matrix series begins at a future date – after the machines control the Earth and

enslave humans as an energy supply. The point made in the *Second Renaissance*

Part I and II is that it did not have to end this way if humans had been fair-minded all the way along.

Our own technologies are not as advanced as those depicted in these narratives, but a robot future is one to which many scientists aspire. Perhaps, as the anime suggest, if humans continue to create humanoid robots, their use, or misuse could become a moral issue. If it seems farfetched, this comment from leading robot researcher Dr. Ishiguro Hiroshi – number three on the CNN.com list of "Eight Geniuses Who Will Change Your Life" – may suggest otherwise: he believes the "robots' main role in our future will be to interact naturally with people—to pitch in as the workforce shrinks or to do necessary, unpleasant tasks" (Furman, 2007, *CNN.com/living*). Ishiguro has already made extremely lifelike female robots and a replica of himself. The robots interact with humans and are quite convincing. He suggests that within our lifetime, robots will naturally interface with humans in the community and the workplace (Furman, *CNN.com/living*). He states, "One day, they will live among us. Then you'd have to ask: 'Are you human? Or a robot? [sic]'" (cited in Tabuchi, 2008, Japan Looks to a Robot Future, Online). With this in mind, it may be possible that intelligent robots will object to being delegated the "necessary, unpleasant tasks" (mentioned above) and may rebel against their exploitation in the work place, or to their termination as the robots do in the *Animatrix*. The second part of my discussion of robot abuse begins here with a description of robot Thirds.

Armitage III takes the creation of robots a step further with the development of the state of the art "Third" type robots designed to conceive children, of which Naomi Armitage is the prototype (except other Thirds do not have her combat augmentations). Secretly created by artificial intelligence scientists under the auspices of the Martian government, Thirds are hoped to be the answer to the languishing population and economy. Thirds are indistinguishable from humans and are exclusively female with the exception of one adolescent boy, Naomi's synthetic brother Julian.

With the creation of the Thirds, it is worth noting that Martian leaders are trying to create a new independent Martian species, but attempt to regulate it in the conventional gender determined manner. Perhaps one of our greatest apprehensions about a posthuman future is the looming confusion and fear regarding modifications and transformations of gender, sexuality, long-term relationships (marriage), and procreation. As I will discuss below, in this anime the robot baby receptacle is given a standard female form, and the human male donor is still an active agent in this arrangement. As Balsamo (1999) notes, "the female body is the site at which we can witness the struggle between systems of social order" (p. 39). In the same way that the female body physically represents different systems of oppression within our own social structure, the female robot body in the anime also represents the plight of the robot.

The secret baby-ready Thirds live seamlessly amongst the human residents on Mars and flourish in the arts (they are endowed with artistic talents), but that

ends when the Mars government, which cannot pull the colony out of recession,

forms an alliance with the Earth government. Earth's feminist leader, Chairwoman

Everheart (a good dose of sarcasm here) who heads the new "two-world" party

endorses a dubious "neo-humanism," and surreptitiously (since she has knowledge

of the Thirds' presence on Mars) orders the annihilation of the female "Thirds."

Unknown to the public, the government issues a terrorist with a list of all the names

of Thirds (except for Armitage's) to terminate them and live- broadcast their brutal

assassinations. It is revealed much later that the terrorist, Dr. René D'anclaude

(perhaps a reference to René Descartes), is not a human at all, but is a team of

secret robots cloned from a violent, psychologically disturbed scientist of the same

name who has disappeared. Holding all networks hostage, the terrorist D'anclaude

exposes the identity of the Thirds that have been living as humans, and exhibits

sadistic joy as he kills them while they beg for their lives.

Strategically, he leaves the Thirds' destroyed corpses in a manner that

exposes their open wounds, so that their bloodied inner electronics along with their

synthetic organs become horrific spectacles for public consumption, turning the

female Thirds into "monsters" to be vilified. As Hashmi (2000) suggests,

> Systems of difference rely heavily on a scopic order based on a visual
>
> recognition of difference, difference that is, as Haraway says, marked on the
>
> organic body. However, once the human-machine boundary is crossed, the
>
> other is materially and literally incorporated into the self so that it is no
>
> longer possible to project difference onto other bodies and to then have

visible "proof" of that difference. (Japanese Anime in the United States, Online)

The footage of the massacred Thirds – as it exposes the robot interiors to the world – is the only action that can double as propaganda to frighten and stir the already incensed human population and justify violence against robots. The killer's malicious mottos such as "they are amongst us" and "they could be anyone" are repeated like mantras. These verbal fear tactics are comparable to those used to stir public hatred and paranoia of non-visible minority groups like gays and lesbians, particularly in the 1970s, and to a much lesser extent even today.

Robot Thirds have been public darlings- beloved dancers, singers, artists, writers, actors, etc., and the shocking revelation that they are inhuman throws Martian citizens into a state of angry confusion. They cannot understand how these individuals can be so talented, complex, and humanlike, and only be machines. For Armitage, human inability to accept the robot's complex nature is extremely frustrating. In the scene before she openly admits to being a third robot herself, she acts inappropriately after hearing a deceased Third's (Kelly McCanon, famous country singer) boyfriend/manager sob into his beer. The man snivels,

> She was the most human girl I knew. She was so sensitive and in touch. She didn't listen to her manager though [sic]. She always did things her way. I can't believe it! [sic] She must have been a real woman! No robot could have made a guitar weep the way Kelly did! No robot could sing with that passion! (*Armitage III,* 1994)

In response, Naomi punches the poor ex-boyfriend and sends him reeling onto the floor. Distraught, she tells Ross, "The jerk can't figure out how a robot could be as good as his precious humans. All of Kelly McCanon's personality, talents, and dreams were inside that machine." It is not until Armitage comes forward about her own robot origins – stirred emotionally to both distinguish herself as a third and to directly associate herself with the cause she will fight for – that she becomes the killing machine humans will fear. With Ross to assist her she attempts to reveal the truth, but through foul play, both protagonists are placed on the wanted criminal list, and they become hunted insurgents.

For Armitage, revealing her android identity is very painful, even though she knows she must. After fighting with D'anclaude, whom she appears to have mortally wounded (as mentioned above there are many clones of D'anclaude, but this is unknown to Ross and Naomi) she plaintively cries, "That's right I am a monster! I'm the monster society created. I'm the thing they blame for recession and social problems! I'm the scapegoat! "If humans don't want me, why did they make me?" (*Armitage III*, 1994) Her condemnation of human arrogance and irresponsibility is of course analogous to the story of Frankenstein's monster. *Monster* is the word Armitage utters throughout the anime, usually referring to herself in a self-deprecatory manner.

She realizes that she is a despised member of an abject group. Ashamed of her own wounds that expose the metal and wires underneath the flesh on her arms and chest, she begs, "Ross, please don't look at me!" (*Armitage III*, 1994) She

whimpers and attempts to cover her flesh wounds with her hands. Her vulnerability is emphasized by her diminutive stature. She is not much larger than a young adolescent child would be (presumably, because she is a robot and remains the same size as she was when she was created). She tells Ross, "I feel like some kind of hideous puppet. I can walk, and I can talk, and I can laugh, and I can cry, but I still don't feel [physical] pain. I'm just a doll!" (*Armitage III*, 1994)

In the next scene, Naomi leaps into the river, (presumably to her death, as it is unlikely that a robot will float). Ross dives in after her and drags her to the embankment. When she recovers, he utters, "Oh, thank God! To which she angrily retorts, "Thank god for what? God is human! God made me in his image! Do you know what it's like to be me? You couldn't possibly imagine what it's like [sic]!" (*Armitage III*) This scene relates to a previous one in which Ross had followed the terrorist D'anclaude into a decrepit and heavily graffitied church where D'anclaude tells Ross that religion has been rejected on Mars. The film seems to make a parallel between human disappointment in its own god (seemingly a Christian one in the anime universe) that is purported to have created humankind in its own image and then abandoned humans to misery, and the robots' relationship with their gods- the humans, who after copying their image onto machines renounce them. Naomi's accusations make the point that humans disregard her feelings as if she is worthless.

The sad plight of the robots is subtly and beautifully emphasized in the final scene of the first episode. With soft jazz playing in the streets, Martian humans

stroll through a busy downtown at night. A concert poster of Kelly McCanon the murdered third that was once an adored country singer has fallen on the sidewalk unnoticed and is trampled by the same people who loved her only days before. One by one, Thirds are murdered and simultaneously made into monsters.

The incidents discussed above demonstrate that although humans have advanced technologically, they have not grown wiser at the same time. For instance, humans have not learned to control their destructive behaviors. Humans still exploit less powerful individuals and are hostile toward those perceived as the *other*, in this case, machines that humans have created in their own image only to exploit and mistreat them. The anime illustrate that as boundaries between what is human and what is machine blur, the situation for posthumans worsens. The second theme I will discuss – Who is humane? What are the differences between robots and humans? What is it that makes us human? – examines robots and humans in the narratives, and continues the discussion that often it is the female robot body that becomes a vehicle through which borders (between human and machine) are contested.

Naomi, now you are real!

(Dr. Asakura to his robot creation Naomi Armitage - *Armitage III*)

By investigating the nature of humans and robots these anime inadvertently describe their differences (often slight) as well as their similarities. The anime

illustrate how arbitrary distinctions are defined and how those distinctions reflect prejudicial practices in our own world. Mobina Hashmi brings to mind that early science fiction claimed to explain how humans differed from machines, and by doing so, provide a definition of human. She states,

> Its [the robots] failure to become human is located in its inability to fully understand or appreciate human independence and individuality of thought and action- traits that are important in a Western, and in particular, American, idea of a rational self-sufficient individual. Thus, humanity is conflated with these ideals and the robot's lack in these areas leaves it suited only to be a servant of Man. (Japanese Anime in the United States, Online)

However, more contemporary narratives such as the ones discussed here, question and even dispel such notions of difference. For instance, the protagonist Naomi Armitage displays, "human independence and individuality of thought and action" that characterizes only human beings according to the definition above. Moreover, Naomi and the other Thirds lead complex creative lives that enrich the community.

What is it then that makes them less human than their creators- memories of childhood perhaps? Even though that may be a marker of a human being, in this narrative Naomi has affectionate memories of her childhood- she mentions school, playing on the swings, and falling off the teeter-totter, etc., and a strong bond to her creator Dr. Asakura whom she calls Papa. In contrast to the cyborgs discussed in chapter two and three, whose human brains have been transferred a number of

times to a variety of host bodies – all of which mediate their experience in varying ways – Thirds have one single existence that characterizes them. Armitage does not suffer through the dislocation and subsequent paranoia of not knowing who or what she is. Similar to Kusanagi in *Ghost in the Shell*, she is a machine with a "soul/ghost," but in this case, although it is definitely a synthetic one with no human roots, she seems to be more in touch with whom she is and is perhaps more humanlike than the cyborg, with its original organic human brain.

When flaws in Armitage's CPU (mind) begin to materialize (Thirds have a short expiration date – similar to replicants in *Blade Runner*) and she believes that she is dying, her scientist/father Dr. Asakura fixes her and tells her, "Naomi, now you are real" (*Armitage III*, 1994). His choice of words do not imply that she is a perfect or fully-functioning robot, but rather the term "real" has connotations of a consciousness that transcends a notion of machine or automaton. Naomi had been worried that Asakura would not be able to fix her as the authorities had altered his brain. Frustrated, she tells Ross that she hopes to live but hope is a human feeling. The irony is that she really does understand what it means to be human. He responds, "I know a man well [referring to himself], and he is less human than all the things you are talking about" (*Armitage III*, 1994). As mentioned above, Ross has fallen quickly in love with Armitage, whom he perceives as having more complex emotions than he does himself. Naomi is also similar to humans in her search to understand herself and her individual destiny, involving love, family, relationships, etc.

