



## Luiza-Maria Filimon

### “Beware the Cosmic String, My Son”: Highjacked Realities and Accidental Utopias in Shinichiro Watanabe’s *Space Dandy*

#### ABSTRACT

Anime series in the dystopia sci-fi subgenre are essentially what Miller Jr. describes as “investigations into the nature of human identity and its relation to sociocultural forces and structures.” The rarer utopian counterparts tend to fall under Louis Marin’s suggested interpretation according to which “Utopia, in its ever-changing state, is the symbolic destination of all travel narratives.” One of Watanabe’s recent animated series, *Space Dandy* is at its core a space odyssey through the multiverse where “normal” is the exception. The study analyzes five episodes set in utopian-like places and deconstructs world-building mechanisms, features and functions, while also reconsidering the nature and conditions needed for utopias to function as organic but unhinged realities in a subversion of the dystopian tropes.

#### KEYWORDS

Utopia; *Anime*; Space Opera; Science-Fiction; Parallel Universes; Shinichirō Watanabe.

#### LUIZA-MARIA FILIMON

National School of Political Science and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania  
luiza.filimon@gmail.com

Hey, Everett,<sup>1</sup>  
What am I like in your world?  
Let me take a peek.

Hey, Everett,  
According to you, there are lots of  
different worlds  
I’m not sure I understand

Oh, the dream of a never-ending dream

From *X Jigen e Youkoso*  
 (“Welcome to the X<sup>th</sup> Dimension”)  
performed by Etsuko Yakushimaru

#### Introduction

Prior to *Space Dandy* (2014), Shinichirō Watanabe’s critically acclaimed *anime* series, *Cowboy Bebop* (1998-1999), was conceived “not just [as] a space adventure series for adolescent boys but [as] a program that would appeal to adults.”<sup>2</sup> Set in the year 2071, on the spaceship *Bebop*, it “follows the adventures of a group of bounty hunters (two males and two females): ex-triad member Spike Spiegel, ex-cop Jet Black, con-artist Faye Valentine, and child computer hacker Radical Edward.”<sup>3</sup> The “*Bebop*” in the title, is a



reference to “a modern movement in jazz that started at Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem in 1941. The artists there began a creative competition in an attempt to play jazz ‘freely’, and this competition resulted in the development of bebop.”<sup>4</sup> With the series’ “creator-of-record [being] ‘Hajime Yatate’ – Sunrise Studio’s well-known house pseudonym for a team effort”<sup>5</sup> – we can presume that the series creators were “playing “freely” or experimenting without ‘fear of risky things’ in the hope of creating a ‘new genre’.”<sup>6</sup>

The main character of *Cowboy Bebop*, Spike Spiegel, is in Susan Napier’s view, “literally and symbolically adrift in a universe that sustains him physically but offers him no emotional or spiritual nourishment.”<sup>7</sup> He is part of a reflexive commentary between what Annett regards as “the affects of cool, detached irony and a poignant longing for connection”<sup>8</sup> in a world inhabited by a sense of dispossession and spiritual homelessness. Foreshadowing a new trend in the *anime* medium during the late 1990s and onwards, *Cowboy Bebop* was an exponent of a phenomenon described by Napier as affected by “an increasing disillusionment with the promise of technology.”<sup>9</sup> This was identified in the “rough, retro look to [...] technology [featured in the series which] rather than emphasizing amazing inventions, concentrates on the anguished psyches of its vulnerable and memorable characters.”<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, *Space Dandy* is at first sight, the complete opposite of its predecessor. It has shed the grievous, brooding layers and quasi-dropped the postmodern / millenarian / technology-induced angst. Instead and in spite of its shortcomings, *Space Dandy* is a series that embraces the crisis, ridicules it and in doing so, opens the door to new original creations in a financially-pressed industry, catering, like other of its kindred, to the lowest common denominator.

Its slapstick humor and occasional raunchiness is marked by an irreverent self-awareness. An A.V. Club review summarizes *Space Dandy* as follows:

The series premiere of *Space Dandy* goes out of its way to announce the show’s anarchic, irreverent tone. The show’s titular, pompadour-sporting hero is a freelance hunter for exotic, unregistered aliens in some far-flung future; he travels the galaxy in his broken-down starship, the *Aloha Oe*, with only a similarly broken-down robot and a useless, feline alien for company. A pre-credits introduction helpfully explains that these are the adventures of “Space Dandy and his brave space crew... in space.” The show’s belief that the word “space” is enough to make anything awesome teeters between earnest and ironic, as the over-the-top vocal performances and character animation are juxtaposed with eye-popping cosmic panoramas.<sup>11</sup>

This study examines the theme of utopia in what can be considered a postmodern pastiche series, comprised of mash-ups and drawing influence from Western sci-fi movies like *Forbidden Planet* (1950) or *Tron* (1982)<sup>12</sup> and Japanese animation classics alike. In order to more aptly contextualize the place of *Space Dandy* in the Japanese animated sci-fi genre, the paper first offers an overview of how dystopias and utopias function in *anime*, of what they represent for the East Asian culture while, at same time, running a parallel thread to Western movies and symbols. One particular aspect we explore deals with the causes that enabled the emergence of *Space Dandy*’s utopian communities / places and how in spite of the trope subversion at the centre of the series, they remain bound to a



sum of externalities. Because of their inherent accidental origins, these alien utopias do not succumb to the classical entrapping of the dystopian hubris as a plot device. Even when in some of these instances, the conjuncture that allowed them to exist, disappears – as is the case with the end of sentience in one instance, we find in the sage words of a character that “this is not an ending, but a new beginning.”<sup>13</sup>

### Observations on Dystopias and Japanese Animations: from the Bomb to the Automaton

We have been subordinate to our limitations until now. The time has come to cast aside these bonds and to elevate our consciousness to a higher plane. It is time to become a part of all things.

Puppet Master, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)

Mainstream movies like *The Matrix* (1999), *The Hunger Games* (2012) or *Inception* (2010) were inspired by or were similar to Japanese cult films such as *Akira* (1988), *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), *Battle Royale* (2000) or *Paprika* (2006). Earlier, during the postwar period, Japanese sci-fi authors from Kōbō Abe, Shinichi Hoshi, Sakyō Komatsu to Kenzaburō Ōe and Haruki Murakami, were themselves influenced and hence embodied the literary “structural compromise” of writing in a genre that imported “[c]ontemporary American SF [...] in part as a result of the American military occupation.”<sup>14</sup> Murakami’s works, for example, echo to varied degrees those of William Gibson’s *Johnny Mnemonic* (see *Sekai noowari to hādo-boirudo wandārando / Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*) or George Orwell’s

Nineteen Eighty-Four (as is the case with *ichi-kyū-hachi-yon / IQ84*).<sup>15</sup>

The 1988 animated epic, *Akira*, directed by Katsuhiro Otomo, explored such themes as “the relationships between humans and machines and ultimately depict[ed] the potential for human development and evolution when confined by an oppressive police state.”<sup>16</sup> Originally a *seinen* manga,<sup>17</sup> developed by Masamune Shirow,<sup>18</sup> *Ghost in the Shell* achieved international mainstream success when it was made into an *anime* by Mamoru Oshii.<sup>19</sup> A stated source of inspiration for *The Matrix*,<sup>20</sup> *Ghost in the Shell* attracted parallels to Donna Haraway’s theories on the “Cyborg Manifesto”<sup>21</sup>: “we are all now cyborgs, we need to know how the computer sees, to learn to recognize its gaze and then to imitate it.”<sup>22</sup>

Haraway’s identified dualisms can be recognized in part or in their entirety in the dystopian *anime* subgenre: “representation / simulation; organic / biotic component; reproduction / replication; scientific management in home or factory / global factory (electronic cottage); labor / robotics; public or private / cyborg citizenship; sex / genetic engineering; mind / artificial intelligence.”<sup>23</sup> The dystopian *Akira* is according to a commentator cited by William M. Tsutsui, an exercise in “post nuclear sublime,” riddled with the traditional motifs of urban nihilism where the cinematic cityscape unravels into “riots in the streets, a venal authoritarian state, millenarian cults, terrorist movements, biker gangs, and a peculiar government program for developing psychic mutants.”<sup>24</sup> A *memento* of the present, *Akira* in Pellitteri’s view:

[...] introduces a narrative dystopia that goes allegorically over the main phases of contemporary Japanese history, transfiguring the visual spectacularity into a metaphor for the implosion / explosion of Japanese society, beginning from the



trauma of the bombs up to the current hyper-industrialization and social decay.<sup>25</sup>

Shapiro, on the other hand, while still keeping in line with the “present as origin,” views *Akira* to be “more about the crises inherent in contemporary Japanese youth culture than what the bomb means.”<sup>26</sup> Still, in a case of art imitates life, Pellitteri continues:

Contemporary *manga* [and by extension, *anime*] was born in the fire of Hiroshima<sup>27</sup>, which gave it what Saya Shiraishi (1997) has called the “Original Experience”: the story of a group of young survivors, bound by friendship and refusing to die, fighting in a post-apocalyptic world and allowing a new world to see the dawn. This traumatic scenario can be found in a thousand and one ways in *manga* and *anime*, where it acts as background to the battles of the robot: apocalypse avoided, apocalypse defeated.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, the bombs constitute representations of the unfathomable. A character from the story *Seidōshoku no yami* (*A Bronze-coloured Dark*, 1979), authored by Kurita Tōhei, speaks of the outcome of Nagasaki and how: “It was a tale from the land of the dead, impossible to believe,”<sup>29</sup> while Hiroshima survivor, medical practitioner Hachiya Michihiko writes in the eponymous *Diary* covering the period from August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945 to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1945 (*Hiroshima nikki*, 1955), how: “outsiders could not grasp the fact that they were witnessing the exodus of a people who walked in the realm of dreams.”<sup>30</sup> It is a case of aborted utopia which was during the 1980s, a leitmotif of the Japanese animated imaginary, revolving around “the vision of the Earth scoured by radiation and then spontaneously reborn.”<sup>31</sup>

