Chapter 3
Are You Really a Child?
Androids and Cyborgs in Japanese Comics and Animations

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ABSTRACT
A multitude of genres and types of characters, in Japanese comics and animated series, suggests many thought-provoking themes; i.e., questions about human nature. Many artists can see the answers to these questions in artificial humans – both cyborgs and androids. In this research, the author analyzes Japanese texts of popular culture in which artificial children are the protagonists of the stories. The author aims to compare a child figure in sociological discourse, considered there as vulnerable, to the representations in manga and anime, in which characters are created as children or technologically-modified prepubescents. In this chapter, the author presents ideas and culture associations for the concepts of android and cyborg. The chapter focuses also on analysis of the characters from Japanese comic books and animations – both androids and then cyborgs – according to transhumanistic and posthumanistic theories. The analysis results in a conclusion that a child figure is dehumanized in the context of cyborg and android child protagonists.

INTRODUCTION
Transhumanism and posthumanism are parallel intellectual movements that seek to understand the nature of humanity and the possibility of crossing its borders. In our times, the question of the future of man is increasingly being posed from the technology angle. It allows us to look at the current development of culture from...
a different perspective, as well as at all the possibilities that will be transformed in the near future.

Posthumanism draws attention to non-anthropocentric prospects: technical entities (machines – especially robots, artificial intelligence). Transhumanism can be viewed as a way of human improvement, or enhancement; not using traditional humanistic methods (e.g., education), but technology. While posthumanism is associated more with a shift in our understanding of other entities, transhumanism is related mainly to technological modifications of the human body. Both ideas are connected to technology and humanity on different levels, as shown later in the chapter.

Polish researcher Magdalena Radkowska-Walkowicz uses the term “artificial human” to describe both android and cyborg beings. As she states, they are creatures used by people to learn more about their own identity (Radkowska-Walkowicz, 2008, p. 24). Since both androids and cyborgs are present in literature, cinematography, comic books and animations, they have become objects of interests for scientists, sociologists, and recipients of texts of popular culture. One of the most popular sources of android and cyborg protagonists is Japanese comic books and animations. However, what comes as a surprise when compared to the Western texts of culture, in manga and anime, artificial humans are often shown as children.

In this research, presentation of cyborgs and androids in the form of a child is used as a means to show the attitude of Japanese authors to technology and mankind, and the relationship between these two. However, before that, it is necessary to explain the concept of an artificial human, as it is considered to be a posthumanistic and transhumanistic mirror of humanity. An observation of android robots and modified humans may contribute to a better understanding of people’s own identities, and increase their self-awareness.

It is also important to ask the question; how much can androids resemble humans before they will be seen as monstrous? Japanese roboticist, Masahiro Mori, in his essay, The Uncanny Valley, hypothesized that a person’s response to a human-like robot would abruptly shift from empathy to revulsion as it approaches, but fails to attain, a lifelike appearance. Mori called this descent into eeriness “the uncanny valley,” and that concept has rapidly gained interest both in science and popular culture. Especially now, seeing as technology in the last several years has evolved to where people are building robots looking more like humans (Mori, 2012, p. 98).

ANDROIDS AND CYBORGs

“There was perhaps never a moment in the ancient or modern history of Europe when no one was pursuing the idea of making a human being by other than the ordinary reproductive means” (1984, p. 201), writes Jay David Bolter in his book, Turing’s
The Exploitation of Models in Artificial Emotions
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-exploitation-of-models-in-artificial-emotions/127559?camid=4v1a

An Approach to Opinion Mining in Community Graph Using Graph Mining Techniques
www.igi-global.com/article/an-approach-to-opinion-mining-in-community-graph-using-graph-mining-techniques/214878?camid=4v1a