The only love scene takes place in the final episode. Before Ross and Naomi make love, the image of them standing nude facing one another reveals that they possess the same exposed robotic parts in mirror image as Ross's mechanical shoulder and arm have same configuration as Naomi's wounded shoulder and arm on the opposite side of her body. The pose illustrates that they are not so different from one another despite the fact that one is a human and one a robot. Their shared intimacy also demonstrates that Armitage is not a robot sex toy in any sense of the word. When they embrace, Armitage is hesitant and asks Ross for reassurance so that she knows he is making a conscious decision. It is interesting that the robot inquires this of the human. She asks,

> Armitage: Are you sure?
>
> Ross: I've been sure about this since I met you.
>
> Armitage: But I'm a robot!
>
> Ross: I'm half robot too, but I know a true heart when I've met one.

The physical act of making love between a male human and a female robot, as opposed to sexual activity for male gratification is very rare in robot narratives, and is approached beautifully in this anime. It introduces the notion of sexual pleasure between robots and humans as existing in a meaningful way. By reproducing, the couple partakes in one of the defining actions of a life form and their child permeates boundaries and coalesces bodies of organism and machine. The daughter Yoko, a character in the sequel, is not just the hybrid offspring of

technology and human that the scientists were commissioned to develop to bolster

Martian numbers, but is a product of robot/human love as well.

Autonomous androids that are capable of love and forming relationships is a

little unnerving to most of us who are not accustomed to the idea that we will

probably be cohabitating with posthumans in the future, at least in large urban

centers. Humans will undoubtedly wish to shape relationships with posthumans to

a human advantage as they do in the anime. Hashmi (2000) suggests there are two

solutions to living peaceably with cyborgs/robots should they become autonomous:

one is to simply give up our nostalgia for our organic bodies in favor of Haraway's

notion of a new multiplicity of possible cyborg identities, or try to limit and control

the shape that our interface with technology will take. One possible measure of

control related to the second option (already discussed above) "draws upon gender

norms, especially heterosexual reproductive norms, as a way of structuring the

unknown" (Hashmi, Japanese Anime in the United States, Online). Another form

of management is offered in the guise of robot philosophy within the film's

narrative by the owner of the Hu-Gite robot manufacturing company (a rival

company of the manufacturer of robot Thirds). Their motto is described to Sylibus:

Home Robotization- making a robot a part of the family by making

it more functional.

A humanoid robot simply doesn't work, there has to be a reason and

purpose for a robot's existence. When they've achieved that purpose

humans and robots will live in harmony. And that's the belief on which our

company is founded [sic]. People are afraid because they misunderstand

the potential of robots. Our vision isn't shared by everyone yet [sic].

(*Armitage III*, 1994)

The motto and the explanation suggest that robots ought to have a particular

controlled function, and implies that their abilities should not exceed what is

needed to perform assigned tasks. By this standard, fully autonomous robots like

the Thirds should never have been manufactured, but then again the production of

Thirds was illegal. Further, while the philosophy of "Home Robotization" seems to

make sense, it may prove difficult to adhere to in application. Although it is

beyond the scope of the anime and this chapter, one can imagine that it may be

impossible to produce robots that will perform complex tasks and then limit them

in their ability to transfer that knowledge to other circumstances and situations.

Certainly, in our own world, preventing technology from becoming out of

control is not a strong point for humans who are already ruining the planet on a

grand scale. In general, viewers are not aware of how far science has advanced in

the areas of robotics and artificial intelligence in the real world. Oddly, these

anime may be more fact than science fiction. Our fears about technologically

enhanced bodies emerge in Western popular culture in film franchises such as

Terminator (1984 et. al) and *Robocop* (1987 et. al), as well as hero movies such as

Batman (1989, et. al) and *Spiderman* (2002 et. al), which almost invariably feature

villains who are scientists that have utilized their own bodies for experimentation

leading to insanity and criminal activity.

In this anime, Dr. D'anclaude (as mentioned above) is a scientist with psychotic tendencies who cloned and downloaded his brain into an assassinoid (assassin robot) prototype. Later, his clones were used by the Earth government to terrorize and eliminate the female Thirds. Cloning, especially the duplication of psychologically deranged persons for use as leaders or as weapons has chilling implications both in the anime (although it is not explored) and in our own world. As Sharalyn Orbaugh (2007) suggests, one of the most frightening things about humanoid robots/cyborgs, is our not knowing or understanding the relationship between the biotic and techno-mechanical parts of the robot body, and which of those parts is in control at any given time (p. 177). Ironically, it may be that the machine consciousness is the less threatening one.

This notion of who should be in charge is also a dilemma in *Appleseed*, as humans in this anime live with posthumans in an arguably utopian society. The robot bioroids are allegedly there for the benefit of humankind, "to encourage stability in human society," as "humans are thought to be ruled by 'unstable' emotions, often leading to war" (*Appleseed*, 2004). The bioroids who are intelligent, rational, and placid depend on humans to maintain them and must accept that they are given an expiration date (once again, similar to replicants in *Blade Runner*). As mentioned above, bioroid negative emotions are suppressed – no jealousy, anger, or bitterness – however, their positive feelings seem to be enabled, as they are capable of love.

The bioroids are not capable of having children until a compromise between humans and bioroids is reached at the end of the film, and it is discovered that the technology exists for bioroid fertility and it can be utilized. It is inferred that humans and bioroids of either sex will be able to form couples with each other and with humans and have children. This ending differs from *Armitage*, as any type of agreement between humans and bioroids is never reached even in the sequel. After fighting for the rights of both sides, central *Appleseed* protagonist Duenan Knute states,

> Nothing was really changed in the end, and given enough time the sins of humanity will likely get worse. But there is always a chance that the next generation might learn from our mistakes [sic]. So I'll keep on fighting for our children's sake—the true "new race of man" [sic]. (*Appleseed*, 2004)

Perhaps this is our destiny as well- to mingle our fates with our posthuman creations in a future that is advancing more quickly than we think. The third theme, below, the gendered treatment of posthuman and human characters, explores how characters of each sex are portrayed in the anime, and how those depictions reflect our current behaviors.

The machinic, while offering liberation from gender, usually serves merely to reinforce the gender dynamics currently at play.

Dànielle DeVoss

The anime illustrate that the creation of posthumans does not help to alleviate gender difference and sexist behaviors but actually intensifies them in ways that reflect our own conduct. Moreover, according to Annalee Newitz (1995), how the gendered body reacts to becoming mechanized is determined by basic cultural norms that are deeply ingrained. She states, "Bodies manipulated by mecha science are merged with pieces of technology in order to 'give birth' to new creatures...Female bodies and sexuality are therefore 'best suited' to mecha-and male bodies and sexuality are disfigured by it-precisely because it is related to reproduction and giving birth" (Magical Girls and Atomic Bomb Sperm, Online). We have already looked a great deal at the female body, and will continue to do so in this section. At this point, however, I turn my attention to how Newitz's theory can be applied to the depiction of male cyborgs and robots in two of the anime *Armitage III* and *Appleseed*. Following this discussion, I will examine how female characters are sexualized and treated abusively in these anime, and how the portrayal of gendered behaviors is used to critique sexism, particularly in *Armitage III*.

In the anime *Appleseed*, the robotically transformed central male character Briareos conforms to Newitz's theory. He is so ashamed of his new cyborg body that he refuses to resume his relationship with the beautiful, curvaceous protagonist Duenan Knute even though he still loves her. His metal shell could not be a more masculine cliché (except for the antennae on his helmet that resemble rabbit ears). His massive, hard, v-shaped torso is accentuated by the shiny silver armor-like

covering, and his height seems to be extended as well. Suffering from low self-esteem, he refers to himself as a monster. Although Armitage also refers to herself the same way, her self-perception seems to be directly linked to the hatred she feels from humans. Briareos, on the other hand, regards himself as worthless even though others, including Duenan, accept him. He will only allow himself to be Deunen's protector, which seems almost unnecessary, as she is a highly trained warrior herself.

This character's machine enhancements also seem to dehumanize him in combat, turning him into a machismo assassin. In a spectacular fight scene – the computer-generated graphics in this film are extraordinarily beautiful – Briareos takes on a group of metallic looking female robots (not bioroids) who are svelte and lithe (especially compared to the hulky cyborg). The females are also exaggeratedly shapely and very large breasted, once again, fulfilling prescriptive norms concerning the idealized female form. Battling one of the females, Briareos punches his giant fist through the center of her torso. The shot shows Briareos and the female android from the side, and as his huge fist comes through her body and out the other side, it completely splits her apart and her electronic components are sent spilling into the air. If it was not enough the first time, it is shown again from another angle, this time from the back of the female robot, and viewers watch as his gigantic fist comes through her body toward them (almost in slow motion). The penetration of her torso with his arm has obvious sexual connotations and is shockingly violent although there is no blood or organic mess.

The spectacular computer graphics aside, it is quite unusual for its demonstration of male might. Interestingly, the last living female android in the group is so alarmed by Briareos (who aims a humongous gun at her) that she sinks to her knees in front of him. She seems to be in a pose of female submission; however, she takes out a long whip that she sends skillfully spiraling up her own body until she lacerates her entire torso, splicing it apart, and dies. This act is disturbing in its surrender to male superiority, even if she took her own life before he could humiliate her by taking it.

Similarly, as mentioned above, the robotic clones of Dr. Rene D'anclaude in *Armitage III* resemble a demented terminator that keeps on coming seemingly out of nowhere. At first, he presents the impression of a flamboyant rock star carrying a massive machine gun, and is believable as a male extremist with the gumption to hijack the transmission of public broadcasting to flaunt his assassinations of female Thirds. As the film progresses and his pursuit of Thirds is even more fanatical, his body becomes increasingly mechanical and monstrous until his demented laughing face and broad white shoulders seem to extend from a gigantic tank armed with weapons that include giant claws and guns fused to his body. Naomi Armitage on the other hand is not transformed by her need to combat D'anclaude. Other than her wounds, she remains human in appearance throughout the series.

Armitage's mate, however, the stereotypically handsome and masculine, Ross Sylibus, is visibly troubled by the cyborg repairs to his body (as mentioned

above). Further, the armored suit that he wears when he fights the military alongside Armitage typically exaggerates his height and breadth and completely dwarfs the diminutive Naomi. In general, these narratives demonstrate Newitz's claim that males are disfigured (made monstrous) to varying degrees by technology, much more so than women. Moreover, the anime depict how male and female characters follow prescriptive norms instead of break with them and suggest a dystopian future—one that does not partake in Haraway's utopian vision for the cyborg (and by extension the robot). In her Cyborg Manifesto, Haraway (1991) claims,

> Up till now (once upon a time), female embodiment seemed to be given, organic, necessary; and female embodiment seemed to mean skill in mothering and its metaphoric extensions. Only by being out of place could we take intense pleasure in machines, and then with excuses that this was organic activity after all, appropriate to females. Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment. Gender might not be global identity after all, even if it has profound historical breadth and depth. (p. 180)

While Haraway proposes that the cyborg /robot has the potential to disturb the "central dogma of phallogocentrism" (p. 176), which enslaves women, these anime do not comply with her perspective. Conversely, the anime discussed in this chapter suggest that robots can also intensify gender difference and the oppression of women by imagining a future scenario that could manifest if our present sexist

practices continue. Quite clearly, I do not think that these anime are anti-

technology or are making a case against artificial intelligence, but act as warning

trope that humans must change along with their technologies as the narratives

reflect current sexist practices; those that are apparent to the filmmakers.