Of familiar entropic results we are reminded of in Fritz Lang’s 1927 epic, *Metropolis*, where the robotic mechanical man is the logical expression for the “subverted utopia of ‘German technological modernization’ [...] [outside the control] of those who had enthusiastically promoted modernization as the harbinger of democratic socialism and cultural purification.”<sup>32</sup> Lang’s automatons are denied a soul of their own and are deemed to be at the root of all problems – the epitome of *hubris* – “reflect[ing] th[e] increasingly negative assessment [at that time] of contemporary German realities and the dashed expectations for a technologically enabled utopian future.”<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Oshii’s *Other in Ghost in the Shell*, “is a purely speculative or metaphysical entity without a trace of reality [...] in [a depersonalized] city [that] can be both utopia and ruin.”<sup>34</sup>

In a similar fashion to Lang, Oshii rejects on aesthetic grounds, “cultural nationalism, itself [spurred by the] rapid modernization [of the Japanese metropolis] since the mountains of rubble in 1945.”<sup>35</sup> Twenty years later, from 1947 to 1949, Lang’s *Metropolis* was reimagined by one of Japan’s groundbreaking *manga* artists, Tezuka Osamu. Expanding on the class divisions between humans and machines, the *manga* (animated in 2001) “feature[s] a vertically oriented city in which robots and humans live and work together, but in which they are strictly segregated by vertical divisions of space.”<sup>36</sup> Conversely, this division reoccurs at an ontological level, with only the most privileged humans able to maintain a completely organic body, while the others are “forced against their will to fuse in varying degrees with the machinic.”<sup>37</sup>

Dystopias are echoes of the here and now. In spite of their uncanny features, one recognizes in them the idiosyncrasies, oxymora and cognitive dissonances associated



with the present. The prefix “dys” “impl[ies] impairment or abnormality” of an “euchronian scheme”<sup>38</sup> rather than a premeditated descent into an ethically impaired abyss. Jennifer Gonzalez in addressing the cyborg bodies, posits that they are “reflections of a contemporary state of being.”<sup>39</sup> The cyborg representations “function[...] as a site of condensation and displacement,” coalescing “the multiple fears and desires of a [reality] in the process of transformation.”<sup>40</sup> Paraphrasing Joseph Raz, this autonomous reality is part author of its life, as such it “must be aware of [its] life as stretching over time. [It] must be capable of understanding how various choices will have considerable and lasting impact on [its] life.”<sup>41</sup> Taken to its paroxystic end, this micromanaged reality – by machines or technocrats – enables an “apocalyptic discourse, problematized as a condition that can no longer be counted to exist, thanks to the advances of technology and its increasing capabilities for both material and spiritual destruction.”<sup>42</sup>

Dystopian *anime* series like *Texhnolyze* (2003), *Ergo Proxy* (2006), *Psycho Pass* (2012, 2014), and even *Steins Gate* (2011), are built around or succumb to Frances Bonner’s 4 Cs tenets of cyberpunk: corporeality, computers, corporations and crime.<sup>43</sup> As far as corporeality is concerned, the body in its double alterity – of the (an)organic individual(s) and of the city, seen as a living mechanism controlled by A.I.-like programs<sup>44</sup> – becomes in Baudrillard’s words, “a *fractal subject* – an object among objects [...] with an infinite set of surfaces.”<sup>45</sup> In Osamu Tezuka’s animated *Metropolis* for example, the city is represented as a huge machine where the humans inhabit “geographies of exclusion.”<sup>46</sup>

In these worlds, by fusing with the machine, the human body takes part in an estrangement, to the point that one wonders:

“How much organic material is necessary to consider a being ‘human’?; What are the juridical ramifications of bodies that incorporate less and less organic material? Is human emotion possible in a world in which bodies are no longer containers for the mind/ soul?”<sup>47</sup> In Oshii’s *Ghost in the Shell*, “[a] cyborg’s ‘ghost’ is the remnant of the organic and human that remains beneath its technological supplements and alterations,”<sup>48</sup> with the main character standing for “a kind of archetypal cyborg entity, poised in the ever-shifting boundaries and borders between human and posthuman, technophilic and technophobic, utopian and dystopian, ordinary and extraordinary, conservative and radical.”<sup>49</sup> Stephen Teo accurately identifies the essence of these dystopian animations, as an expression of a posthuman imaginary which benefits from “the postmodernity of Asian cities as a motif of the future”<sup>50</sup>:

[...] with films such as *Ghost in the Shell*, *Akira* and *Metropolis*, anime [...] question[s] the human self and its impact on the world around us. *Metropolis* appears to condense the endings of both *Ghost* and *Akira* as the robot protagonist, struggling with her identity, triggers off an apocalypse that is regenerative, for all its destructive power.<sup>51</sup>



### Utopias: Recovering the *Locus Mundi*

They say there's no such place... as Paradise. Even if you search to the ends of the Earth, there's nothing there.

No matter how far you walk, it's always the same road. It just goes on and on. But, in spite of that... Why am I so driven to find it? A voice calls to me... It says: "Search for Paradise."

*Wolf's Rain* (2003)

On the other side of the spectrum, utopias embody both elements of the "good place / no place" binary<sup>52</sup>: the Golden Age<sup>53</sup> of yesteryear and the desired (post)human, orderly Eden version 2.0. Though one cannot access the former place, it will aspire to the latter for "[t]he rationale of a utopia has to be post-Golden Age, conceptually if not chronologically."<sup>54</sup> In Roland Barthes' view<sup>55</sup>: "to look at [the past] we must be excluded from it."<sup>56</sup> In doing so, nostalgia settles in. Boym describes it "as a longing for [a] home that no longer exists or has never existed, [...] a sentiment of loss and displacement, [and] also a romance with one's own fantasy."<sup>57</sup> Barthes adds: "[...] the time when my mother was alive *before me* is – History. No anamnesis could ever make me glimpse this time starting from myself,"<sup>58</sup> though one might long for and fantasize about it constantly.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the Japanese aesthetic concept of *mono no aware* (*the pathos of things*), "conveys fleeting beauty in an experience that cannot be pinned down or denoted by a single moment or image."<sup>59</sup> Tze-Yue Hu explains it as "sensitivity to things and the language of feeling the incommunicable, as words are limited in expressing the intuitive undertaking."<sup>60</sup> In spite of its fragility, Prusinsky adds, citing Andrijauskas: "in the Heian era,<sup>61</sup> [...] *mono no aware* [...] included 'the ability to

discern and bring out the unique inner charm of every existing phenomenon or thing, to identify oneself with the object being contemplated, to empathize with its mysterious beauty'."<sup>62</sup> This state is reminiscent of Ovid's Golden Age aesthetics, where:

The earth herself, without compulsion, untouched by hoe or plowshare, of herself gave all things needful. [...] Then spring was everlasting, and gentle zephyrs with warm breath played with the flowers that sprang unplanted. Anon the earth, untilled, brought forth her stores of grain, and the fields, though unfallowed, grew white with the heavy, bearded wheat. Streams of milk and streams of sweet nectar flowed, and yellow honey was distilled from the verdant oak.<sup>63</sup>

We drew this parallel since a number of Western scholars (Frank and Fritzie Manuel or Krishan Kumar) have argued that "true Utopias are impossible to find outside the Western tradition."<sup>64</sup> Susan Napier explains that from their point of view, traditional Utopian paradigms are divided between on one hand, the city-state originating in Plato's *Republic*, "combined with the post-apocalypse heavenly city of the Judeo-Christian tradition,"<sup>65</sup> and on the other, "the pastoral Utopia, the Arcadia of the Greeks combined with the pre-Lapsarian Eden of the Bible."<sup>66</sup> With this said, *Shinto* – Japan's foundational religion, which balances "influences from various parts of Asia and even Oceania"<sup>67</sup> with secular beliefs, divides the universe in five parts of which the last one – *Tokoyo no Kuni* (*Land of endless nights*) – is "a utopian land whose denizens neither age nor die."<sup>68</sup> The oldest and second oldest chronicles of Japan, *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*) (712) and *Nihon Shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*)





(720) describe *Tokoyo no Kuni* “as linked to the dynamic of the whole life cycle – from harvest, regeneration and renewal to death.”<sup>69</sup> The influence of Platonic “static utopias” – in More and Campanella’s vein – could be replaced by the Confucian tradition and its focus on the creation of the perfect man or going even further back in time, to Duke of Zhou’s China – a 3000 years old casebook representation of the Golden Age.<sup>70</sup> While for the Western Arcadia, Napier identifies “the Taoist ideal of simplicity” and in particular, Tao Yuanming’s fable of a lost village, *Tōgenkyō (The Peach Blossom Spring)* (421), “a fictitious haven of peace, away from the turmoil of the world,”<sup>71</sup> accidentally uncovered by a lost fisherman “where people live in harmony with nature, happily unaware of the strife and problems of the outside world.”<sup>72</sup>

Aside from *mono no aware*, another concept, originating in Okinawa and still practiced today to a certain degree, *yuimaru* (reciprocity) represents: “a virtue that enabled the people [...] to develop an idiosyncratic culture and identity, [...] recall[ing] the ancient need for members of a family unit to work together to eke out a bare subsistence and for households to undertake projects for the common good.”<sup>73</sup> This type of communitarian identity is expressed through the notion of *ichariba-chode* (“Once we meet, we are like brothers and sisters”).<sup>74</sup> *Chimugurisan* (“someone’s pain is my pain”) and *nuchidotakara* (“life is the most precious thing in the world”) embody similar Okinawan values distilled in the crucible of the tumultuous and ardent experiences of island life.<sup>75</sup>

The animated version of these utopian experiences is encountered in Hayao Miyazaki – arguably one of Japan’s most acclaimed storytellers and filmmakers – and Studio Ghibli’s filmography. Hiroshi

Yamanaka argues that Miyazaki’s movies “offer a new secularized spiritual vision of a world where Japanese can find salvation”<sup>76</sup> through an “appeal to ‘nostalgia’ for a usable past [...] couched within [an] imaginary fantasy world.”<sup>77</sup> The core tenets of his body of work are: “memories (*kioku*), scenery (*fūkei*), one’s experiences with hometown (*kokyō*), one’s identity and understanding of local customs and environmental conditions (*fūdosei*), and one’s original experiences with sunset (*yūkake*).”<sup>78</sup> Miyazaki’s essentially *bildungsroman* movies subvert the theme of “good vs. evil” with the hero / heroine almost never fighting or opposing “a single monolithic enemy,” instead confronting conflicted individuals or groups defined by their redeeming qualities.<sup>79</sup> As James Mark Shields points out, what occurs is a premeditated deconstruction of the “good-evil divide.”<sup>80</sup>

Miyazaki himself was influenced by Isao Takahata,<sup>81</sup> whose *Grave of the Fireflies (Hotaru no Haka)* (1988) based on a semi-autobiographical short story (1967) by Akiyuki Nosaka,<sup>82</sup> is a masterful exercise in “disaster utopia.”<sup>83</sup> This type of stories despite representing overwhelming tragedy, “are also a promise of ‘happy reconstruction days’, world-rectifying events that establish a new and fairer order – and a social universe renewed.”<sup>84</sup> Late film critic, Roger Ebert thought of *Grave of the Fireflies* as “an emotional experience so powerful that it forces a rethinking of animation”<sup>85</sup>:

*Grave of the Fireflies* (1988) is an animated film telling the story of two children from the port city of Kobe, made homeless by the bombs. Seita is a young teenager, and his sister Setsuko is about 5. [...] The first shot of the film shows Seita dead in a subway station, and so we can guess Setsuko’s fate; we are accompanied through flashbacks by the boy’s spirit.