Along the same lines, Dànielle DeVoss (2000) maintains, we are rarely

challenged by images of posthumans (p. 837). She asserts, "The machinic, while

offering liberation from gender, usually serves merely to reinforce the gender

dynamics currently at play" (p. 837). Extending DeVoss's argument into our own

world, robots currently under production by the Kokoro Company in Japan

(discussed further in the conclusion) following Dr. Ishiguro's designs (mentioned

above) are all young adult females, and can be rented as hostesses (they move,

gesture, and speak) in a variety of costumes including French maid, nurse, and

geisha for seven hundred American dollars a day. The company lists some the

special features of their Actroid-Der2 line as the following:

> The "Actroid-DER2" a younger sister of Actroid-DER, has been
>
> improved in her astonishing appearance and high performance and is now
>
> even cuter than her older sister! Her most attractive feature is her long legs
>
> and her bright smile. Her astonishingly small face is capable of creating
>
> exotic facial expressions. Her girlish and cute gestures are also polished.
>
> She can also pose as a fashion model by making best use of her stylish
>
> physical features besides her regular job as a show host and guide. (Kokoro
>
> ActroidDer2 Robots, (no date), Online)

Indeed, the adorable long-legged Kokoro robots seem to embody Tatsumi Takayuki's (2006) description of female robots or dolls: "Ideal women are the product of men's dreams, and dolls are imitations not of women but of that product" (p. 97).

With this reality in mind, it is not difficult to imagine a red light district like the one in *Armitage III*, where a man can shop for his fantasies among legions of willing female androids. Although the scene is delightful for its colorful representation of an upbeat burlesque atmosphere complete with one beaming satisfied man carrying a lovely mermaid across his arms, is this a future we aspire to? On the one hand, it may be easy to regulate and provide measures to prevent the spread of disease, but what about consequences for real women, and robot females as well, especially those individuals that have a humanlike consciousness. Conspicuously missing in the scene are any representations of women looking for male androids, or even males looking at male androids, and women cruising for female androids. In fact, there are no male androids—straight, transvestite, or gay in the films, other than D'anclaude and the adolescent Julian. As previously mentioned, there is no adult male robot to topple the superior position of the adult heterosexual male. The powerful Armitage, along with Sylibus, are the only existing threats.

Armitage III stands apart from typical Hollywood films, in that the protector of innocent citizens (albeit robot citizens), Naomi Armitage, is a female—a female robot at that. Typically, Hollywood superheroes are men such as Batman,

Spiderman, Iron Man, and Superman, to name a few. Neither is Armitage an imposing tall, athletic, female figure such as Wonder Woman or Electra. Further, she is completely marginalized as opposed to the male superheroes mentioned above that function alongside law enforcement systems to a great degree; for instance, Batman is summoned by the police department with the Bat light. Armitage differs from these masked avengers as well in that her identity is not hidden; she is well known.

Unlike the Batman character, she cannot lead a sumptuous, glamorous life separate from her duties as the savior of robots. Instead, since the criminals she fights (if one could call them criminals) are part of the system, not outsiders, she is threatened with incarceration. Armitage is forced to leave her job and go into complete hiding when she is not fighting. Further, she is still an insurgent when the film finishes, which is also rare in a Hollywood hero film. Usually, in standard Western narratives male champions are redeemed in the eyes of the public in the end, even if they act like borderline vigilantes; moreover, their good service is recognized and applauded (the most recent Batman film, *The Dark Knight* (2008) excluded). There is no redemption for Armitage, and dissimilar to the hero that rescues the maiden in distress, she cannot save the robots from the massive conspiracy that will destroy them. However, strong to the finish, Armitage refuses to compromise in any regard. Her last act of defiance is her refusal to use the false identification card Ross has procured for her. Instead, the pregnant Armitage

clings to her identity as a third. In the final scene, she tosses the card into the wind as their car races through the Martian desert frontier land.

Though Armitage does not represent the typical Western action hero, throughout most of the anime, she dresses like a streetwalker in a 50s style ensemble that triggers her associates to dub her the "terror in hot-pants." Her appearance fits into the feminist message that the film delivers in general, which I will explain.

It is implied that Armitage chooses her own working outfit—an outfit choice that reflects the norms of an extremely sexist society. Further, Armitage acts girlish and ditzy at the beginning of the film, which seems to disappear as she reveals her robot origins. It is possible that she resorts to such cliché behavior either because she is not sure how to act like a young woman and perceives that she is fulfilling expected models of female behavior, or she is purposely attempting to draw attention away from herself by minimizing her perceived differences to other women, and, or even distracting the public with her clothing, i.e. who would guess that she is a police officer? Notably, once she has become an outlaw, she trades in the red hot-pant outfit for a black long-sleeved top and pants, and other more ordinary clothing.[3]

Of course, it is possible that the sexualized red outfit is beyond the character's control, and is simply a way in which the creators have catered to the presumably male spectator (which of course it does), but I am making a case for the treatment of this character that exceeds (even if it may include) this aspiration.

However, it is robot seconds that are the most prevalent representation of the female in this anime, and who exhibit the most sexualized or male-pleasing appearance and behavior. I will discuss them next.

As Levi (1996) maintains, robot seconds, "exemplify the low position of women in Martian society...They even have metal buttons on the sides of their heads that allow men to turn them off if they become tiresome" (p. 122). Seconds are programmed to be obedient and perform various tasks, perhaps fitting the Hu-Gite company's definition of "Home Robotization" mentioned above at least to some degree. In general, female seconds are shown prominently in a variety of industries and home care situations – significantly, positions without power that include nurturing and support roles such as childcare workers, caregivers, nannies, nurses, office staff, as well as sex trade workers. The use of female robots in these roles emphasizes the vulnerability of the robots in general and mirrors the majority of occupations held by women in our own world. The predominance of female robots places the female form in a servile role overall.

In all cases, seconds are idealized and sexualized versions of young women, endowed with shapely torsos and sweet pretty faces with overly large eyes that give them the appearance of innocence (which of course they are) despite their adult curves. For instance, the first female second that appears in the film is a flight attendant- an attractive female robot that wears a small air force hat, bustier, and a tiny black thong revealing her buttocks. "Do not touch" is written in heavy black letters on the right side of her derrière. In addition to their often sexualized

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appearance, robot seconds are also given to fits of little girl giggles and silliness. As the Chief of the Martian Police Department tells the female inspector from Earth apologetically, "Robots on Mars don't reflect a feminist society!" (*Armitage III*, 1994)

During the anti-robot uprising, female seconds are frequently and blatantly abused by humans. For instance, Ross encounters a rowdy mob that taunts a frightened and bewildered female second who lies prone on the pavement gazing up at her adversaries. They encircle her while a man threateningly pulls on a length of thick chain attached to the female's throat with a metal collar. In another scene, D'anclaude handcuffs a female third to a chain link fence. He jeers at her while she begs for her life before shooting her to death. Even more alarming for its portrayal of violence toward a female robot is a brutal scene from *The Second Renaissance* in which an android is degraded by a gang of men. The young female cries out as the men publically tear her clothing from her body while chastising her, after which they beat her to death. Once again, these scenes comment on current human behavior in our own world and envisage that behavior in a robot future. If these scenes seem far-fetched, one only has to remember recent news stories of women being frequently stoned-to-death in some countries, and domestic violence against women is rampant in North America behind closed doors. If anything, these film scenes demonstrate that robot bodies may give misogynistic men and oppressive regimes greater license to be abusive to females.

Behind closed doors, but perhaps just as prevalent as violent abuse, is the

illicit sexual abuse of female androids in *Armitage III*. The most offensive

examples involve Mr. Allen, the Public Relations officer for the *Conception*

Company, which is the unlawful manufacturer of female Thirds and rival to the Hu-

Gite manufacturer mentioned above. *Conception* has its own version of the "Home

Robotization" motto. Describing the market for robot seconds, Allen tells

protagonist Ross Sylibus that organic robots are in high demand, especially since,

"One purpose of robots is to help turn human fantasies into realities!" (*Armitage*

III, 1994) As if to reinforce this point, while talking with Ross, Allen clicks his

fingers and a lovely female enters the room and goes down on one knee. He sits on

the other knee occasionally caressing the female robot's back while he speaks. The

camera zooms in on the robot's face whose colossal starry-eyes stare vacantly into

space. Ironically, unaware at this point of the purpose of the Thirds, Ross

scrutinizes her and says sarcastically, "They can do almost anything can't they

except reproduce, right?" (Armitage III, 1994) When Allen's conversation with

Ross is over, Allen stands up and kicks the girl's shin, her cue to rise, and she

smiles at both men before leaving the room. Ross snidely asks Allen if she is an

example of "Home Robotization."

Amusingly, when Ross exits the building the robot bids him goodbye at the

door with the reminder, "Drive safely and don't forget to use your seat belt!"

(*Armitage III*, 1994). Walking away Ross mutters to himself, "Human fantasy?

She sounds like my mother" (*Armitage III*). The difference between a semi-

programmable female robot second and a robot third like the autonomous, feisty

Armitage is obvious. Later Ross will find Mr. Allen enjoying the fruits of his labor

again with an illegal application of "Home Robotization." In this scene, Allen

really is at home in his living room nude in an armchair moaning while plugged

into several naked female seconds with whom he is enjoying cybersex.

While the lovely young seconds are programmable to some degree, they

also seem to have emotions and can make decisions based on their experience (but

cannot cross humans). Quite possibly, with the right sexual apparatus, and an

on/off switch, as mentioned above, they would be a dream come true to many men

who might prefer a partner that is both sexy and compliant. Robot Thirds,

however, do not adhere to the same sweet and submissive stereotype. Though they

are attractive, they are not exaggeratedly cute with doe eyes and perfect slender

bodies. Instead, they vary in shape, weight, and height, and are usually older. A

couple of them seem to be approaching middle age with graying hair. As

mentioned above Thirds are artists of various types, such as opera divas, novelists,

and visual artists. They seem to have careers that allow them to be independent

financially and choose varied life-styles; for instance, as mentioned above the

painter is a lesbian having a love affair with her model who is probably also a third.

This couple is ironic when it is considered that female Thirds are supposed to mate

with men and have human children.

It is obvious that Dr. Asakura, who designed Armitage and the other Thirds,

has a different mind-set than the government who commissioned him to create

baby-ready robots. Armitage's brother Julian tells her that Asakura knew what he was doing. He says,

> I can understand why the Thirds were made to seem so human ...not just in appearance but emotionally like that singer or that novelist. They weren't just machines they had souls. It takes more than the right plumbing to procreate. (*Armitage III*, 1994)

Although this comment is a compliment from Armitage's brother Julian, I would like to reflect on the writer's choice of words for a moment. The notion of plumbing is an odd concept in general, especially here, applied to a pregnant robot body. It is notable that even though reproductive sexuality is at the core of *Armitage III*, there is no mention of menstruation or of nursing children, although in our own world both has served to keep women in their place (the home) throughout most of history as dictated by men. In fact, so unfamiliar is the whole idea of owning a childbearing body to Armitage that she is not aware that she is capable of having children until she hears of it through autopsy reports made on the pregnant bodies of deceased Thirds. Yet, female robot bodies are still coded in a similar fashion to women's bodies, as both leaky and polluting, through visual imagery as I will explain below.

The cultural and political construction of women's bodies in relationship to men's bodies has "served to ground the devaluation of women by men" (Margrit Shildrick, 1999, p. 14). Accordingly, women's bodies position women as morally deficient and existentially disabled" (p. 14). Moreover, women's bodies are

regarded as leaky, uncontrollable, and even unclean. According to Brian Ruh (2004), "blood of any kind is seen as polluting in Japanese Shinto beliefs" (p. 136), and this notion extends to menstruation, a symbol of womanhood (p. 136). In a similar regard, Irene Gedalof (paraphrasing Haraway) states,

> 'Women' don't settle down as the borders of separate and stable community identities. Like the leaky female body, 'women' bleed across those borders. Like the productive female body, 'women' give birth to all sorts of new identities. Like the female bodies troubling talent for making other bodies. (p. 213)

In *Armitage III*, the perceived threat of the female Thirds is dealt with by exterminating them.

Despite the fact that Thirds do not have leaky breasts and vaginas mentioned above (as far as we know), their bodies are coded as feminine in similar ways through misogynistic violence when D'anclaude murders them on public television. After being dispatched by D'anclaude, Thirds' bodies are left exposed to the world as abject, messy items with various wounds and gaping oozing holes in their female robot bodies exposing blood and electronics – the insides of a maternal and not-maternal (machinic) body – displayed morbidly larger than life on giant viewing screens, exciting and incensing the masses. Their "otherness," which was formerly concealed, justifies their sacrifice. Moreover, it could also be said that the Thirds' hysterical ravings to implore D'anclaude not to kill them are another proof

of their uncontainable feminine character, as hysteria, akin to bleeding, is a female trait.

The images of the Thirds hunted, taunted, and murdered by D'anclaude are particularly strong because the Thirds do not have the idealized young and youthful appearance of the *seconds* that gives the *seconds* additional distance. The Thirds are thoroughly believable as the woman next door or at the supermarket, and their murder is much worse for its realism. Notably, however, they were designed by Armitage's "father" to reflect creativity and life, instead of Naomi whom he loves and on whom he bestowed an arsenal of combat skills. Thirds would also make strong mothers, who, paradoxically, would likely be feminist in their mindset, which is something sorely lacking in Martian society.

Conversely, it is evident that Thirds pose a possible threat to women who have historically been subordinate to men. While it is possible that Thirds may help to elevate the status of women (and society as well), there is also the potential that their existence may create another substructure that subordinates women. For instance, in addition to being gifted artistically, robot Thirds are also exceedingly smart, strong, and fundamentally ageless. It would be difficult for human females to compete. Moreover, Thirds can conceive and give birth, a function that hitherto belonged only to women, which is unnerving in itself.

It is also worth noting that by comparison, men lose nothing at all. Even though there is a male third, Naomi's brother Julian, he poses no perceived threat to anyone. He is an adolescent boy of around eleven years of age with a phenomenal

intellect, but who will never grow up. As he says, "The joke's on me!" In keeping with male power constructs, Julian will never become a strong adult man and cannot impregnate a female robot or a woman, as he will never reach puberty; hence, he poses no threat to the patriarchal system as an outsider. Why he is created in the first place is never explained.

One may also wonder why the government did not ask scientists to design both male and female robots to quickly increase the native Martian population and prevent recession, as it takes a generation for human offspring to grow up and enter the work force. I maintain that by ignoring this alternative, the narrative emphasizes that male authorities are fearful of losing power by removing the human male from the equation, (which reiterates the point made in the paragraph above, that men do not lose anything), whereas removing the human female is acceptable. Further, the choice to design a female robot in place of a female human, instead of the other way around, places paternity as the more important role in the making of life than maternity.

This preference also gives credence to sexist and regressive eighteenth-century prescriptive notions that rationality is predominantly a human male characteristic and one that elevates humans from animals. This notion is complemented by an equally sexist one that defines women as similar to nature/animals (easily replaced by machines), indicating that women are less evolved and therefore inferior to men. Once again, as Newitz (1995) suggests "female bodies and sexuality are...'best suited' to mecha" (Magical Girls and

Atomic Bomb Sperm, Online), and as previously mentioned, female bodies represent systems of oppression at work in society. Following suit, the unmodified human male is the essential inclusion for the production of human offspring. As Gill Kirkup (2003) maintains, the very underpinnings of the discourse that defines what is human, "constructs gender inequality" (p. 6). A related hypothesis dates back to ancient Egypt when it was widely accepted that babies were the product of the male seed and male creative powers and the female womb was needed merely for incubation. In keeping with what appears to be a feminist critique throughout the narrative, the anime illustrates how men place themselves in the prominent role of expanding the human race. Perhaps, not incidentally, it is also men that are privileged to enjoy the pleasure of having sexual relations with submissive idealized female bodies, while women are not given an equal opportunity to enjoy the same relations with idealized males.

The only woman with any real power in *Armitage III* is the "Two World Leader" Chairwoman Everheart, mentioned above, who wears a man-styled suit jacket, is square-shouldered, and very short- haired, giving her a rather manly appearance, suggesting that ambitious women in positions of control are masculine in appearance. Further, the anime seems to infer that she is not only unfeminine in appearance, but is devoid of empathy and sympathy, traits that are typically categorized as feminine. For instance, unfettered by any remorse, she is able to organize the cruel and pitiless terrorization and annihilation of the female Thirds, which are to all intent and purposes indistinguishable from women, and the

genocide of vast numbers of female seconds. I suggest that the anime is not absurdly pretending that feminine women cannot be cold and or cruel, but rather it is concurring with a common trope that anyone who belongs to the higher echelons of the corporate world – typically the domain of men – must be tough and ruthless. However, by so doing – conflating Everheart's masculine appearance (reflecting her mindset) and her cruelty – the anime makes two assumptions, men at the top are cruel, and so are ambitious women. The use of a female world leader in this narrative is an interesting and unique twist and the portrayal can be argued to be sexist, or a critique of sexism, or both. Paradoxically, the only females in *Armitage III* that are demonstrated to be both strong and independent in positive ways are the female Thirds, who are not organic women.

I conclude that the three anime discussed in this chapter, *Armitage III*, *The Second Renaissance I* and *II*, and *Appleseed* demonstrate how human societies struggle to maintain boundaries between humans and posthumans and enforce binarisms despite the technological imagination that has made it possible to us to expand beyond our current parameters. As González (2000) maintains,

> Visual representations of cyborgs are…not only utopian or dystopian prophesies, but are rather reflections of a contemporary state of being. The image of the cyborg body functions as a site of condensation and displacement. It contains on its surface and in its fundamental structure the multiple fears and desires of a culture caught in the process of transformation" (p. 58).

These narratives demonstrate how the creation of robots problematize the ways in which we have related to each other throughout history – providing another form of slavery, sexual slavery and the means to exploit vulnerable beings through abuse of power. It is their "otherness" – their robot bodies – that have removed the prohibition to misuse and abuse them. *Armitage III* suggests that although humans have made great strides in technology, human relationships have not evolved accordingly. Society on Mars still suffers from longstanding problems such as sexism and prejudice, which surface in a characteristic manner but in a new context. Perhaps, the only way to change our own future, which may bear some frightening similarities to the depictions of human /posthuman relationships in the anime, is to change the way we relate to each other in the present.

> *Haraway praises the cyborg as a potentially liberatory concept, for it provides a metaphor for gender obsolescence. When gender ceases to be an issue, she explains, women can be released from their inequality under patriarchy and equality becomes possible.*
>
> Claudia Springer

I maintain that my responses to my original questions are once again folded into my discussion of the themes I isolate in this anime. In conclusion, *Armitage III* illustrates the marginalization and coercion of the central characters who rebel and become heroes, but it is also a love story between two unlikely individuals—a

robot female with the ability to carry children and a human male with two bionic limbs who hated robots until meeting the headstrong heroine. Their commitment to the victimized robots, and a strong sense of justice, is what brings them together. Through their relationship, Armitage learns that she is not a monster and can be herself with at least one human. Ross learns to love Armitage and accept the equality of humans and robots. Similarly, Armitage is also willing to acknowledge that she is worthy of love and children.

Armitage III ends with Ross and the pregnant Armitage fleeing from a war they cannot fight without assistance. Even in the sequel *Armitage III: Dual Matrix*, the clash between the robots and humans is not resolved. However, the couple is victorious on a personal level. Naomi's pregnant body was never discovered and a new race of posthumans is still possible. In fact, the sequel reveals that their adorable child possesses some extraordinary talents that she has inherited from her mother.

In our own world, the existence of artificial intelligence, particularly humanoid robots, may pose a threat to human civilization on many levels (especially for women), but it may also have the power to better humans as well. Sharalyn Orbaugh (2007) paraphrasing González states, "Cyborgs are not about the future, they are about contemporary society and its current transformations" (p. 172). Viewers, students in particular (especially female students), may wonder about the possibility of robot couples forming in their lifetimes, and what impact

that might have on human-to-human relationships in general. How can negative uses of robots be prevented? What would negative uses be?

Foremost, the dystopian worlds portrayed in these anime demonstrate that humans are the victims of their own poor and selfish choices, but by doing so they also indicate that humans can make conscious decisions and merge with technology in creative and unprecedented ways into a propitious future. These anime offer students models for reflection about themselves and society. In any event, progress in robotics and artificial intelligence is not going to end. Our students will form the generation that will implement such technologies. The question is- what direction will we follow in our own world? As protagonist Kusanagi Motoko from *Ghost in the Shell* declares, "If a technological feat is possible man will do it. Almost as though it's wired into the core of our beings" (1995).

Conclusion

Shifting Boundaries of Human Technology Interface

The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated.

The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment.

We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us.

We are responsible for boundaries; we are they.

Donna Haraway

I've come to a point where I just can't make a movie

without addressing the problem of humanity as part of an ecosystem.

Miyazaki Hayao

This thesis explores how apocalyptic anime can be used in diverse and complex ways to comment on character response to upheaval and disaster. I offer an analysis of important anime titles that deal with the theme of apocalypse through human abuses of technology. My choices of course only reflect a fraction of significant apocalyptic anime that is available, as it is well beyond the scope and length of this study to attempt a comprehensive investigation of apocalyptic anime in general. As the reader will have noted, the apocalypse in each anime I discuss differs in type, scope, and affect. Some of the anime illustrate apocalyptic crises

that are personal and psychological, such as Kusanagi Motoko's in *Ghost in the Shell* (although the technologies that affect the protagonist also have far-reaching consequences). Other anime involve world-ending scenarios such as those illustrated in *The Second Renaissance*. The purpose of this thesis is two-fold: it demonstrates how apocalypse narratives in anime can assist educators and students to reflect on the changes that technology is making in the world and to our personal lives, as well as provide educators and students with an analysis of apocalyptic anime that is suitable for pedagogical delivery and study.

In this thesis, I have argued that the study of apocalypse through anime is worthwhile for reasons that are particularly important to students. Characteristics that are typical of Japanese storytelling in general foster active spectatorship. A brief summary of those characteristics include- sophisticated and challenging narratives that rival works in print on the same topics; complex and ambiguous characters; open-endings, and narratives that critique our relationships with technology in imaginative and complicated ways through the construction of alternate fictional worlds that reflect our own.

I would like to focus for a moment on the latter: I suggest that it is the imaginative relationship that viewers have with animation that provides it with the power to move us in a way that more realistic portrayals in live-action cinema cannot. As Paul Wells (1998) suggests, the "transgressive possibilities available to the cartoon…seem limitless, and this has not been lost on animators since the evolution of the form" (p. 19). Fantasy, and in particular, metamorphosis is a

feature of the animated film that can be endlessly explored by animators, to great advantage. I suggest that apocalyptic images can be portrayed in animation that cannot easily be reproduced in live action. For instance, the apocalyptic scenes in Otomo Katsuhiro's *Akira* (1988) featuring Tetsuo's transmogrification – his infected arm becomes a monstrous image of destruction – would be impossible to reproduce in a live action film. Animation makes it possible to portray circumstances of transformation and change that are limited only by the imagination.

It could be said that all of the anime I discuss in this thesis make use of the transformative mode of animation to create alternative worlds, even if in some ways they mirror our own. Further, as the medium of animation calls for greater suspension of disbelief, it is perhaps less difficult to accept outlandish characters (human and otherwise) and their predicaments. For instance, I have little problem feeling sympathetic toward *Armitage III*'s tough female android cop, Naomi Armitage, or accepting that *Ghost in the Shell*'s cyborg Kusanagi Motoko can merge with the data streams of the Internet. Clearly, animation is no longer just for children and anime is important to many adolescents and young adults. Moreover, students can model this artistic form by dealing with their own responses to anime films and in voicing their own concerns that surface in anime narratives. For these reasons among many, it should be part of student curriculum.