[...] There are ancient Japanese cultural currents flowing beneath the surface of *Grave of the Fireflies*, and they're explained by critic Dennis H. Fukushima Jr., who finds the story's origins in the tradition of double-suicide plays. It is not that Seita and Setsuko commit suicide overtly, but that life wears away their will to live.<sup>86</sup>

In a different tonality yet still maintaining the familiar nostalgic register, Miyazaki's films from *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no Tani no Naushika*) (1984), *My Neighbour Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*) (1988), *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke-hime*) (1997), to *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*) (2001, winner of the 75<sup>th</sup> Academy Award for Best Animated Feature), *Howl's Moving Castle* (*Hauru no Ugoku Shiro*) (2004, nominated at the 78<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards for Best Animated Feature), *Ponyo* (*Gake no Ue no Ponyo*) (2008) or *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*) (2013, nominated at the 87<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards for Best Animated Feature) – are accounts of utopian environments, that (with the exception of the last one) are located in a fantastic no-space, explained in Todorov's words as “a frontier between two adjacent realms.”<sup>87</sup> In addition, these worlds built around the intersection between the sacred and the profane, the fantastical and the mundane, are also riddled with temporal dislocations and “scramble[d] sociohistorical points of references.”<sup>88</sup>

In *My Neighbour Totoro*, for example, Wegner highlights “the utopian dimensions of animation,” characterized by the “absence of landscape” as is appropriate for the multipurposeful and resourceful *satoyama* regions (“forest commons managed by local agricultural communities”).<sup>89</sup> In the *manga* version of *Nausicaä*, we find a society of “forest people,” which in spite of inherent toils and tribulations, “are portrayed as

perfect, optimistically representing the possibility of challenging but sustainable and fulfilling life in profound natural harmony, without sacrificing intellect.”<sup>90</sup> In so far as the environmental ubiquitousness is concerned, this can be in part attributed to the idea that even when travelling into the past<sup>91</sup> – like in *Spirited Away* – the pastoral utopian dimensions are composite elements of an idiosyncratic *illo tempore* and lost space,<sup>92</sup> where the “positive construction of nature [becomes] a prerequisite for [such] ideals.”<sup>93</sup>

In concluding this section, we are reminded of Karl Mannheim's essay confronting the concepts of “ideology” and “utopia” whereupon the former is dependent on a historical perspective based on a complex game of socio-historical conditions, thoughts and actions. By contrast, the latter – when transposed in practice – wholly or partially – presupposes an annulment or dissolution of the prevalent and preordained order.”<sup>94</sup> Speaking of history, Himmelmann states that it cannot be understood by itself – in other words, it is not “natural,” since it is contingent on a spiritual initiative on the part of the social consciousness.<sup>95</sup> Miyazaki's tales are exercises in contesting the idea that uncovering history means destiny,<sup>96</sup> instead he unveils glimpses of nostalgic dreams, remnants of a bygone era asleep in the uncharted sea of memories and millennia.<sup>97</sup>





---

Luiza-Maria Filimon

***Space Dandy* –  
Reiterations  
of Postmodern *Champoo*<sup>98</sup>**

This place is everywhere and nowhere.  
*Space Dandy* (2014)

*Space Dandy* (2014) is the result of a collaborative effort helmed by Shinichirō Watanabe as general director and produced by Studio Bones. Like his two other previous original incarnations – *Cowboy Bebop* (1998-1999) and *Samurai Champloo* (2004-2005) – *Space Dandy* constitutes a similar mix of influences, themes and concepts laid over a 1970s disco inspired soundtrack, which gives the series an “old school and retro”<sup>99</sup> feel. Unlike the other two, *Space Dandy* is designed as a comedy that progresses across its two cours,<sup>100</sup> into more weird, brooding and darker tones, changing tonalities, from slapstick to Gallows, from lowbrow to highbrow, from droll to dry, from one style of animation to another depending on the directors, writers and animation supervisors assigned to every episode. Narrative wise, the series is wilfully disjointed, with every episode more or less rebooting the action across apparent parallel dimensions. Though not all 26 episodes provide an equally satisfying story-telling experience, in subtext, *Space Dandy* plays more along the lines of an ironic self-aware commentary on the state of the *anime* industry, than of simply yielding to the narrow-minded supply and demand for gratuitous fanservice (which is the case especially with the first episode, critically panned<sup>101</sup> and regarded as one of the series’ weakest parts).

A space opera dramedy at its core, *Space Dandy* follows the accident prone three-“manned” crew of the spaceship *Aloha Oe*, in their quest to find and capture rare or new alien life forms. The main characters –

Dandy, the superficial alien hunter, QT, the robot with outdated software / vacuum cleaner capable of feelings and Meow, a lazy cat-like alien from the Planet Betelgeuse, addicted to Twitter – regularly die, are stranded in other dimensions or periods of time and in one instance, they even inadvertently trigger a chain reaction that turns the universe into a zombie utopia (further explored bellow).

Since every episode reboots the characters, there does not seem to be a lot of character development and growth outside the character-driven episodes like episode 10: *Ashita wa Kitto Tumorō Jan yo* (*There’s Always Tomorrow, Baby*), which is Meow-centric and similar to Bill Murray’s *Groundhog Day* (1993); episode 13: *Sōjiki Datte Koisuru Jan yo* (*Even Vacuum Cleaners Fall in Love, Baby*), which is QT-centric and inspired by classics like Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot*, *Bicentennial Man*, Phillip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, or Steven Spielberg’s *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* (2001); or episode 21: *Kanashimi no Nai Sekai Jan yo* (*A World with No Sadness, Baby*), which is Dandy-centric and is reminiscent of late Robin Williams’ movie, *What Dreams May Come* (1998), Guillermo del Toro’s *Pan Labyrinth* (2006) or even Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (1972). The characters function as plot devices, offering humour relief in the traditional stand-up comedy style of *Manzai* which involves a *boke* (funny man), usually Dandy and a *tsukkomi* (straight man), usually QT with Meow switching between the two roles. In the background, the Gogol and the Jaicro Empires are in a life or death stand off for the control of the universe. Without his knowledge, the first side is pursuing Dandy – thought as crucial for the future of the universe – yet is always unable to capture him (with the exception of the last episode).

The parallel universes leitmotif appears from the first episode, *Nagare Nagasarete*



*Ikiru Jan yo (Live with the Flow, Baby)* where while trapped in the void, Dandy pulls on a large wire which happens to be in QT's assessment a cosmic string: "Oh wait, I know what that is! That's a cosmic string. If we go pulling on it all willy-nilly, there's a chance that space-time will distort even more and we'll be trapped here forever"<sup>102</sup>, while in the second episode, *Maboroshi no Uchū Rāmen o Sagasu Jan yo (The Search for the Phantom Space Ramen, Baby)*, Dandy and Meow travel through a wormhole to an alternate dimension, with QT this time, stating that: "Since you just forced your way through the wormhole, the space-time warp has gotten more severe and dangerous."<sup>103</sup> This culminates in episode 14: *Onrī Wan ni Narenai Jan yo (I Can't Be the Only One, Baby)*, after Meow asks himself: "In a universe where the possibilities are endless, how did I come to be friends with such irresponsible people?," with the three of them meeting weirder and weirder counterparts from parallel universes. This was caused by the sudden appearance of a cosmic string – which is, in the narrator's words:

better referred to as a dimensional fray. This is a string-like domain, the remnant of a phase defect at a certain point in space. By tugging on this string, a doorway to another parallel universe is opened. [...] these universes are realms which encapsulate every conceivable possibility. [...] All of them are neither counterfeits nor doubles but [Dandy's] indisputable self for that particular world.<sup>104</sup>

If so far we examined where, how and why the themes of dystopia and utopia lead themselves to Japanese animations, in this final part, we analyse a set of episodes which are exponents or take place in what we have referred to as "accidental utopias":

one man's (season 1, episode 2), a non-sentient one (season 1, episode 4), a plant-based one (season 1, episode 9), a temporal loop one (season 1, episode 10) and last but not least, an afterlife utopia (season 2, episode 8 (21)).

### **Journey into the Multiverse: Trope Reversals and Plot Devices**

In search of new lands, I build  
a new house  
I thatch the house with reed stalks...  
gathered neatly in bundles  
At the stone wall, let us celebrate the  
golden house, that was built by  
a hundred carpenters.<sup>105</sup>  
*Obokuri-Eemui (Obtain Our Bearings,*  
folk song) performed by Ikue Asazaki

In episode two, *The Search for the Phantom Space Ramen, Baby (Maboroshi no Uchū Rāmen o Sagasu Jan yo)*, the characters are on a quest to find a rare alien who makes "other-dimensional flavored ramen" (Japanese noodle soup). Written by Dai Satō<sup>106</sup> and directed by Sayo Yamamoto,<sup>107</sup> the irony in this episode is that the long-sought for dish in the premise is actually none other than the terrestrial *Ramen Jiro*, listed by *The Guardian UK* in its "50 best things to eat in the world" and just like the series, "[r]amen Jiro is a very non-traditional, in your face, take it or leave it. You either love it or hate it."<sup>108</sup> This episode is as much about one man's tale as it is about the quasi-religious experience and spiritual quest to find the perfect culinary experience. Fittingly located on the other side of a wormhole, on an asteroid floating in space, the *ramen-ya* (restaurant) is managed by an old alien<sup>109</sup> that has been there for the last 10,000 years, with Dandy and Meow being the first customers in 90 years.