As mentioned in the introduction, the study of anime narratives can bring student interest into their work, as anime is probably already a part of their lives. I

am in agreement with Patrick Drazen (2003) who suggests that in general popular culture is immanently valuable (though often ignored), and should not be taken lightly "since it contains the capacity to guide viewers along the path of socially acceptable thought and action" (p. viii). Drazen quotes film critic Peter Biskind:

> Movies influence manners, attitudes and behavior. In the fifties, they told us how to dress for a rumble or a board meeting, how far to go on the first date, what to think about...Jews, blacks, and homosexuals. They taught girls whether they should have husbands or careers, boys whether to pursue work or pleasure. They told us what was right and what was wrong, what was good and what was bad; they defined our problems and suggested solutions. And they still do [sic]. (pp. viii-ix)

Similar to Biskind, Drazen suggests that Hollywood film both reflects and influences North American life. In the same regard, Japanese animation has this capacity. Moreover, as Chandler-Olcott (2008) claims, student interest in Japan is has grown rapidly in recent years, and this healthy interest in another culture ought to be encouraged. She states, "Literacy teachers can no longer afford to see anime as the province of a few hobbyists seeking to position themselves as 'alternative' through their appreciation of Far Eastern culture" (pp. 65-66).

As Chandler suggests, perhaps, importantly, it can also be said that through attaining understanding of another culture and a new set of perspectives (to some degree) one also learns more about one's own culture through "inevitable cross-

cultural comparisons" (2008, p. 68). As Gilles Poitras (2008) suggests, fans who are interested in anime are also interested in Japan's broader culture. He maintains,

> Fans want to have a greater understating of the show they enjoy, so they study foods, geography, history, clothing, martial arts, contemporary pop culture, etiquette, and any other aspect of Japanese society that may catch their fancy. Along with all the anime related events, [anime] conventions may have limited-enrollment tea ceremonies, workshops on popular music, and presentations on history and other topics (p. 65)

Of particular interest to anime fans is Japanese research and progress in technology, particularly as it pertains to games, robots, cyborgs, gadgets, toys and artificial intelligence in general.

As mentioned in the introduction, the global importance of anime reaches beyond its recognition as a distinct Japanese cultural product. Anime is heralded as possessing a stateless quality (Napier, 2005, p. 26) even as it reflects its indigenous Japanese roots. As Napier claims,

> The Japanese national cultural identity put forward by anime is increasingly, and perhaps paradoxically, a *global* one. In this regard anime is perhaps the ideal aesthetic product for the contemporary period, at the forefront of creating an alternative cultural discourse that goes beyond the traditional categories of 'native' or 'international' to participate in what may well be a genuinely new form of global culture. (p. 292)

However, until recently anime was made by the Japanese for the Japanese. Even Miyazaki (2002), whose work is appreciated around the world, claims it is critical to maintain one's own culture (p. 16).

Miyazaki (2002) argues that through film, children who are surrounded by technology can be reminded of their roots and the richness of their traditions. He claims traditional things are often pushed into a small folk culture world. He states,

> In this borderless age, a man who doesn't have a place to put down his roots will be looked down upon. A place is the past and also a history. A man without history or a people that forgot its past will have no choice but to disappear..." (p. 16).

For viewers, students in particular, who have the resources to learn about Japanese culture in anime, the viewing experience is even deeper and richer. As Antonia Levi (1996) maintains, making meaning from anime requires "knowledge of Japan's prehistory, its myths and legends, its religions, artistic traditions, and philosophies" (p. 16).

However, as mentioned above, in keeping with Napier's thoughts, I suggest that many anime are both meaningful and relevant to a global audience, even if the finer points of Japanese references, enriching as they may be, are not completely understood. I have attempted to the best of my ability to address these references as they occur throughout this thesis. I have been guided in this area by several theorists including Susan Napier, Yamanaka Hiroshi, Yoshioka Shiro, Gilles

Poitras, Antonia Levi, Helen McCarthy, as well as directors Oshii Mamoru and Miyazaki Hayao to name only a few.

Overall, my writing has been guided by many excellent theorists, in the area of anime, cyborg theory, posthumanism, literary theory and criticism, and gender studies. In particular, anime theorist Susan Napier and cyborg theorist Donna Haraway (as mentioned in my introduction) have been most useful. The former was important to support one of the main claims of this thesis, which is that apocalyptic anime can be used as a means with which students can deal with catastrophe and change. As Napier (2003) maintains, "anime is not only particularly suited to convey the unconveyable but also, and perhaps surprisingly, it can challenge the problem of psychic numbing" (*Into the Labyrinth*, Online). She claims, "*anime* is more than surface images…the best of *anime* offers sophisticated and moving narratives, intriguing and often notably three-dimensional characters, and even memorable philosophical visions that do indeed evoke viewer response at a variety of sophisticated levels" (*Into the Labyrinth*, Online).

Further, Napier (2005) guided my analysis of *Princess Mononoke* in the various ways outlined in my introduction, including her analysis of how it can be read as a Japanese vision of multiculturalism (p. 246). In addition, Helen McCarthy's writing was very helpful, as well as texts I have recently discovered by Yamanaka Hiroshi and Yoshioka Shiro: their beautiful descriptions of the Japanese quest and Miyazaki's relationship to the forest respectively were enlightening.

Particularly illuminating were commentary and interviews with the directors, Miyazaki and Oshii.

As mentioned in my introduction, my discussion of Chapters Two through Four were strongly guided by my reading of Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto." Even though Haraway's famous essay was not originally intended to be a manifesto for the machine, but was actually a metaphor for a form of feminism, it has been usurped and disseminated by cyborg theorists, becoming a point of departure for discussions of posthumanism in general. I was also guided by works of other theorists who have extended and elaborated on Haraway's vision: those theorists include Claudia Springer, Mobina Hashmi, N. Katherine Hayles, Jennifer Gonzalez, Sharalyn Orbaugh, and Steven T. Brown, as well as others.

In her manifesto, Haraway (1991) claims, "Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves" (p. 181). She takes a feminist stance that cyborgs, as liminal entities, can release women and other minorities from complex dominations related to dualisms that prevail in Western traditions. However, in the films I have explored, humans situate robots within these binarisms rather than break with them: in other words, what are robots if they are not another ill-used worker, another oppressed female, another "other" to be subjugated. In short, the human characters in these films reject the imaginative potential of technology to break the bonds of

domination. They portray how humans treat their creations with disrespect and violence, perhaps out of fear that their new creations will surpass them.

In sharp contrast, Haraway (1991) calls for a synthesis of human and machine, although she admits cyborg representation in science fiction is laden with human insecurities. In her manifesto, she claims,

> We find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras...There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic. The replicant Rachel in the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner* stands as the image of a cyborg culture's fear, love, and confusion. (pp. 177-178)

Perhaps Naomi Armitage is comparable to the character Rachel in *Blade Runner*. Similar to Rachel, Armitage is admired and feared by her human creators and colleagues, but in the end, she is hunted by humans who want to exterminate her.

Possibly, Kusanagi from *Ghost in the Shell* is the closest to Haraway's description of the cyborg potential to break free of the body, or in cyberpunk terminology the "meat." Haraway (1991) asks, "Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" (p.178). Kusanagi was able to break out of her synthetic skin and merge with the cosmos. The anime portray the potential of human technologies, but also how humans are paralyzed by their fear of that potential. In fear and confusion, they defy not only the machine potential but also the human one.

Although Oshii shows tremendous sympathy for the plight of the cyborgs in *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence*, and Ochi Hiroyuki presents us with an unforgettable more-than-human robot in *Armitage III (OVA)*, the worlds these creatures inhabit are not gracious and accepting. Haraway rejects technophobia, but she maintains that we must take responsibility for the power relations we establish with the technologies we create and implement. This responsibility is not met with any more care in the worlds of the films I discuss than it is in the real world of technological disasters that have destroyed our environment. I will leave the discussion of my theorists here, and begin a discussion of my themes. I will discuss my themes chapter by chapter, and show how my theorists have directed my thinking in many examples as those instances arise.

The overriding theme of *Princess Mononoke* is ecological apocalypse. Although the film ends with a sudden and dramatic reversal of the disastrous environmental apocalypse (begun with the severing of the Shishigami's head), things are not business as usual by any means. The human settlement of Tatara must be rebuilt, and although the crippled Eboshi promises to do things in a better way, what that means is unclear. The film implies that the forest – and by extension all of nature – will slowly be destroyed as humans continue to encroach on the natural world. As Napier suggests, by refusing to destroy Tatara and Eboshi, Miyazaki's film, implicitly acknowledges the inevitability of progress (2005, p. 245).

Further, *Princess Mononoke* describes the beginning of human estrangement from the natural world and human abuses of the forest and its inhabitants. The film also suggests great loss—loss of lifestyle, morals and spirit, as the gulf between humans and the natural world increases. The director created the fantastic world of *Princess Mononoke* and its characters, by subverting typical representations of fourteenth century Japan (as described by Napier). Through his complex characters, Miyazaki demonstrates that humans who are responsible for devastating the environment can also be good people in other ways who lead complicated lives. The film suggests that we must accept that humans cannot live in the world without some negative effect on the environment, but we can attempt to keep it to a minimum.

The storyline of *Princess Mononoke* follows the protagonist's quest, and as Yamanaka (2008) claims, Ashitaka's journey to attain self-renewal is embedded in the directors "reverence of life" that exists as a great power permeating both the human and natural worlds (p. 246). To renew himself and find a cure for his scar, Ashitaka must travel into the depths of the woodlands, which could also be interpreted as a journey deep inside himself. The pristine cleansing waters of the Shishigami's mysterious pond represent a time when the natural world was a place of mystery and refuge. Now according to Miyazaki it exists as a sense of awe inside us all. Through reaching that sacred place, through his selfless actions, and enormous sense of hope and purpose, Ashitaka reverses the boar god's curse. He

serves as Miyazaki's reminder to viewers that the important thing is to live (our lives to the fullest in a good way).

The next film, *Ghost in the Shell*, contrasts to *Princess Mononoke* in several ways. Most obviously, it is set in the future instead of the past, is more cerebral in tone, and focuses primarily on a single protagonist's struggle with identity. It is the first of the anime I discuss that problematizes how the virtual or cyberworld has come to be embedded in the everyday. In short, as Napier (2007) states of apocalyptic themed *Serial Experiments Lain* (1998) and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995, 1996), and which could just as easily apply to *Ghost in the Shell*, "reality itself becomes part of the apocalyptic discourse, problematized as a condition that can no longer be counted on to continue to exist, thanks to the advances of technology and its increasing capabilities for both material and spiritual destruction" (p. 102). Certainly, *Ghost in the Shell* describes a world in which not only reality, but memory as well, is unreliable.

While on the surface it may seem that *Ghost in the Shell* represents the absence of dualisms Haraway calls for, it does not offer characters an escape from power paradigms. Kusanagi's incredible cyborg body that offers her superhuman strength and abilities also makes her easier to control. As Bolton (2002) posits, paraphrasing Haraway, "the challenges to bodily integrity that the cyborg poses—from the body's penetration by technology to the specter of its conversion into a data stream—carry with them the threat of objectification and coercion" (From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls, Online).

The character Kusanagi constantly questions- *who am I?* She wonders if it really matters if she is human; for one thing, humans are even more vulnerable to cyberbrain manipulation than she is. Further, humans have become the pathetic victims of their own technologies. After meeting the Puppet Master, an advanced sentient intelligence born in the 'net,' the primary reason to be human – possessing a unique consciousness – evaporates. Clearly, the Puppet Master is an independent consciousness with the desire to sustain itself and even to mutate, merging with Kusanagi, to bear its "offspring into the Net itself" (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995).