In order to still make a living, he arranged to send *ramen* through the wormhole, noting that by the time it arrives, the noodles are stale and the flavor, changed. Prodded by Dandy and recognizing in him “an Earthling,” the old alien recounts how he went to Earth himself: “so long ago. I can’t even remember when it was.”<sup>110</sup> Responsible in his youth, for someone’s death, he flees his home-world and eventually growing exhausted in “both heart and soul” arrives on a world called Earth, where he learns the flavor of *ramen*, stating how it was something he would never forget and how afterwards, never able to return home, he went to the alternate dimension where: “All I can do is live here forever, making my *ramen*.” Asked by Dandy if he is lonely, the old man answers that he has “long since forgotten what the feeling of loneliness is.” With the wormhole destabilized and closing forever, the old alien chooses to remain there and along with him, the secret ingredient to the flavor – his tears.<sup>111</sup>

This episode encapsulates sci-fi writer Kim Stanley Robinson’s – author of the utopian *Wild Shore Triptych* and *The Mars* trilogy – definition on utopia as “the process of making a better world, the name for one path history can take, a dynamic, tumultuous, agonizing process, with no end. Struggle forever,”<sup>112</sup> scaled down to the path of atoning for one man’s sins yet with no one to offer absolution in return. It is accidental and it is an utopia because the experience is intermediated by a singularity and acknowledged by Dandy and thus – at least in this case – proves wrong the adage according to which “no man is an island” literally and figuratively.

Episode four, *Sometimes You Can’t Live with Dying, Baby* (*Shinde mo Shini Kirenai Toki mo Aru Jan yo*), directed by Ikuro Sato and penned by Kimiko Ueno, is an enterprise in deconstructing the zombie

genre, with the main characters instead of fighting the walking dead, becoming themselves – the robot included – zombies. In this trope reversal, the creators construct an undead universe, narrated by God, in the spirit of Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. This unconventional situation expands from the bottom to the top, beginning with daily activities: “A zombie’s morning starts early. At first, they could not accept the fact that they had become zombies and tried to find a way to turn back.” Failing to remedy their situation, the trio was initially, “haunted by the meaninglessness of their lives,” trapped in an endlessly repeating cycle of despair and “an inexplicable craving for raw meat.” Their *senpai* (elder) zombie – which they had previously captured and thus set in motion the zombie apocalypse – “tells” them how “changing your thinking may let you lead a happy zombie life.” The narrator explains how after they replaced “the word “rotting,” with the more positive word, “fermenting,” the half-rotting heroes were able to be more positive, too,” to the point that Dandy “thinks” how: “There’s not that big of a difference between being dead and being alive”<sup>113</sup> (this is reversed at first, only to be repeated in episode 21).

With slowness the only downside, life as zombies in space proves to be repetitive but peaceful. Moreover there is no discrimination since “in space, zombies don’t stand out so much.” Dandy obtains a death certificate and the payout from his life insurance policy and life continues undisturbed, with zombies converging for unexplained reasons at the mall. After “even the zombie hunter and the employees at the insurance agency that employed him, turned into zombies, [everyone] was able to live peacefully once again,” while the entire universe turned “at an astonishingly fast pace, where even robots turn[ed] into zombies.” When finally “every living thing has become a



zombie,” the narrator proclaims: “no more species, no more sickness, no more differences. Everyone has become equal as zombies.”<sup>114</sup>

The movie *Warm Bodies* based on the eponymous novel, written by Isaac Marion, incorporates a similar genre subversion with the added romantic undertones between a human and a zombie that also happens to be the narrator of the story.<sup>115</sup> The absurdity of the premise as well as the positive outcome of the episode, would appear to confirm Geoghegan’s dual interpretations of utopia: on one hand, the “good place that, *as of yet*, has found no place” and which apparently can only be found in space and on the other, the “desire for goodness [peace] that could never realistically find a place”<sup>116</sup> (see endnote 55).

In episode nine, *Plants Are Living Things, Too, Baby (Shokubutsu Datte Ikiteru Jan yo)* the crew is searching for the mysterious alien – Code D – on Planet Planta. Directed by EunYoung Choi<sup>117</sup> and based on her story and Shinichirō Watanabe’s screenplay, the action takes places on the planet described by the narrator as being:

from times of yore, known as a world where plants alone grew rampantly. But in recent years, as a result of evolved plants, it has become a plant republic of 18 different states. *Vegims* – cerebral plants that live mainly in the northern hemisphere, possess an elevated intelligence and use tiny organisms known as microbes to do their labor. Elsewhere, *Movies*, which live in the southern hemisphere, are lower order plants which live a simpler lifestyle.<sup>118</sup>

The planet allows for the cohabitation of a utilitarian-inclined society and of a pastoral, Arcadian one. The episode focuses

largely on the Vegims, especially on the scientist Doctor H and on his daughter, 033H. Having never previously encountered a human, Dandy is thought at first to be a strange plant. A review summarizes the events as follows:

Dr. H is kind and welcoming to Dandy once he’s been identified, and he too seeks to know more of the mysterious Code D – which [...] causes plants to expand to even more preposterous sizes. What he doesn’t realize is that it’s also Code D’s presence that gave the plants of Planta their sentience – and when Dandy and 033H [...] go on a magnificently surrealistic journey to find and retrieve Code D, the result is the end of sentience on Planta.<sup>119</sup>

Before he regresses to his base form, Dr. H recounts how: “Long ago, we were ordinary plants. However, one day, that Code D, that meteorite landed here and everything changed. We all evolved. However, we were unable to control it. We will go back to our original forms, back where we once were,” with his parting words being: “This is not an ending. This is a new beginning.”<sup>120</sup> With sentience comes wisdom and Doctor H’s input on how Code D affects them in various ways – approaching its location, makes them grow exponentially – would anticipate a potential disturbing outcome to the continued evolution of life on the planet. Therefore, the only possible and reasonable outcome should be a return to a state prior self-awareness and cognizance, which is hastened by the fortuitous arrival of Dandy on his quest to retrieve what he believes to be a rare alien.

Episode 10, *There’s Always Tomorrow, Baby (Ashita wa Kitto Tumorō Jan yo)* is directed by Masayuki Miyaji and based on script by Kimiko Ueno. Miyaji participated



in Studio Ghibli's training program and afterwards was given the assistant director position to Hayao Miyazaki in *Spirited Away*, while Ueno is also responsible for the script in the zombie episode. In so far as they share the same writer, the two episodes also share a number of similarities such as the proclivity for repetitiveness, the mundane, or the banality of quotidian life. Through another subversive irony, in the zombie case, the main characters proved to be much more aware of their condition and even try to pro-actively improve it, while trapped in the time loop, they do not suspect that something is amiss for numerous cycles:

[At one point, the narrator explains:] I'm sure everyone's noticed by now. The strong magnetic field caused by the [accidental burst] of Pyonium [an unintended effect of the war between the two empires] twisted time and space into a Möbius and that has caused them to fall into a space-time loop. They are repeating the same day over and over again.<sup>121</sup>

As mentioned above, this largely goes unnoticed by the trio and by anyone else on Meow's planet, Betelgeuse. On the 88<sup>th</sup> loop, QT wonders: "Oh? Do the days all seem the same to you?"; only for Dandy to dismiss it on account that "everyday is so monotonous." When eventually, on the 108<sup>th</sup> loop, all three start to anticipate random events: "For some reason I know what'll happen next! (QT); "Is this what they call precognition?" (Dandy); followed by "Does this mean we have superpowers?" (Meow), the miffed narrator interjects and scolds them: "Of course not! It's a loop! A loop! How many times do you think you've repeated the same day? The story can't progress like this!" Owing to the *deus ex*

*machina* intervention, the narrator adds: "they finally noticed that they were in a loop"<sup>122</sup>, with a reviewer highlighting that: "They're so content to simply sit in a bar drinking that it's about three months before they even notice that anything's wrong."<sup>123</sup>

After a series of failed attempts at escaping their predicament, a pattern emerges: "Wake up in the morning, work up a sweat, and have a drink after work at the usual bar." Having always wanted to escape his ordinary planet where nothing ever happens, Meow arrives to the conclusion that "doing what seems like the same thing every day like this [working at a manufacturing plant] ... might not be too bad either." But it is not about doing "what seems like the same thing," it is actually "doing the same thing," as QT aptly points out.<sup>124</sup>

There is a touch of Miyazaki's *l'esprit d'espace*, in Miyaji's direction of a story about reconciling the comfort brought by the native hearth with the infinite possibilities that wait to be discovered, once the first place is left behind. A reviewer underlines precisely this aspect:

[...] being forced to repeat the same day in a place he couldn't wait to flee would be pure hell for Meow, but he actually begins to appreciate the appeal of it. [...] There's also a chance to let Meow's father know that he appreciates him and that's he's sorry he can't follow his path, and a "grass is always greener" realization that a comfortable daily routine has its own charms. The time loop is just a metaphor, of course, a stand-in for the daily routine that's at the heart of so many lives – and highlights the choice so many young people must make between the lure of adventure and a new vista every day and the knowledge that you'll never want for a bed, food on the table and people who care about you close-by.<sup>125</sup>





In this case, from an ontological standpoint, utopia is a Möbius-like closed system that has reached a plateau and in which any further change, mutation or transgression, would inevitably cause the collapse of this mundane order. It also amenable to Walter Benjamin's idea "that under the surface of rationality the urban-industrial world had become re-enchanted on an unconscious level."<sup>126</sup>

Finally, episode 21, *A World with No Sadness, Baby* (*Kanashimi no Nai Sekai Jan yo*), directed by Yasuhiro Nakura (who also provides the storyboards) and written by Shinichirō Watanabe, takes place on Planet Limbo, "filled with ghosts," "a place between this world and that world," inhabited by "the souls of the dead," where the only thing that is alive, is the planet itself. Anthropomorphized, the planet takes the form of a girl named Poe that recounts how: "A long, long time ago, this planet had living beings on it. But they destroyed themselves with their own civilization. [...] They are not around anymore."<sup>127</sup> Instead what happens is that "the souls of the dead have a certain magnetism. Pulled in by the souls, other souls also come here" and since Poe has been lonely for a long time, it has made the planet a home for them. This is where Dandy wakes up – dead by all accounts – after what can only be described as a Viking ceremonial burial. Not being yet aware his condition, Dandy goes in search for "someone" to tell him where he is. This "someone" (*dareka*) happens to be Ferdinand, a veritable Virgil-like guide, a pure expression of a *daimonic* archetype,<sup>128</sup> a personified extension of the planet: "I guess you could say I'm rare. But you could also say I'm extremely common."<sup>129</sup> Ferdinand leads Dandy on a journey of self-discovery where they encounter many strange creatures deliberating on the meaning of life and death.<sup>130</sup> When Dandy is finally confronted with the cause of his death, Ferdinand quips that:

[...] a lot of people forget the circumstances of their death [...]. Do you accept that you're dead now? Because [...] this is a planet of the dead. [...] It's more unnatural to be alive. Anyway, you won't grow older or get hungry here. You don't have to work, and there is very little stress. It's great. Come enjoy the party. [...] [B]ecause there's nothing for you to lose here. It's a world with no sadness.<sup>131</sup>

Hearing this, Dandy asks how if there is no sadness, then "doesn't that mean there's no joy, either?" When he finally meets Poe and tells her he wants to escape the planet, she replies that he cannot go back but that he may be able to go to another dimension where he may have escaped death. In order for this happen, a sacrifice is required and it consists of Planet Limbo's existence coming to an end: "[...] a large amount of energy is required for that. It would take all the energy on this planet"<sup>132</sup> Once Dandy arrives to the conclusion that either dead or alive, he is still himself, the episode ends on an ambiguous note: showing him asleep on *Aloha Oe* as well as back on Planet Limbo, rejoining Poe and Ferdinand.