Kusanagi consciously chooses to obviate her body, and now, the possibilities of movement through the intricacies of the cybernetic world are endless. Perhaps she could be compared with Case, the Internet-junky protagonist from Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1990), who is said to achieve "the bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (p. 6). Discussing *Neuromancer* Bukatman (1993) posits, "The body is paradoxically extended by its own disappearance—the subject's control is increased by its implosion within the cyberspaces of electronic technology" (p. 315). However, while this anime suggests posthuman technologies can offer grand opportunities, it also acknowledges that these technologies can be used for sinister purposes. Further, Kusanagi's opportunity to transcend her body is not one that would be available to the vast majority of the population.

Kusanagi's presence in *Innocence* confirms that while Oshii claims *Innocence* illustrates his concern that humans need to preserve their humanity, he is not suggesting that humanity is necessarily embedded in the physical body. Not

only does Kusanagi communicate psychically with Batou, in one scene she also animates a robot body long enough to assist him. Further, although it is subtle in both films, it would be obvious to viewers that there is a type of love between Kusanagi and Batou. Oshii seems to comment that even a human psyche that has transcended its material body searches for connection to its humanity.

For instance, when Batou asks Kusanagi if she is happy (as an incorporeal entity), she responds, "A nostalgic value, I suppose. At least I am free of qualms" (*Innocence*, 2004). She follows with a line from the *Dhammapada* that viewers are told she often used before her disappearance, "Let one walk alone, committing no sin, with few wishes. Like an elephant in the forest" [sic] (*Innocence*, 2004). Although this quote suggests that Kusanagi has an uncomplicated existence beyond a requirement for human contact, her parting words to Batou are, "Always remember, Batou ... whenever you enter the Net, I'll be by your side" (*Innocence*, 2004), suggest otherwise. Kusanagi's relationship with Batou, in which she acts as both his protector and as his guide indicates that she is motivated to connect with the world outside of her own consciousness. Further, Batou's quiet love for her, as well as his caring relationship with his hound, suggests that the cyborg is capable of an emotional life that connects him to the outside world as well.

Oshii emphasizes the point that animals can encourage humans (and by extension cyborgs) to connect to the natural world; hence, by acknowledging the world, humans can know themselves. In a sense, this theme, which emphasizes Oshii's disapproval of anthropocentricism, links Oshii's *Innocence* to one of the

central themes in Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*- that of human estrangement to the natural world. Further, in one sense Oshii seems to be placing emphasis on the human as an organism, and the idea of the whole body as a marker of self, instead of the preeminence of the mind that was proposed in *Ghost in the Shell*.

Indeed, in some ways Oshii seems to suggest that the human consciousness is inextricably bound to the body, and as the human body disappears, so does the consciousness. However, as I have already demonstrated, that reading in itself would not be complete. Oshii is making many seemingly contradictory points with this film. Perhaps it may said, that the film offers multiple points of view- for instance, from a human and a robot standpoint, which would automatically differ.

Similarly, *Innocence* portrays two quite dissimilar reasons why humans create dolls/cyborgs/robots. One reading suggests that humans creating dolls signals the end of humanity- that as humanity diminishes humans are engineering their replacement. As Claudia Springer (1996) argues, "Those who adulate technology's penetration of the human body and mind can lose sight of how the attempt to become a technological object leads inevitably to extinction" (p. 7). However, another more positive reading of posthumanity in this film implies that the hybrid human/doll signifies the evolution of humanity into a superior technologically enhanced form. Oshii maintains, dolls represent the progression of humanity as the creator and advancer of culture, and losing the body is a part of that course (Orbaugh, 2008, p. 161). Then again, as Sharalyn Orbaugh suggests (and which makes the most sense to me), perhaps Oshii's central concern is *omoi*

ga nokoru (affect remains). Oshii maintains, "The affect that a person leaves

behind is the evidence that they have lived" (Orbaugh, p. 161). Through

Innocence, Oshii suggests that this state is the essence of life, and that it can belong

to posthumans as well as humans.

Chapter Four examines additional themes that focus on relationships

between humans and robots in three anime. While two of these films illustrate

personal as well as social crises, the third describes world-ending events. *Armitage*

III and *The Second Renaissance* portray the exploitation and abuse of robots. The

former culminates in robot genocide, while the latter leads to an all-out-war

between humans and robots. Although Naomi Armitage and Ross Sylibus in

Armitage III are important central characters, the social milieu surrounding the

plight of the robots is almost as important to the narrative as they are. Both films

demonstrate that the robots do nothing to deserve maltreatment, and illustrate that

robot females are most often the victims. The anime suggest that in our own robot

future, the existence of robots may intensify gender difference and the oppression

of women by creating another class that is both female and "other," giving

oppressors a greater excuse for sexism and violence against the female gender.

While these anime do not demonize technology, they prefigure problematic

relationships with robots by highlighting how these types of relationships currently

exist in our own societies. For instance, *The Second Renaissance* suggests

comparisons of robot maltreatment to specific historical events in our own history

that describe the mistreatment of minorities. As Mobina Hashmi (2000) claims, "I

think there is a legitimate parallel to be drawn between these stories about a robotic other and its position in the dominant order and the position of women and non-white peoples" (Japanese Anime in the United States, Online). These films rather graphically depict the horrendous treatment of sentient robots that mirrors our horrendous treatment of each other.

The third film discussed in this chapter, *Appleseed*, also portrays humans as harboring resentment and directing malevolence at peaceful bioroid robots that were originally designed to assist humans to become less violent and more placid overall. Similar to the anime described in the other chapters, these films suggest that machines may be more humane than humans. Paradoxically, Hashmi (2000) suggests, efforts to aggressively control autonomous robots in our own world, once they are living amongst us, could result in a battle in which we lose our own organic bodies (Japanese Anime in the United States, Online). This outcome is illustrated in *The Second Renaissance,* as mentioned above, in which people arrogantly turn against robots and are the cause of their own demise. It is conceivable that robots could eventually replace humans, particularly if one considers the possibility of epidemic diseases and global warming taking its toll on the vulnerable human body. The former theme was dealt with in Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón's live action film, *Children of Men* (1996) in which humans face sterility and extinction.

Perhaps these anime suggest that we humans should ask ourselves what it is that makes us human, and what, if anything makes humans superior to their

technological offspring. I suggest that the answer is not as simple as it seems. When I asked my daughter, a university student, how she would characterize the differences between robots and humans, her reply was quick and assertive: "We are humans because we are flesh and blood. We are not emotionless machines. That is the difference!" However, after watching *Armitage III* her opinion changed completely, and she felt genuine empathy for the plight of the robots in the anime. She said, "Perhaps in the not so distant future we may not be so different from each other." This point was made in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. In Scott's film, scientists create humanoid robot slaves to perform arduous and degrading labour. They are endowed with human memories and emotions, but are also installed with a built in device for self-destruction after only four years. The robots, which have formed strong friendships and love relationships rebel violently against their human creators only because they want to continue to live.

The question is how are we, humans, in the real world going to fare with posthuman beings in our own future. For instance, how will we respond if humanoid robots are given the employment we covet? We (educators and students) might consider, what forms of rights should be given to robots? Will distinctions between machines and humans be clear-cut and definable? What counts as intelligence? What is human?

The themes in the anime I have chosen suggest that our relationships with technology should be positive, after all posthumans may exist in the future only at the behest of humans. We, not they, are responsible for technology estranging us

from the natural world, from our higher morals and spiritual concerns, and from each other. However, in many ways the anime I discuss can be said to show viewers that we need to change ourselves now, in the present, to create a brighter future. In fact Oshii (2004) states, "The future I describe in the movies is actually not the future. It's the present, so if the future in the movies looks very dark and very sad, unfortunately, that's the way our present is [sic]." (Interview, Gilchrist, Online). As Mobina Hashmi (2000) writes of *Ghost in the Shell*, "The film depicts a pessimistic vision of the near future where technology serves only to extend and reinforce the dominant order," (Japanese Anime in the United States, Online).

After viewing these anime, and considering the many themes this thesis introduces, students may ask- will we be more successful at planning and utilizing technologies that relate to artificial intelligence than we have been with technologies that have brought the world to an energy crisis? Will we be able to live harmoniously with the machines we create? What will happen to our human bodies? As Jasper Sharp (2004) warns, "Does anything not in a form that can be recognized or represented by a computer cease to have any meaning, and can the realms of spirituality or morality also be confined within the logic of the algorithm?" (Midnight Eye, Online). Perhaps, humans will turn into the mindless, shapeless blobs staring at their personal computer screens, illustrated in Andrew Stanton's remarkable recent Hollywood animated picture *Wall-E* (2008). In this film, which takes a somewhat humorous look at a frightening vision of our possible future, humans float in space without a home for seven hundred years waiting for a

time they can return safely to Earth without fear of contamination. Similarly, we have thoughtlessly poisoned the planet, and have already begun to develop what Bukatman (1993) calls a "terminal identity," an identity that begins and perhaps ends at the computer terminal. Moreover, Bukatman advises, "the 'real' body disappears into its postmodern master-narrative of dissolution in too many terminal identity philosophies and fictions" (p. 315).

Certainly, there are many thoughtful opinions regarding our cyborgian metamorphosis. In reference to our own transformation, Oshii (2004) has stated,

> One answer would be to discard the actual human body, and embrace becoming a doll. People try to adjust their natural bodies, evolved for something very different, to the modern urban environment. Instead of following that trajectory, we're better off turning into dolls, into intended artifice. (*After the Long Goodbye*, p. 190)

Mobina Hashmi (2000) takes a more negative approach to the vision of human interface with technology, particularly as a state of evolution mentioned above. She argues,

> The history of cyborgs is very closely tied to that of military scientific developments, as is that of cyberspace. If the cyborg is understood solely as the next step in human evolution, as the means by which humans can finally attain transcendence, and if "human" is unproblematically universalized and homogenized, then the lived material realities of the vast majority of humans are once again erased. And, once again, the question to ask is of

how one can articulate discursive contestations of dominant meanings and

dominant social orders (such as that in *Ghost in the Shell*) with the lived

realities of struggles for real economic and material equality [sic].

(Japanese Anime in the United States, Online)

Obviously, narratives like *Ghost in the Shell* do not portray rural peoples, third

world residents, and the economically disadvantaged as reaping positive benefits

from cyber-enhancements. Similarly, it is almost guaranteed that in the real world-

politicians, wealthy criminals, and the financial elite in general would be the

beneficiaries of research in artificial intelligence.

However, medical experiments with AI (artificial intelligence) have taken

place in our own time. Few of us realize it, but a handful of humans have already

been provided with bionic limbs. The first fitting occurred in 2002, when Dr. Todd

Kuiken from the University of Chicago fit an amputee with a fully functional

robotic arm using microcomputer technology. The arm reacts to the patient's

thoughts and commands, and responds to feelings such as hot and cold (Michael

Arndt, Dr. Todd A. Kuiken: Bionic Sensation, 2006, Online). Just as remarkable,

in 2006, a research team led by neuroscientist John Donoghue, from Brown

University implanted a tiny silicone chip into the brain of a man who was paralyzed

in four limbs (as a result of being stabbed in the neck) and then attached it to a

computer. Incredibly, in four days, "the patient was able to move a computer

cursor on a screen, open e-mail, adjust the channel and volume control on a

television, play a computer game, and control a robotic arm using his thoughts"

(Doidge, 2007, p. 207). The next stage may include, a miniature computer that can be connected, "either to a robotic arm or wirelessly to a wheelchair control or to electrodes implanted in muscles to trigger movements (Doidge, p. 207).

Moreover, research on downloading consciousness into external hardware is also on the horizon though not possible yet, as well as brain computer interface (direct neural interface, or BCI) mentioned in Chapter Three. In line with these initiatives, in Japan, Dr. Ishiguro (2006) asks, "I wonder how possible it is to separate one's inner self and outer self, to create distance between one's body and soul" (Geminoid Videos, Online). This is a central issue in Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* films as well as Ochi's *Armitage III*. Both directors incorporate the possibility of such a separation in the narrative. Kusanagi in *Ghost in the Shell*, chooses a complete separation, dispensing with her body or shell altogether.

All arguments aside, in the end, as Oshii (2004) maintains, human interface with machines is inevitable. Clearly, however, it must be managed. He maintains, "In this day and age when everything is uncertain, we should all think about what to value in life and how to coexist with others. We all need friends, family, and lovers. We cannot live alone" (Go Fish Pictures, Online). In the constructed worlds of his films, "robots and electronic beings have become necessary companions to people" and, as he says, "that time has come already" (Go Fish Pictures, Online). Professor Ishiguro Hiroshi (2008), creator of the Geminoid Robots maintains, "In the end, we don't want to interact with machines or computers. We want to interact with technology in a human way so it's natural and

valid to try to make robots look like us" (Cited in Tabuchi, Japan Looks to a Robot Future, Online).

In Japan, they are already designing robot companions to assist with the care of the sick and elderly. With more than a fifth of the population sixty-five or older, Japan is counting on robots to replenish the work force and care for seniors.[1] According to Kageyama Yuri (2004), robots can be more than helpers, "carrying out simple chores and reminding patients to take their medication," but companions as well, "even if the machines can carry on only a semblance of a real dialogue" for the time being (Red Orbit, Online). In the same way, Dr. Ishiguro's android robots are already so convincing, at least for a short session, that his researchers have noted that when a robot is introduced to the public, "even when people know it is a robot they unconsciously react to it as if it were human, for example, by averting their gaze when they ask a question, to signal they are thinking of the answer" (Smith, Soon he'll be in two places at once, 2006, Online). Dr. Ishiguro has designed an android twin of himself that he believes will allow him to be in two places at once, such as at home or in the classroom; in fact, he has already introduced his Geminoid twin to his students and observed their reactions (Smith, Soon he'll be in two places at once, Online).

Using Dr. Ishiguro's designs (also mentioned in Chapter Four) the Kokoro Company in Japan (Kokoro Co. Ltd., Online) has designed the incredibly lifelike female "Actroid" robots. As previously discussed, these robots are available to rent – for business functions and conventions – with a variety of clothing styles that

range from business suits to clingy one-piece vinyl jumpers. Each android talks, and is controlled by multiple electronic sensors that respond to stimuli in a human-like manner. Additionally, they have supple silicon skin that appears to breathe using air compression. While such advancements in cybernetics and robotics are exciting, it is also possible that sexual abuses or a sex trade in robots, such as those imagined in the anime (scantily clad female robot *seconds* in *Armitage III* and gynoid dolls in *Innocence*) will occur at a future date.

However, dolls of many sizes, not just life-sized ones are already big business for adult consumers in Japan and elsewhere. Napier (2008) claims that dolls and action figures are considered "works of art, icons of ideology and emotion, and objects of fetishization" (p. 259). Napier states that while doing research on dolls in Tokyo she spent time in Akihabara, the area which used to be known as the center for the latest in techno-gadgetry but is now equally well known for its proliferation of shops that offer doll products for sale. She describes these strange forays into the doll world as a movement, "from sunshine into shadow" (p. 259). She states,

> I would start in a well-lit mammoth store such as Laox, stuffed with
>
> seemingly every gadget, toy, and action figure under the sun; then progress
>
> to smaller places specializing in dolls or sometimes simply doll parts (one
>
> particularly distinctive store had huge cabinets full of glass dolls' eyes, like
>
> something from *Blade Runner* [1982]); to truly specialized places—warrens
>
> of glass cases owned by individuals that exhibited their owners' particular

tastes, ranging from the innocuous, like Barbie dolls and trading cards, to

the disturbing—dolls in bondage or even simply dismembered doll torsos

rising from a rose-blossom-shaped pool of blood. These stores would often

sell doll-centered magazines, usually containing pictures of mutilated nude

dolls in disorientingly beautiful scenes and exquisitely lit and photographed.

(p. 259)

Napier adds that she also visited many stores that sell "costumes" for consumers,

usually *otaku* (obsessive fans of anything, for example- anime, manga, and dolls)

displayed on life-sized dolls. She claims that *otaku* are the driving force behind a

"doll worship subculture of contemporary Japan" (p. 260). The expensive outfits

found in these shops range from schoolgirl to provocative French maid uniforms.

The end-result is to make the wearer into a fantasy character or a doll themselves,

including "Lolita".[2] This activity is popular with otaku and is usually referred to as

"cosplay" or costume play. The anime conventions I have attended always include

robot and cyborg cosplayers from a variety of anime, which is common practice at

all anime and manga events. Although Napier describes a darker side of anime

subculture here, typically anime conventions are light-hearted and celebratory.

Further, while manifestations of the robot/doll in anime, manga, action

figures, cosplay, and anime may seem outlandish to many educators, these popular

cultural phenomena are probably very familiar to our students. As mentioned in

the introduction, contemporary students are in general, more progressive in their

knowledge of the anime medium than we educators. Therefore, it is my hope that

this thesis has offered readers a brief introduction to anime origins and culture, as well as most importantly, an examination of apocalyptic anime that can be used for the purposes of pedagogy. I hope as well that educators will go beyond this thesis and investigate anime and its world in additional venues.

In conclusion, anime can stimulate viewers, particularly students, to speculate about what it is that makes us human, and human relationships with technology. There are inestimable questions that can be employed for reflection and exchange between educators and students. I only discuss some of them. However, in regards to posthumans, one theme rises above the others. It is eloquently stated by Donna Haraway (1991) from her *Cyborg Manifesto*:

> The machine is not an *it* to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; *they* do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they. (p. 180)

As she claims, being able to design and employ technology is not sufficient. We must also be able to guide and use it respectfully.

As I expressed in my introduction, this thesis examines a selection of apocalyptic anime to illustrate how the main characters in each anime experience various types of apocalypse, which can help students to reflect on events in the contemporary world. Once again, I suggest that anime can assist us, students and educators alike, to make meaning of our experience of disaster and technology

through an imaginative and indirect relationship with anime characters who must deal with life-altering and traumatizing events. As Napier (2003), maintains,

> Catastrophe is "cool" at an aesthetic distance but it is also fundamentally terrifying—disturbing us at the most basic core of our being, our desire for security. Not simply by writing about it but also by reading it, viewing it, or experiencing it vicariously, the reader/viewer does not just "buy it off," he or she also *works it through*. (*Into the Labyrinth*, Online)

As I argue throughout this thesis, anime can provide students and teachers with a vocabulary with which to reflect on the changes technology is making in the world. Educationally speaking, this thesis provides an analysis of this vocabulary, and a set of ideas that can be used for potential curricula. I suggest that anime narratives encourage active spectatorship from viewers, and (once again) the pedagogical importance of anime in providing a form for active spectatorship is one of the main educational claims in this thesis and underpins my examination.

All the anime I discuss propose that posthuman technologies can offer humans new ways of being in the world that are thrilling as well as frightening. As previously mentioned, if human destiny is to continue to interface with machines in increasingly complex ways – through our relationships with robots, through evolving into cyborgs, or through transferring human intelligence into external hardware – it is essential that we preserve our humanity in all senses of the word. Notably, students should be reminded to re-evaluate the artificial supremacy of

humans, and of human-to-human relationships, as these narratives reveal other valuable relationships as well.

Once again, our challenge is to move beyond ourselves to re-envision and cultivate relationships with the more-than-human world. *Princess Mononoke* illustrates how the natural world and its inhabitants are reduced to natural resources to be plundered by humans with industry and firearms, and the ancient gods diminished to dumb animals. It shows us an imaginary incident in the history of a primordial forest that is much like our ancient rain forests across the globe—real forests and all their inhabitants that are steadily destroyed by grazing cattle for fast-food restaurants and drilling for oil. Moreover, these anime suggest that in the future, humans must be prepared to share their environment respectfully with its posthuman neighbors. After all, those creatures are also an extension of us. As Batou comments to Togusa, "Reminds me of the line 'what the body creates, is as much an expression of DNA as the body itself [sic]'" (*Innocence*, 2004). Although he is referring to the city (as a living entity), he might as well be referring to anything that humans create, and I would think particularly to posthumans (Batou might as well be referring to himself). Overall, the anime I discuss in this thesis challenge an anthropocentric view of the world. This perspective is an essential one that is sorely needed in pedagogy, as there is very little educational content that does not premise humans at the centre of curricula.

Notes

Chapter One

[1] According to Miyazaki: At least from ancient times up to a certain time in the medieval period, there was a boundary beyond which humans should not enter. Within this boundary was our territory, so we ruled it as the human's world with our rules, but beyond this road, we couldn't do anything even if a crime has been committed, since it was no longer the human's world - there was such an asylum or sanctum... As we gradually lost the awareness of such holy things, humans somehow lost their respect for nature. This film deals with such a process (*"Mononoke Hime Program"* online).

[2] For example, Nausicaa, the heroine of Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind (1984) blends nurturance and intuitiveness, characteristics which are traditionally considered feminine, with bravery and combat skills, traits which are historically considered masculine. Similarly, Sheeta from Castle in the Sky matures into a courageous young woman, and while she is not a warrior, she is kindhearted, loyal, and strong, and able to stand up to the corrupt politicians who attempt to abuse her legacy.

[3] Although the character Jiko does not appear to change or mature throughout *Princess Mononoke*, he does demonstrate the director's philosophy in complex and interesting ways. As mentioned in this chapter, through Jiko,

Miyazaki makes many often playful philosophical comments. Through this character Miyazaki extols the merit of living life to the fullest even in a "cursed world."

[4] A sense of loss, together with grief and absence is common to the elegiac mode, frequently apparent in Miyazaki's narratives (as well as those by other anime directors). Consistent with this mode, there are many deaths in *Princess Mononoke* and the sudden disappearance of characters causes an arrestment to the narrative and invokes, for the audience, a sense of *aware,* a Japanese term which translates as "softly despairing beauty" (Kawai 22). Related to the above is the Japanese attitude of *mono no aware* a Buddhist lamentation and an expression of tragedy.

[5] Notably, Miyazaki (1997) states the devastated forest is replaced by a tamer version of nature:

I think that the Japanese did kill *shishigami* [Deer God] around the time of the Muromachi era... After *shishigami's* head was returned, nature regenerated. But it has become a tame [cultivated], non-frightening forest of the kind we are accustomed to seeing. The Japanese have been remaking the Japanese landscape in this way. (Interview, Online)

Preamble to Chapters with Futuristic Setting

[1]Complicating immensely complex terms such as cyborg and posthuman are writings by theorists such as Donna Haraway who claim that we are already

cyborgs – beings dependent on and tethered to the machines that sustain us – living with computers, televisions, and electronic devices that accompany us when we leave the home, not to mention our various modes of transportation. Moreover, the technologies that seem so far-fetched in these films are already a reality to some degree, although most of us are not aware of how far research on the brain and artificial intelligence has come. I mention some of these technologies in my conclusion. However, for the purposes of these chapters, cyborgs are humans who have had their bodies augmented to some degree, if not entirely, but a portion at least of their human brains remain.

Chapter Two

[1] The *Matrix* uses a form of digital rain to characterize its franchise (patterns of green characters/text falling on a black background that represents digital codes within the matrix) originally used in the introductory credits for *Ghost in the Shell*, as well as fight sequences copied from the anime, and plot similarities. Producer Joel Silver has been publically open that the directors' brought a copy of *Ghost in the Shell* to their meeting with him to demonstrate the type of style and imagery they were aiming for in the original *Matrix* feature. Subsequently, the Wachowski Brothers commissioned a group of Japanese animators to work on a selection of short films that comprise the *Animatrix*, with narratives that supposedly pre-date the original *Matrix* film series and act as a prequel.