An alien minstrel playing Maurice Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (*Pavane for a dead princess*) paints a fitting image to an *Elysian* world that exists only because of the grace of a *solus deus* and managed by its "reason" – seen in the episode as surveillance drone-like extensions of the planet, called Night Porters. What is a utopia if not a world without sadness, such as described by Ferdinand? All the analyzed episodes essentially offer the viewer glimpses into universes that in the end *cannot be*, not only due to the completely alien atmosphere and *weltanschauung*, but also because the theme of utopia is interpreted not just as a





means to an end, but as *the dead-end* – that can be accepted like in episode 4 and 10 or which can be willfully discarded as in the case of Planets Planta and Limbo. As far as experimenting with the medium, episodes 2, 9 and 21, also happen to be the most rewarding visually and story-wise.

### Conclusions

As we have already established, all the “accidental utopias” took place in alien environments where most of the aliens were beings unique among themselves; some manifested a benign surveillance element (episodes 9, 21); with the exception of the first case, they were generally structured within the confines of a *raison d'être* (episodes 9, 21) or self-contained (with the exception of episodes 4, 10); they were pattern generators (especially episodes 4, 10); there were external agents that enabled their coming into being (zombie alien in episode 4, meteorite in episode 9, random blast of *Pyonium* energy from an intergalactic war in episode 10, the planet’s conscience in episode 21) or on the contrary, that hastened their collapse (Dandy in episodes 2, 9, 21, the narrator through a *deus ex machina* in episode 10); they were shown to be both ephemeral (episodes 9, 10, 21) and eternal (episodes 2, 4). The only element they had in common was the distinct and overtly expressed lack of sadness at the heart of these worlds and the collective shrug when pointed out by external actors (Dandy in episodes 2, 21, the narrator in episodes 4, 10).

In counterpoint, it seems only appropriate that episode 13, *Even Vacuum Cleaners Fall in Love, Baby* (*Sōjiki Datte Koisuru Jan yo*), written by Dai Satō, presents us with a classical “rise of the machines, once they begin to manifest emotions”

type of dystopian scenario,<sup>133</sup> which stays true to the creed that abuse, exploitation and neglect at the hand of organics, can have nefarious consequences for those who would abuse their power and privilege.

As we have detailed in the first part, dystopias are reflections of crisis, inevitable manifestations of when the fragile *status quo* of the present is disrupted malevolently or not, or just due to society as whole ignoring to take heed of the law of unintended consequences. In so far as the *anime* medium reflects the current state of the Japanese popular culture, it too is directly exposed to what is essentially an identity crisis. In an environment characterized by “nichification” as a result of monetary constraints and an apparent general stagnation in so far as original productions are concerned, *Space Dandy* incorporates the good and the bad of the industry and given the benefit of the doubt, regards the latter as a “necessary evil” associated with commercial mediums in general.

Utopia, as we have seen, remains an experiment in societal otherworldliness moored in an “uncanny valley.” Adapted to our case-study, this utopian uncanny valley refers to the ultimate rejection of these societies or experiences. It is no accident that the epitome of irony is reached in the zombie utopia: the usual cognitive functions required to reap the benefits of living peacefully and harmoniously in a homogenous community of shared values and emotions, are “zombified” and thus rendered obsolete. These are precisely the aspects which QT disregards in the beginning of episode 13 as “pointless things”<sup>134</sup> but whose importance could not be stressed enough. At its core, the outcome of dystopias and utopias is not a by-product of stealing from the “forbidden tree” but of disregarding the ontological values which constitute the society’s very own foundational tenets. From this sacrilegious act – as



shown in the first part of the study – society inevitably falls into the entropic chain-reaction of abuses which pave the way, to more and more dystopian-prone outcomes. Reversely, the opposite is also possible, whereby upholding these values, one should not aim towards building an Eden-like city of God, down bellow in People's edifices but should at the very least, acknowledge the silent / silenced dissonant tensions that amass more and more barriers between people and their creations and between peers alike.

### Bibliography

- Ahn, Jiwon. "Samurai Champloo: Transnational Viewing," in Ethan Thompson, Jason Mittell (eds.), *How to Watch Television*, New York: New York University Press, 2013, pp. 364-372.
- Allison, Anne. *Millennial Monsters. Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.
- Anderson, Crystal S. *Beyond the Chinese Connection: Contemporary Afro-Asian Cultural Production*, Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2013.
- Annett, Sandra. *Anime Fan Communities. Transcultural Flows and Frictions*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Arbore, Grigore. *Cetatea ideală*, București: Editura Meridiane, 1978.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Brenner, Robin E. *Understanding Manga and Anime*, Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2007.
- Broderick, Mick. "Making Things New. Regeneration and Transcendence in Anime," in John Walliss, Kenneth G.C. Newport (eds.), *The End All Around Us. Apocalyptic Texts and Popular Culture*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 120-147.
- Bruno, Giuliana. "Ramble City: Postmodernism and 'Blade Runner'," *October*, vol. 41 (Summer 1987), pp. 61-74.
- Chipman, Jay Scott. "So Where Do I Go from Here? *Ghost in the Shell* and Imagining Cyborg Mythology for the New Millennium," in John Perlich, David Whitt (eds.), *Millennial Mythmaking. Essays on the Power of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, Films and Games*, Jefferson, North Carolina and London: MacFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010, pp. 167-192.
- Dutton, Jacqueline. "'Non-western' Utopian Traditions," in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 223-258.
- Ebert, Roger. "Grave of the Fireflies," March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2000, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-grave-of-the-fireflies-1988>.
- Eikman, Viktor. *Meadow and Apocalypse. Constructions of Nature in the Early Works of Miyazaki Hayao*, Advanced Essay, Göteborg University, Sweden, June 2007.
- Ettinger, Benjamin. "Space Dandy – Episode 2 Review," *Anipages*, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.pelleas.net/aniTOP/index.php/space-dandy-2>.
- Gaggi, Silvio. "The Cyborg and the Net: Figures of the Technological Subject," in David L. Erben (ed.), *Adrift in the Technological Matrix*, Cranbury, New Jersey and London: Associated University Presses, 2010, pp. 125-139.
- Geoghegan, Vincent. "Political Theory, Utopia, Post-Secularism," in Tom Moylan, Raffaella Baccolini (eds.), *Utopia Method Vision. The Use Value of Social Dreaming*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 69-86.
- Gonzalez, Jennifer. "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research," in Chris Hables Gray (ed.), *The Cyborg Handbook*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 267-279.



- Himmelman, Nikolaus. *Trecutul utopic*, trans. Alexandru Avram, București: Editura Meridiane, 1984.
- Hiramoto, Mie. "Anime and Intertextualities. Hegemonic Identities in *Cowboy Bebop*," *Pragmatics and Societies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2010), pp. 234-256.
- Hu, Tze-Yue G. *Frames of Anime. Culture and Image Building*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010.
- Hurst, G. Cameron III. "The Heian Period," in William M. Tsutsui (ed.), *A Companion to Japanese History*, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2009, pp. 30-46.
- Inuhiko, Yomota. "Stranger Than Tokyo: Space and Race in Postnational Japanese Cinema," trans. Aaron Gerow, in Jenny Kwok Wah Lau (ed.), *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003, pp. 76-89.
- Jackson, Paul. "Heirs and Graces: Moribito: *Guardian of the Spirit* in the Realm of Japanese Fantasy," in Timothy Perper, Martha Cornog (eds.), *Mangatopia. Essay on Manga and Anime in the Modern World*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, pp. 53-70.
- Kakazu, Hiroshi. *Island Sustainability. Challenges and Opportunities for Okinawa and Other Pacific Islands in a Globalized World*, Bloomington, Indiana: Trafford Publishing, 2012.
- Koba, Renata. "Cyberpunk versus Empire: Constructing Technotopia in the New World Order," in Fátima Vieira, Marinela Freitas (eds.), *Utopia Matters. Theory, Politics, Literature and the Arts*, Porto: Editora da Universidade do Porto, 2005, pp. 251-256.
- Lambie, Ryan. "Space Dandy: why you should watch it, 5 essential episodes," *Den of Geek*, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://www.den-ofgeek.com/tv/space-dandy/34976/space-dandy-why-you-should-watch-it-5-essential-episodes>.
- Lambie, Ryan. "Exclusive: Neill Blomkamp on his next sci-fi film, Chappie," *Den of Geek*, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <http://www.den-ofgeek.com/movies/chappie/25920/exclusiv-e-neill-blomkamp-on-his-next-sci-fi-film-chappie>.
- Lamarre, Thomas. *The Anime Machine. A Media Theory of Animation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Lissner, Ivan. *Culturi enigmatice*, trans. Victor H. Adrian, București: Editura Meridiane, 1972.
- Lodén, Torbjörn. "Literature as a Vehicle for the Dao: Changing Perspectives of Fiction and Truth in Chinese Literature," in Anders Cullhead, Lena Rydholm (eds.), *True Lies Worldwide: Fictionality in Global Contexts*, Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2014, pp. 31-49.
- Makela, Lee. "From Metropolis to Metropolis. The Changing Role of the Robot in Japanese and Western Cinema," in Mark W. MacWilliams (ed.), *Japanese Visual Culture. Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2008, pp. 91-114.
- Marion, Isaac. *Warm Bodies*, New York: Atria Books, 2011.
- Manuel, Frank E., Manuel, Fritzie P. *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Miller, Gerald Alva Jr., *Exploring the Limits of the Human through Science Fiction*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Milner, Andrew. *Locating Science Fiction*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "The Subject of Visual Culture," in Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader. Second Edition*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 3-23.
- Nakasone, Ronald Y. assisted by Inaishi, Sayaka. "Okinawan Americans: History, People, and Culture," in Jonathan H.X. Lee,



Kathleen Nadcau (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Asian American. Folklore and Folklife (Volume I)*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, pp. 877-880.

Napier, Susan. "Manga and anime. Entertainment, big business and art in Japan," in Victoria Lyon Bestor, Theodore C. Bestor, with Akiko Yamagata (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011, pp. 226-237.

Napier, Susan J. "When the Machines Stop. Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Serial Experiments: Lain*," in Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., and Takayuki Tatsumi (eds.), *Robot Dreams and Wired Dreams. Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, pp. 101-122.

Napier, Susan J. *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature. The Subversion of Modernity*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Orbaugh, Sharalyn. "Manga and anime," in Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts and Sherryl Vint (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 112-123.

Onley Pirkle, Michelle. "Dèjà Vu All Over Again? *Cowboy Bepop's* Transformation to the Big Screen," in J.P. Telotte, Gerald Duchovnay (eds.), *Science Fiction Film, Television and Adaptation. Across the Screens*, New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2012, pp. 164-175.

Orbaugh, Sharalyn. "Frankenstein and the Cyborg Metropolis: The Evolution of Body and City in Science Fiction Narratives," in Steven T. Brown (ed.), *Cinema Anime*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 81-112.

Patten, Fred. *Watching Anime, Reading Manga. 25 Years of Essays and Reviews*, Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2004.

Pellitteri, Marco. *The Dragon and the Dazzle. Models, Strategies, and Identities of Japanese Imagination*, trans. Roberto Branca, Latina: Tunué, 2010.

Prusinski, Lauren. "Wabi-Sabi, Mono no Aware, and Ma: Tracing Traditional Japanese Aesthetics Through Japanese History," *Studies on Asia. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Asian Studies*, Series IV, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 2012), pp. 25-49.

Raz, Joseph. *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Rees, Christine. *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Rose, Steve. "Hollywood is haunted by Ghost in the Shell," *The Guardian*, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/oct/19/hollywood-ghost-in-the-shell>.

Ruh, Brian. *Stray Dog of Anime. The Films of Mamoru Oshii. Second Edition*, New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Shapiro, Jerome J. *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film*, New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

Shen, Jing. *Playwrights and Literary Games in Seventeenth-Century China*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010.

Shields, James Mark. "Miyazaki, Hayao (1941-)," in Eric Michael Mazur (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Film*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, pp. 320-324.

Siegel, Tatiana, Fleming, Michael. "DreamWorks to make 'Ghost' in 3-D," *Variety*, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008, <http://variety.com/2008/film/markets-festivals/dream-works-to-make-ghost-in-3-d-1117984029/>.

Stanley Robinson, Kim. *Pacific Edge*, New York: Tim Doherty Associates, Inc., 1990.

Steiger, Janet. "Future Noir: Contemporary Representations of Visionary Cities," in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema*, London: Verso, 1999, pp. 97-122.



Surat, Daryl. "Otakon 2013: Fifty Minutes with Shinichirō Watanabe," *Ani-gamers*, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <http://www.ani-gamers.com/posts/shinichiro-watanabe-space-dandy-otakon-2013-press-conference/>.

Takeshi, Matsumae. "Early Kami Worship," trans. Janet Goodwin, in Delmer M. Brown (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan – Volume 1: Ancient Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 328-358.

Teo, Stephen. *The Asian Cinema Experience. Styles, spaces, theory*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013.

Tokitsu, Kenji. *Miyamoto Musashi. His Life and Writings*, Boston: Weatherhill, 2004.

Treat, John Whittier. *Writing Ground Zero. Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Tsutsui, William M. "Oh No, There Goes Tokyo: Recreational Apocalypse and the City in Postwar Japanese Popular Culture," in Gyan Prakash (ed.), *Noir Urbanisms. Dystopic Images of the Modern City*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 104-126.

Wegner, Phillip E. "'An Unfinished Project that was Also a Missed Opportunity': Utopia and Alternate History in Hayao Miyazaki's My Neighbour Totoro," *Image-Text: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2010), [http://www.english.ufl.edu/-imagetext/archives/v5\\_2/wegner/](http://www.english.ufl.edu/-imagetext/archives/v5_2/wegner/).

Wilkins, Alasdair. "Space Dandy is more than *Cowboy Bebop*'s demented little brother," *A.V. Club*, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014, <http://www.avclub.com/review/space-dandy-is-more-than-cowboy-bebops-demented-li-201062>.

Wong, Yoke-Sum. "A Presence of a Constant End. Contemporary Art and Popular Culture in Japan," in Amy Swiffen, Joshua Nichols (eds.), *The Ends of History*.

*Questioning the Stakes of Historical Reason*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 84-102.

Yamanaka, Hiroshi. "The Utopian 'Power to Live.' The Significance of the Miyazaki Phenomenon," in Mark W. MacWilliams (ed.), *Japanese Visual Culture. Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2008, pp. 237-255.

Yuen, Wong Kin. "On the Edge of Spaces: Blade Runner, Ghost in the Shell, and Hong Kong's Cityscape," in Sean Redmon (ed.), *Liquid Metal. The Science Fiction Film Reader*, New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2007, pp. 98-112.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Referring to Hugh Everett III, American physicist. Advanced for the first time, the concept of the "many-worlds interpretation" of quantum physics.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Patten, *Watching Anime, Reading Manga. 25 Years of Essays and Reviews*, Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2004, p. 357.

<sup>3</sup> Mie Hiramoto, "Anime and intertextualities. Hegemonic identities in Cowboy Bepop," *Pragmatics and Societies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2010), p. 239.

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Onley Pirkle, "Dèjà Vu All Over Again? *Cowboy Bepop*'s Transformation to the Big Screen," in J.P. Telotte, Gerald Duchovnay (eds.), *Science Fiction Film, Television and Adaptation. Across the Screens*, New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2012, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Fred Patten, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Michelle Onley Pirkle, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Susan Napier cited by Crystal S. Anderson, *Beyond the Chinese Connection: Contemporary Afro-Asian Cultural Production*, Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2013, p. 118.





<sup>8</sup> Sandra Annett, *Anime Fan Communities. Transcultural Flows and Frictions*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Napier, "Manga and anime. Entertainment, big business and art in Japan," in Victoria Lyon Bestor, Theodore C. Bestor, with Akiko Yamagata (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, Oxon and New York, 2011, p. 236.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Alasdair Wilkins, "Space Dandy is more than *Cowboy Bebop*'s demented little brother," *A.V. Club*, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014, [www.avclub.com/review/space-dandy-is-more-than-cowboy-bebops-demented-li-201062](http://www.avclub.com/review/space-dandy-is-more-than-cowboy-bebops-demented-li-201062) (site of *A.V. Club*), accessed June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Daryl Surat, "Otakon 2013: Fifty Minutes with Shinichirō Watanabe," *Ani-gamers*, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <http://www.anigamers.com/posts/shinichiro-watanabe-space-dandy-otakon-2013-press-conference/> (site of *Ani-gamers*), accessed June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Shingo Natsume (director), Dai Satō (writer), *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 13, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date).

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Milner, *Locating Science Fiction*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012, p. 175.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Gerald Alva Miller, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> Similar to the Western comics, "manga developed from historical art traditions in Japanese culture, although [its] influences and predecessors arguably reach back farther than [its] Western counterparts. The creation [of this] form [...] includ[es] political and governmental influences on the growth of the medium and a definite break away from juvenile origins to 'grow up' as a storytelling format." (see Robin E. Brenner, *Understanding Manga and Anime*, Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2007, p. 1). *Seinen manga* is oriented at older male audiences, with the female equivalent, being *josei*.

<sup>18</sup> A previous *manga* by Masamune Shirow, *Appleseed* (published between 1985 and 1989), takes place in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, in the Utopian city of Olympus, overseen by Gaia – a supercomputer. Neill Blomkamp, director of sci-fi and dystopian fair like the acclaimed *District 9* (2009) or *Elysium* (2013) cited one of *Appleseed*'s main characters – a quasi-cyborg maintaining its humanity – as a source of inspiration for his rabbit-eared robot in the short film, *Tetra Vaal* (2003), which afterwards developed into the feature film, *Chappie* (2015), about a stolen police robot that develops cognitive and empathetic functions. (Ryan Lambie, "Exclusive: Neill Blomkamp on his next sci-fi film, Chappie," *Den of Geek*, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <http://www.denofgeek.com/movies/chappie/25920/exclusive-neill-blomkamp-on-his-next-sci-fi-film-chappie>, (site of *Den of Geek*), accessed June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Brian Ruh describes Mamoru Oshii as "a filmmaker who exemplifies the breadth and complexities of modern Japanese cinema [...]." Of the full-length movie, *Avalon*, James Cameron said it was "the most artistic, beautiful and stylish [film] in Science Fiction History." An "anime auteur," Oshii – states Ruh – "uses the media of film and animation to express his unique view of the world." His movies are "visually grounded in a technological reality," interspersed with theme of control, privacy and surveillance (Brian Ruh, *Stray Dog of Anime. The Films of Mamoru Oshii. Second Edition*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 1, p. 3, p. 6, p. 8, p. 9).

<sup>20</sup> The creators of *The Matrix*, the Wachowski siblings, showed the producers a DVD of *Ghost in the Shell*, stating that: "We want to do that for real." Steven Spielberg and James Cameron are also fans, Spielberg going so far as to acquire the rights to produce a live-action movie to be





released in Spring 2017. (Steve Rose, “Hollywood is haunted by Ghost in the Shell,” *The Guardian*, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/oct/19/hollywood-ghost-in-the-shell> (site of *The Guardian*); Tatiana Siegel, Michael Fleming, “DreamWorks to make ‘Ghost’ in 3-D,” *Variety*, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008, <http://variety.com/2008/film/markets-festivals/dream-works-to-make-ghost-in-3-d-1117984029/> (site of *Variety*), accessed on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Gerald Alva Miller, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 76-77.