[2] *Blade Runner's* director Ridley Scott wanted to film in Hong Kong but could not afford to. While the movie is supposed to take place in Los Angeles, much of the imagery is inspired by Scott's affection for Hong Kong in the early 1980s.

[3] For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. This well known translation is from the King James Bible 1Corinthians 13:12

[4] According to Shirow's notes in the original manga, Kusanagi is deliberately designed to look like a mass-production model so that she will not be too conspicuous – a fact that she will almost certainly be aware of – minimizing the risk that she will be surprise attacked by criminals, hacked up and sold for parts.

[5] In *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, Batou explains to Togusa that he helped the Major escape because the government / Section 9 was only concerned about what she knew (about Project 2501) and not about her as a person. Of course, viewers also understand, although it is never stated, that Batou has strong feelings for the major.

[6] Interestingly, while *Ghost in the Shell* favors the mind, the sequel *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, discussed in the following chapter conveys the director's change of heart, as Oshii decides that it is not the only the mind, but the whole body that determines who you are. Most importantly, he suggests that it is our relationships with other people (Oshii in Gilchrist).

Chapter Three

[1] This idea comes from Oxford Professor and evolutionary biologist,

Richard Dawkin's book *The Extended Phenotype* (1982), which is considered a

contribution to evolutionary theory. Basically, it suggests that products are an

extension of the originator's DNA. For instance, as Timothy Comeau explains, "If

a beaver is a beaver because of its DNA, a beaver's dam is also an expression of

that DNA. Therefore, the CN Tower is also an expression of human DNA, as is

every other aspect of our material culture.

Comeau, T. (2006). *The Extended Phenotype. Good Reads*, April 9, 2006. Week

    15, 1. Retrieved July 22, 2008 from

    http://www.goodreads.ca/386

[2] Related to the reprogramming is an earlier conversation between Togusa

and Haraway, in which she tells the former: "By intentionally malfunctioning,

these gynoids are capable of self-authorizing attacks against humans. This liberates

them from Moral Code #3" (Innocence). It is suggested that the shipping inspector

utilized these codes to re-program the androids. I believe that this is an example of

where Oshii's use of intertextuality becomes too much for most viewers, – it refers

to a loophole in Asimov's *Three Laws of Robotics*, in this case "Moral Code #3," -

A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict

with the First or Second Law. The inference is that since the android was not

protecting itself (commits suicide), it paradoxically could harm humans that are

protected by the first law Moral Code # 1 - A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. While the use of allusions like this one is interesting to those who are familiar with science fiction literature or to those who are interested enough to take the initiative to research such sources, it would serve to distract or distance most viewers.

[3] The gynoids method of self-mutilation leading to death is another instance of Bellmer's influence on Oshii. As Steven T. Brown (2008, p. 240) maintains, Oshii states that his representation of the gynoid ripping apart its chest is directly influenced by Hans Bellmer's drawing *Rose ouverte la nuit* (Rose open at night) (1934). The transgressive drawing depicts a young nude girl staring placidly down at her open chest. On each side of the gaping wound, her hands hold her skin to the side, exposing her rib cage, organs, and intestines. Behind her on the wall a lyrical pattern reminiscent of music notation provides lines and swirls that soften the subject matter in a peculiar way. Similarly, Oshii's geisha-like gynoid stretches and rips her fake skin exposing her metal ribs and wires. Behind her inscribed on the dark wall is a similar undulating muted pattern. Comparable to Bellmer's drawing, the gynoid's expression is also placid, but as Steven T. Brown describes her, the doll's gaze is directed to Batou and by extension the viewer, appealing to both for help (p. 240); whereas, in Bellmer's drawing she is absorbed in the spectacle of her own rent torso.

Chapter Four

[1] The original version of *Armitage III* (1994) directed by Ochi Hiroyuki was released as a four episode OVA (original video animation) that later spawned two theatrical releases. In 1997 it was cut down to create the motion picture released as *Armitage III: Poly-Matrix*, directed by Sato Takuya that includes some new brief scenes and an alternative ending, but leaves out some original scenes that provide thoughtful social commentary found in the OVAs. For the purposes of this chapter, I examine the original four-episode collection.

[2] The Wachowski's lined up an impressive collection of animation directors almost entirely from Japan to direct and re-vision their ideas about the events leading up to the universe in the *Matrix*. It seems appropriate to honor anime directors, as the Wachowski's were heavily influenced by anime themselves, particularly by *Ghost in the Shell* as mentioned in chapter two.

[3] I argue that Naomi Armitage's attire is a part of the important feminist statement that occurs throughout this anime. However, in general many viewers may claim that she is just a "hot babe." Assuredly, her clothing provides viewers, male viewers in particular, with what has come to be known in anime lingo as "fan service." Fan service quite simply refers to depicting characters in a visually appealing sexualized fashion. Obviously, one has to admit that anime like anything else has to turn a profit, and anime producers must always make this consideration. Nonetheless, in the case of *Armitage III* (and many other titles), I argue that

although the protagonist could be considered a "hot babe," she is also a complex character in a sophisticated narrative.

Conclusion

[1] In fact, in 2007 the Japanese government received a "national technology roadmap by the Trade Ministry, which calls for 1 million industrial robots to be installed throughout the country by 2025" (Japan Looks to a Robot Future, Online). The statics suggest that one robot can replace about ten employees, and the one million suggested could replace ten million humans, accounting for about, fifteen percent of the current work force. Moreover, these employees "won't be claiming overtime or drawing pensions when they're retired. The cost of machinery is going down, while labor costs are rising," (Tabuchi, 2008, Online).

[2] Notably, this making of humans into dolls is related to a born in Japan turned global phenomena of "Lolita" fashions—worn by a marginalized youth group. Theresa Winge (2008), explains that Lolitas or "Lolis," as they are also referred to are "young women and men who dress as anachronistic visual representations of Victorian-era dolls, covered from head to toe in lace, ruffles, and bows" (p. 49). Winge states that most of the Japanese Lolitas are young women (not girls) who dress in cute (*kawaii*), seemingly innocent, childlike fashions to represent their desire to "escape the trappings of adult life and with it the culture's dominant ideologies" (p. 48). Viewed in this perspective, it can be regarded as a

kind of "power" fashion. Of course this name carries with it sexual pedophilic connotations that reference Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* (1955), particularly in the West, but not entirely missing in Japan. Indeed, despite the modest styles, which de-emphasize and cover up breasts and curves, and although the girls' may claim otherwise, it is commonly regarded that the Japanese Lolita plays with, "the idea of a young girl as a forbidden sexual object" (51). For this reason, the Lolita subculture is criticized by some people in Japanese society for being inexcusably naïve, and exacerbating the already acute problem that surrounds adult Japanese men desiring under-aged girls. The Kokoro robots, mentioned above, also playfully suggest this type of "adorable" sexuality, with its descriptions of dolls/ robots with small fine facial features and long legs. One of the dolls is available in a "Hello Kitty" t-shirt. Obviously, it is not only some Japanese men that find the idea of compliant, youthful, doll-like females attractive, it could be said this appeal can be present in any nation or society. However, the adulation of *kawaii* (cute) is especially prevalent in Japan, and unfortunately, perversions are an unfortunate aspect of this phenomenon.

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Appendix

Pedagogical Implications and a Few Applications

I maintain that the study of apocalyptic anime is relevant to a globalized view of pedagogical practice that is necessary for today's youth. It is a ready-made and valuable way to bring students' interest into the classroom. However, despite these facts, anime is not included in the curriculum for many students. According to Kelly Chandler-Olcott (2008), anime is absent far too often. She states, "A striking finding of my research has been how little teachers know about students' anime fandom or the literacy practices associated with it, even when students are very committed to their fan-related reading, writing, viewing, and drawing" (Chandler-Olcott, p. 69). She maintains that there is "much to be gained if teachers deliberately invite students to share information about their popular-culture preferences" (Chandler-Olcott, p. 69). She advocates sharing lists with other class members, and that such moves would contribute to a climate that welcomes student interests (Chandler-Olcott, p. 69). In addition, she maintains, it has been shown that a multi-media curriculum, one that could include anime, has distinct advantages for the learner.

Chandler-Olcott (2008) suggests, "one of the most important developments the field of literacy over the past 15 years or so has been a shift in conceptions of literacy from print-driven reading and writing to 'a social, cultural, and contextual

phenomenon that exists with relations to many forms of symbolic expression'
(Lapp & Flood cited in Chandler-Olcott, p. 66). Chandler-Olcott claims that the
most evocative work in the area of multi-literacies is produced by the New London
Group. She describes their "multiliteracies" framework (developed in 1996) as a
design process that creates meaning through the combination and recombination of
signs, resources, and conventions borrowed from the larger culture. According to
Chandler-Olcott, their research has proven the most powerful designs combine
more than one mode, e.g. "linguistic with visual or visual with audio" (p. 66) as it
assists learners to acquire facility in all of these important ways of thinking and
representing (p. 66). Notably, the New London Group (1996) argues for a
globalized learning environment. They claim,

> We want to extend the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for
> the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly
> globalized societies, for the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the
> plurality of texts that circulate. Second, we argue that literacy pedagogy
> now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with
> information and multimedia technologies. (p. 60)

With these objectives in sight, mining anime for cultural references in imagery and
dialogue/text would be beneficial and rewarding on many levels.

In addition, James Bucky Carter (2008) suggests that multiliteracies, i.e.,
"mixing words and images" are an excellent way to "foster comprehension and
memory skills" (p. 48). He claims that in a thirty-minute period, students who

encoded words visually as well as verbally were able to remember twice as many words. In addition, those students who were involved in making artwork in response to visual stimuli developed a much richer comprehension of the narratives (Carter, p. 48).

Chandler-Olcott (2008) offers a few approaches to implementing anime into pedagogical delivery (which she does on a regular basis). Briefly, two of the models she mentions are the *Film Circle* (Chandler-Olcott, p. 70) (the least structured approach) and the *Auteur Study* (Chandler-Olcott, p. 79) (the most teacher-structured approach). In the first, students form groups and choose a film from a list of approved titles. Students are provided with a viewing guide from the teacher to help them focus on particular visual and narrative elements in the film. The groups view the film separately or together and respond with notes and sketches that are subsequently shared with the group and developed and expanded upon. Groups can share their anime analyses with the rest of the class, and if possible, film clips as well (Chandler-Olcott, p. 70). The second more teacher-directed study examines the form, style, and themes that recur in multiple works by one filmmaker, substituting the auteur for the author of a more traditional works in print study (Chandler-Olcott, p. 79). Obvious choices for this model that emerge from this thesis are Miyazaki Hayao and Oshii Mamoru, directors of *Princess Mononoke* and *Ghost in the Shell* respectively, as they each have large bodies of work that explore related themes. Chandler-Olcott also suggests many variations of *Whole Group Debriefing of Independent Viewing* (p. 71), which may involve

student's designing storyboards (Chandler-Olcott, p. 83) or writing film reviews (Chandler-Olcott, p. 76). Like the *Auteur Study,* this model requires that the teacher be familiar and knowledgeable of both teaching multi-media and the anime discussed. This thesis may provide analyses suitable for the latter.

In addition, anime is valuable to educators in other regards; for instance, anime narratives can lead educators to pause and reflect on the contemporary world students are engaged in. By this, I do not necessarily mean the imaginary world of cyborgs and robots, but also the more subtle differences that may escape us. One may consider, for instance, that most students do not experience the same kind of childhood and adolescence as earlier generations may have with an abundance of green spaces for play and recreation. Most of us take for granted childhoods that we shared with greater numbers of wildlife. As our cities continue to spiral outward, those green areas have become smaller and scarcer. Perhaps as much as anything else, these anime portray humans disconnect from nature, and the natural world disappearing faster than we can truly grasp. Students have grown up with this reality. The message that humans are not and should not be the center of all discourse is extremely relevant to students who may need to foster stronger connections to the world around them.

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