<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, “The Subject of Visual Culture,” in Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader. Second Edition*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Renata Koba, “Cyberpunk versus Empire: Constructing Technotopia in the New World Order,” in Fátima Vieira, Marinela Freitas (eds.), *Utopia Matters. Theory, Politics, Literature and the Arts*, Porto: Editora da Universidade do Porto, 2005, p. 253.

<sup>24</sup> William M. Tsutsui, “Oh No, There Goes Tokyo: Recreational Apocalypse and the City in Postwar Japanese Popular Culture,” in Gyan Prakash (ed.), *Noir Urbanisms. Dystopic Images of the Modern City*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 116.

<sup>25</sup> Marco Pellitteri, *The Dragon and the Dazzle. Models, Strategies, and Identities of Japanese Imagination*, trans. Roberto Branca, Latina: Tunué, 2010, p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> Jerome J. Shapiro, *Atomic Bomb Cinema: The Apocalyptic Imagination on Film*, New York and London: Routledge, 2002, p. 258.

<sup>27</sup> Boasting over 15 years of work in the field, Philip Brophy “has demonstrated how the influence of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be traced throughout *anime*’s post-war development and aesthetic sensibilities – from the ocular flash contained in *kawaii* (a.n.: cute) cartoon eyes to the radiating beams and explosive

detonations of energy weapons in *mecha* (a.n.: robot themed).” (see Mick Broderick, “Making Things New. Regeneration and Transcendence in *Anime*,” in John Walliss, Kenneth G.C. Newport (eds.), *The End All Around Us. Apocalyptic Texts and Popular Culture*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 121).

<sup>28</sup> Marco Pellitteri, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

<sup>29</sup> As referred to by John Whittier Treat, *Writing Ground Zero. Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> William M. Tsutsui, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>32</sup> Lee Makela, “From Metropolis to Me-toroposisu. The Changing Role of the Robot in Japanese and Western Cinema,” in Mark W. MacWilliams (ed.), *Japanese Visual Culture. Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2008, p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> Yomota Inuhiko, “Stranger than Tokyo: Space and Race in Postnational Japanese Cinema,” trans. Aaron Gerow, in Jenny Kwok Wah Lau (ed.), *Multiple Modernities: Cinemas and Popular Media in Transcultural East Asia*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003, p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> Sharalyn Orbaugh, “Frankenstein and the Cyborg Metropolis: The Evolution of Body and City in Science Fiction Narratives,” in Steven T. Brown (ed.), *Cinema Anime*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88.

<sup>38</sup> Janet Steiger, “Future Noir: Contemporary Representations of Visionary Cities,” in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema*, London: Verso, 1999, p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> Jennifer Gonzalez, “Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research,” in



Chris Hables Gray (ed.), *The Cyborg Handbook*, New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 267.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 370-371.

<sup>42</sup> Susan J. Napier, "When the Machines Stop. Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Serial Experiments: Lain*," in Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., and Takayuki Tatsumi (eds.), *Robot Dreams and Wired Dreams. Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> See Frances Bonner, "Separate Development: Cyberpunk in Film and TV," in George Slusser and Tom Shippey (eds.), *Fiction 2000: Cyberpunk and the Future of Narrative*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1992, p. 191-207. For an analysis of the four Cs, see "Chapter 1. The Movement: Signs and Signifiers," in Carlen Lavigne, *A Critical Study: Cyberpunk Women, Feminism and Science Fiction*, Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2013, pp. 9-20.

<sup>44</sup> *Appleseed's* Gaia, *Ghost in the Shell's* Puppet Master, *Psycho Pass's* Sibyl System, *The Matrix's* Agent Smith, *I, Robot's* V.I.K.I.

<sup>45</sup> Wong Kin Yuen, "On the Edge of Spaces: Blade Runner, Ghost in the Shell, and Hong Kong's Cityscape," in Sean Redmon (ed.), *Liquid Metal. The Science Fiction Film Reader*, New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 107.

<sup>46</sup> Sharalyn Orbaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>47</sup> Sharalyn Orbaugh, "Manga and Anime," in Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts and Sherryl Vint (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 121.

<sup>48</sup> Silvio Gaggi, "The Cyborg and the Net: Figures of the Technological Subject," in David L. Erben (ed.), *Adrift in the Technological Matrix*, Cranbury, New Jersey and London: Associated University Presses, 2010, p. 129.

<sup>49</sup> Jay Scott Chipman, "So Where Do I Go from Here? *Ghost in the Shell* and Imagining Cyborg Mythology for the New Millennium," in John Perlich, David Whitt (eds.), *Millennial Mythmaking. Essays on the Power of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, Films and Games*, Jefferson, North Carolina and London: MacFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010, p. 175.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Teo, *The Asian Cinema Experience. Styles, Spaces, Theory*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

<sup>52</sup> Geoghegan deems utopia to be "unique amongst political concepts in having an intentional ambiguity built into it from its very inception. Thomas More punned on the sound of two Greek words, *eu* and *ou*, to make "utopia" mean simultaneously good place and no place. This introduced a dynamism into the concept [...]. First, there was the dynamism of the "good" and the "no". In a positivist sense it could mean the good place that, *as of yet*, has found no place. Or, negatively, it was a desire for goodness that could never realistically find a place." (see Vincent Geoghegan, "Political Theory, Utopia, Post-Secularism," in Tom Moylan, Raffaella Baccolini (eds.), *Utopia Method Vision. The Use Value of Social Dreaming*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2007, p. 75).

<sup>53</sup> The Golden Age in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, has become "heavily scented with the primitivist nostalgia of an oversophisticated society: 'Golden was that first age, which, with no one to compel, without a law, of its own will, kept faith and did the right. There was no fear of punishment, no



threatening words were to be read on brazen tablets; no suppliant throng gazed fearfully upon its judge's face; but without judges lived secure. [...] There was no need at all of armed men for nations, secure from war's alarms, passed the years in gentle ease. [...] Then spring was everlasting...?' (as quoted in Frank E. Manuel, Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 74).

<sup>54</sup> Christine Rees, *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Referring to History.

<sup>56</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, quoted in Giuliana Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and 'Blade Runner,'" *October*, vol. 41 (Summer 1987), p. 61.

<sup>57</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, p. xiii.

<sup>58</sup> Roland Barthes, *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> Lauren Prusinski, "Wabi-Sabi, Mono no Aware, and Ma: Tracing Traditional Japanese Aesthetics Through Japanese History," *Studies on Asia. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Asian Studies*, Series IV, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 2012), p. 27, <http://studiesonasia.illinoisstate.edu/seriesIV/vol2-1.shtml>, (site of the *Studies on Asia* journal) accessed on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Tze-Yue G. Hu, *Frames of Anime. Culture and Image Building*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010, p. 130.

<sup>61</sup> According to Hurst III, the Heian Period (794-1185) "is Japan's classical age, when court power was at its zenith and aristocratic culture flourished. [...] In distinction to the subsequent eras of warrior power, it is seen as an age dominated by a small cluster of aristocrats who ruled under the aegis of the emperor by mastery of the civil rather than the military arts. Thus, the term "Heian"

(the characters mean "peace" and "tranquility") suggests cultural considerations as well as political, namely literature, art, Chinese learning, and Buddhist thought" (see G. Cameron Hurst III, "The Heian Period," in William M. Tsutsui (ed.), *A Companion to Japanese History*, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 30).

<sup>62</sup> Antanas Andrijauskas cited in Lauren Prusinski, *op. cit.*, p. 27-28. See also Antanas Andrijauskas, "Specific Features of Traditional Japanese Medieval Aesthetics," *Dialogue and Universalism*, vol. 13, issue 1/2 (January 2003), pp. 199-220.

<sup>63</sup> As cited in Frank E. Manuel, Fritzie P. Manuel, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> Susan J. Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature. The Subversion of Modernity*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 143.

<sup>65</sup> More's *Utopia* and Campanella's *City of the Sun* stem from this conception.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 144.

<sup>67</sup> Matsumae Takeshi, "Early Kami Worship," trans. Janet Goodwin, in Delmer M. Brown (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan – Volume 1: Ancient Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 329.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>69</sup> Jacqueline Dutton, "'Non-western' Utopian Traditions," in Gregory Claeys (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 244.

<sup>70</sup> Susan J. Napier, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>71</sup> Jing Shen, *Playwrights and Literary Games in Seventeenth-Century China*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books. 2010, p. 232

<sup>72</sup> Torbjörn Lodén, "Literature as a Vehicle for the Dao: Changing Perspectives of Fiction and Truth in Chinese Literature," in Anders Cullhead, Lena Rydholm (eds.), *True*



*Lies Worldwide: Fictionality in Global Contexts*, Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2014, p. 39.

<sup>73</sup> Ronald Y. Nakasone assisted by Sayaka Inaishi, "Okinawan Americans: History, People, and Culture," in Jonathan H.X. Lee, Kathleen Nadcau (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Asian American. Folklore and Folklife (Volume I)*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, p. 877.

<sup>74</sup> Hiroshi Kakazu, *Island Sustainability. Challenges and Opportunities for Okinawa and Other Pacific Islands in a Globalized World*, Bloomington: Indiana, Trafford Publishing, 2012, p. 229

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>76</sup> Hiroshi Yamanaka, "The Utopian "Power to Live," The Significance of the Miyazaki Phenomenon," in Mark W. MacWilliams (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 238.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>78</sup> Tze-Yue G. Hu, *op. cit.*, p. 131. Chapter on "Miyazaki and Takahata Anime Cinema," pp. 105-136.

<sup>79</sup> James Mark Shields, "Miyazaki, Hayao (1941- )," in Eric Michael Mazur (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Film*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, p. 321.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>81</sup> Takahata has stated that his animations "are not about fantasizing or searching for utopia, [...] [c]liting the Chinese proverb *onkochishin* (innovation is known through ancient knowledge) as the visionary guidance of his career."<sup>81</sup> (See Kenji Tokitsu, *Miyamoto Musashi. His Life and Writings*, Boston: Weatherhill, 2004, p. 43; Tze-Yue G. Hu, *op. cit.*, p. 131).

<sup>82</sup> Guilt-ridden survivor of the 1945 firebombing of Kobe. His adoptive father died during the bombardment while his younger adopted sister died of malnutrition.

<sup>83</sup> Concept originating with social historian Kitahara Itoko (2006).

<sup>84</sup> Yoke-Sum Wong, "A Presence of a Constant End. Contemporary Art and Popular Culture in Japan," in Amy Swiffen, Joshua Nichols (eds.), *The Ends of History. Questioning the Stakes of Historical Reason*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 98.

<sup>85</sup> Roger Ebert, "Grave of the Fireflies," March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2000, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-grave-of-the-fireflies-1988>, (site of Roger Ebert.com), accessed June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>87</sup> Tzvetan Todorov quoted in Paul Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Lamarre, *The Anime Machine. A Media Theory of Animation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, p. 95.

<sup>89</sup> Phillip E. Wegner, "'An Unfinished Project that was Also a Missed Opportunity': Utopia and Alternate History in Hayao Miyazaki's My Neighbour Totoro," *Image-Text: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2010), [http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v5\\_2/wegner/](http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v5_2/wegner/) (site of Department of English, University of Florida), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>90</sup> Viktor Eikman, *Meadow and Apocalypse. Constructions of Nature in the Early Works of Miyazaki Hayao*, Advanced Essay, Göteborg University, Sweden, June 2007, p. 63, [http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/essay/-files/ViktorEikman\\_Meadow.pdf](http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/essay/-files/ViktorEikman_Meadow.pdf) (site of Ghibli Wiki), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>91</sup> It is important to stress that while Miyazaki – in Lucy Wright's interpretation – "still draw[s] on the cultural myth of an idealized, paradisaal existence in ancient Japan," he also avoids the ideological entrapments associated with the more "nationalistic implications inherent in any discussion of Shinto" (Lucy Wright, "Forest Spirits, Giant Insects and World Trees: The Nature Vision of Hayao Miyazaki," *Journal of*



*Religion and Popular Culture*, vol. 10 (Summer 2005), cited by Phillip E. Wegner, *op. cit.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 96.

<sup>93</sup> Viktor Eikman, *op. cit.* See also: David Ingram, *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

<sup>94</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie*, Bonn, 1929, cited by Grigore Arbore, *Cetatea ideală*, București: Editura Meridiane, 1978, p. 62.

<sup>95</sup> Nikolaus Himmelmann, *Trecutul utopic*, trans. Alexandru Avram, București: Editura Meridiane, 1984, p. 230.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>97</sup> Ivan Lissner, *Culturi enigmatice*, trans. Victor H. Adrian, București: Editura Meridiane, 1972, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> *Samurai Champloo* (2004-2005) is Watanabe's second television series after *Cowboy Bebop*, which takes places in an alternate Edo era (1603-1868), characterized by modernistic elements and set on an anachronistic hip-hop background. The *Champloo* in the title comes "from the regional language of Okinawa – *chanpurū* – and literally means 'something mixed'" (Jiwon Ahn, "Samurai Champloo: Transnational Viewing," in Ethan Thompson, Jason Mittell (eds.), *How to Watch Television*, New York: New York University Press, 2013, p. 365).

<sup>99</sup> "Bones's Shinichirō Watanabe talks Space Dandy & Cowboy Bebop [Otakon 2013]," August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013, <http://sgcafe.com/2013-08/bones-shinichiro-watanabe-talks-space-dandy-and-cowboy-bebop/>, (site of SGCafe), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> In Japanese TV programs, a *cours* represents a unit of production equivalent to 13 episodes.

<sup>101</sup> "So – is anime saved? For now, the jury is out and the bag is mixed. I know this for sure – it's a shame BONES decided to preview the first half of the premiere episode

last week, because the second half was much better. Between that mediocre ten minutes and the general resistance anime fans have towards series that debut in English, get written about in *The Atlantic* (don't worry, the article was full of mistakes) and, quite frankly, any *anime* that's overtly trying to appeal to an international audience the blood was in the water after the US premiere. This was a show a lot of people were waiting to rip apart, and when they saw their chance they took it. Frankly, going into the opener I was expecting the worst." ("Space Dandy – 01," *Random Curiosity*, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014, <http://randomc.net/2014/01/06/space-dandy-01/>, (site of *Random Curiosity*, anime blog), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

<sup>102</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 1, Shingo Natsume (director), Shinichirō Watanabe (writer), January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/58yoKW>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>103</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 2, Saya Yamamoto (director), Dai Satō (writer), January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/R41W2O>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>104</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 2, episode 01 (14), Masahiro Mukai (director), Kimiko Ueno (writer), July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/qUUJkL>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>105</sup> "Obokuri Eeumi (from the anime: Samurai Champloo) by Ikue Asazaki", *Ai No Ko*, July 3rd, 2010, <https://goo.gl/OAA8t6>, (site of Frederick Cloyd blog) accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>106</sup> Who has also penned scripts for other dystopian tinted sci-fi series from *Cowboy Bebop* (1998-1999) to *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (2002-2003), *Ghost in the Shell: S.A.C. 2nd GIG* (2004) to *Wolf's Rain* (2003), *Ergo Proxy* (2006-2007), or *Toward the Terra* (2007).





<sup>107</sup> Has directed critically acclaimed sci-fi series such as *Michiko to Hatchin* (2008), *Lupin III: The Woman Called Fujiko Mine* (2012), as well as episodes for *Texhnolyze* (2003), *Gunslinger Girl* (2003), or *Ergo Proxy* (2006), etc.

<sup>108</sup> Killian Fox, "The 50 best things to eat in the world and where to eat them," *The Guardian*, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/sep/13/best-foods-in-the-world>, (site of *The Guardian*); W. David Marx, "Ramen Jiro: Tokyo's most controversial noodle," *CNN Travel*, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009, <http://travel.cnn.com/tokyo/eat/ramen-jiro-controversy-835612>, (site of CNN), accessed June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>109</sup> The voice actor for the old alien – Ichiro Nagai – is synonymous with Japanese animations: "the embodiment of TV *anime*. From the very first two classic shows – *Tetsuwan Atom* (*Astro Boy*, 1963-1966) and *Ōokami Shōnen Ken* (*Ken, The Wolf Boy*, 1963-1965) – he has been there as a voice actor in countless TV shows, classic and obscure, over the decades. He is one of the defining voices of *anime*, one of the voices [...] heard countless times and recognize[d] immediately" (Benjamin Ettinger, "Space Dandy – Episode 2 Review," *Anipages*, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.pelleas.net/-aniTOP/index.php/space-dandy-2>, (site of *AniPages*), accessed June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

<sup>110</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 2.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>112</sup> Kim Stanley Robinson, *Pacific Edge*, New York, Tim Doherty Associates, Inc., 1990, p. 95.

<sup>113</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 4, Ikuro Sato (director), Kimiko Ueno (writer), January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/Xa1X0d>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>115</sup> Zombie R describes his surroundings: "I think we've been here a long time. I still have all my flesh, but there are elders who are little more than skeletons with clinging bits of muscle, dry as jerky. Somehow it still extends and contracts, and they keep moving. I have never seen any of us 'die' of old age. Maybe we live for ever, I don't know. The future is as blurry to me as the past. I can't seem to make myself care about anything to the right or left of the present, and the present isn't exactly urgent. You might say death has relaxed me. I am riding the escalators when M finds me. I ride the escalators several times a day, whenever they move. It's become a ritual" (Isaac Marion, *Warm Bodies*, New York: Atria Books, 2011, p. 5).

<sup>116</sup> Vincent Geoghegan, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>117</sup> EunYoung Choi storyboarded, provided Key Animation, was the animation and episode director of various episodes of the sci-fi classic *Casshern Sins* (2008-2009), *Kaiba* (2008) *Yojouhan Shiwa Taikei (The Tatami Galaxy)* (2010-2011).

<sup>118</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 9, EunYoung Choi (director and story), Shinichirō Watanabe (writer), March 2<sup>st</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/9fxuho>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>119</sup> "Space Dandy – 09," *Random Curiosity*, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, <http://randomc.net/2014/03/03/space-dandy-09/> (site of *Random Curiosity*, anime blog), accessed June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>120</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 9.

<sup>121</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 10, Masayuki Miyaji (director), Kimiko Ueno (writer), March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/Vp5S7J>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>123</sup> Ryan Lambie, "Space Dandy: why you should watch it, 5 essential episodes," *Den*





of *Geek*, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://www.den-ofgeek.com/tv/space-dandy/34976/space-dandy-why-you-should-watch-it-5-essential-episodes>, (site of *Den of Geek*), accessed June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>124</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 10.

<sup>125</sup> "Space Dandy – 10," *Random Curiosity*, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014, <http://randomc.net/2014/03/10/space-dandy-10/>(site of *Random Curiosity*, anime blog), accessed June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>126</sup> Walter Benjamin referred to in Anne Allison, *Millennial Monsters. Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006, p. 28.

<sup>127</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 2, episode 21 (8), Yasuhiro Nakura (director), Shinichirō Watanabe (writer), August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/Fndffv>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>128</sup> He can be interpreted as an *agathodaimōn* – a noble spirit or as a *genius loci* – a spirit protective of the planet in this case.

<sup>129</sup> *Space Dandy*, season 2, episode 21 (8).

<sup>130</sup> One asks: "What do you think? Isn't it strange? Even if we live happily for a short time, it's not long before we all die in the end. The only difference is that some live a little longer, and some a little shorter. [...] aren't we all just living in order to die? I

want to know what our reason is for living." The other replies: "How very conceited. Bacteria and microorganisms do not have a reason for living. Yet you believe you do?" Elsewhere a similar conversation: "How to live my life? That is the question. I don't want to think about dying. I don't want to live like that. I don't want to think so much about dying that it's the only thing that occupies my mind." An acapella chorus answers: "Isn't it the same as "how to die"?" Even if you don't want to think about it, everyone dies in the end. Keeping death at a distance and not thinking about it, that is like averting your eyes from death. If you leave them be, objects will break and living things will die. The world is heading towards destruction. So thinking about one's death is a matter of no importance" (*Space Dandy*, season 2, episode 21 (8)).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>133</sup> A scene taking place in a scrap-yard of discarded robot appliances mirrors the Zion dance party from *Matrix Reloaded* (2003).

<sup>134</sup> "Out of everything, the most pointless would be what living beings call love." *Space Dandy*, season 1, episode 13, Shingo Natsume (director), Dai Satō (writer), March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (Japanese airing date), <http://goo.gl/9zUcju>, (site of Funimation), accessed June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015.