When Was the Postwar?: A Postcolonial Reading of Speciesism in Hiroya Oku’s

Gantz

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In 2011 I began studying veterinary medicine at Universidade Federal do Piauí, after a whole life in contact with other animals. Having grown up back and forth between the countryside – where most part of my relatives had cattle – and an enormous house in the capital with 3 dogs, a dozen chickens, a duck, a pair of turkeys, the eventual snakes, butterflies, frogs, lizards, bees, ants, scorpions and so on, and having witnessed and actively participated in various situations of life and death, my relation to other animals was complex and instigating. I would read Enciclopedia Britanica and know more about the size of different whales and coloration of snakes, observe the line of ants carrying leaves or their frenzy killing a worm in my yard. I would open coconuts (babaçu) and be surprised by beetle larvae, see the chickens changing behavior and body temperature while laying eggs.

I tried dealing with different animals in different situations, and in the case of individuals I had a lot of contact, I observed their personalities with time. I learned how to love them, and most importantly, I learned the limitations of communication between humans and other animals. I observed their reactions, their suffering, discomfort, anxiety. I recognized how I would never be able to fully grasp how they were feeling. But I knew I wanted to do something with this love, and I thought being a veterinarian meant being a biologist with more practical perks.

And there I was on the second year of the veterinary programme, after closely studying bones, organs and limbs in Anatomy classes. It was the opposite of what I expected, but I went along. The worst was yet to come, as the disassembled animals became whole defrosted corpses in Pathology then live animals to suffer with the sadistic curiosity of students while learning Physiology. I refused to be part of many experiments that were conducted with live dogs, mice and goats, but decided to be one of the best
students in this subject in order to be a monitor in the following semester. My intention was to reduce the stress of the animals before the procedures and to make sure they would be properly sedated when it was the case, I wanted to make their deaths less horrible. In one of the classes, the worst procedure of the course was being conducted. During the whole of this infernal situation – which was obviously infinitively worse for the subjects of experimentation than for me – I was on the verge of crying. I felt rage and disgust, I knew there were many layers of injustice and cruelty at work there, not only in relation to the procedure itself but also the way teachers and students were reacting, their comments, their disrespect. I decided the following semester to abandon the programme and look for something else. I was really traumatised by the accumulation of horrors. My whole life had been a successive witnessing of animal abuse, and if I could, I would now avoid it at all costs. I closed my eyes to it and did not go back.

But now I see my choice was to change perspective. I now know how to name the things I feel, and how theory has been dealing with what I witnessed: speciesism. Violence was present in the words of disgust, in the pain inflicted, in murder. I learned some of the principles of this violence, and that I was not alone: many people dealt with similar situations, and many animals were submitted to even worse. To deal with speciesism in my research was almost necessary, and as a manga reader the corpus presented itself to me even before I began studying veterinary medicine. Now I came full circle, not necessarily talking about my experiences with other animals and speciesism but making use of my experiences as a lever for my research, which is for me an act of love.
Abstract

This research analyses the narrative in panels from the Japanese manga series *Gantz* (2000-2013) with the aid of concepts articulated by postcolonial theorists. The concepts of speciesism and Othering guide the reading of the images and dialogues, whose criteria of selection were the depiction of speciesist conflicts and animalization of the enemy, where power relations are observed in interactions between characters in the fictional war narrative of the manga. The features of Japanese *sen*go fiction allow for comparisons between the narrative of *Gantz* and historical racist and speciesist images of World War II. The continuity of speciesist discourse in this contemporary manga suggests allegories of racist wartime practices and a relation between speciesism, Othering and power relations in the so-called *sen*go, forming a bridge between the historical past and present through fictional discourse.

Key words: manga, Othering, speciesism, World War II, *Gantz*.
Resumo

Esta pesquisa analisa narrativas em painéis da série de mangá Japonesa *Gantz* (2000-2013) com auxílio de conceitos articulados por teóricxs pós-coloniais. Os conceitos de especismo e *Othering* guiam a leitura das imagens e diálogos, cujo critério de seleção se baseou em demonstrar conflitos especistas e animalização dx inimigx numa narrativa de guerra em que relações de poder são observadas através de interações entre personagens. As características do *sengo* Japonês possibilitam comparações entre a narrativa de *Gantz* e imagens racistas e especistas da Segunda Guerra Mundial. A continuidade de discursos especistas neste mangá contemporâneo sugere alegorias de práticas racistas ocorridas durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial e uma relação entre especismo, *Othering* e relações de poder no dito *sengo*, formando assim uma ponte entre o passado e presente históricos através da ficção.

# Table of contents

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 6

2. Review of the literature ........................................................................................................ 10
   2.1 Speciesism and war ........................................................................................................... 10
   2.2 (Science) fiction and war anxieties ............................................................................... 14
   2.3 Theoretical framework ................................................................................................... 16

3. Analysis .................................................................................................................................. 19
   3.1 They are not human ......................................................................................................... 21
   3.2 Human cattle .................................................................................................................... 28
   3.3 War shifts ......................................................................................................................... 35

4. Conclusion and questions for further research ................................................................. 39

5. Works cited ........................................................................................................................... 42

6. Table of figures ..................................................................................................................... 45
I’m truly sorry Man’s dominion
Has broken Nature’s social union,
An’ justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An’ fellow-mortal!

Robert Burns “To a Mouse”
On Turning up in Her Nest with the Plough, November, 1785

1. Introduction

In her essay “Globalizing Manga: From Japan to Hong Kong and Beyond”, Wendy Siuyi Wong gives a brief historical context of Japanese manga and discusses it as a feature of mass culture in a globalized contemporaneity. According to Wong, Hokusai Katsuhika popularized the term “manga” in the eighteenth century to describe his collections of illustrations (27). Originally from Japan but not exclusively Japanese, manga was early influenced by Western and Chinese comics. Wong points out that the influences of Chinese manhua – Chinese comics – and Western cartoons on manga have occurred since the early eighteenth century. The Meiji period (1868 -1912) is cited as the formation of modern Japan and its opening to the Western “world” (27). War is also part of the history of manga development, as Wong asserts that “The prewar period marked the beginning of the modern comics of Japan […]” (28). After World War II, science fiction and manga gained popularity and global notoriety with Tezuka Osamu’s works, namely Atamu Taishi, later imported and animated as Astro Boy in the United States of America (28).
Postwar Japanese manga originated a large scale industry of domestic – followed by increasingly global – relevance.

The connection between war and manga is further addressed by Rei Okamoto in “Theorizing Manga: Nationalism and Discourse on the Role of Wartime Manga”, in which she analyses wartime and postwar Japanese cartoonists’– or mangaka – discourse on war and manga. Sino-Japanese wartime mobilization ensued an ideological engagement from mangaka, who defined manga as “an ideal medium for conveying nationalism” (20). The discourse on the role of manga and mangaka as agents of war continued after World War II as manga expanded to a mass medium, sustained by the growing publishing industry.

The expansion of manga culture developed reader-oriented genres, primarily categorized by target market demographics, namely age and gender (Okabayashi 11). Shōnen and Seinen, for example, are categories of manga which cater to male audiences with different age ranges: the former are aimed at pre-teen and teenage boys and the latter primarily at young men, although they can also include a more mature male readership. This categorization also implies general corresponding features and themes. Seinen manga – which means “young men’s comics” – are marketed towards young male audiences (11). Science fiction, politics and sports are popular in this genre, also often featuring young male protagonists, action-driven plots and violence.

The position of manga in contemporary Japan can be assessed by their popularity and cultural relevance. As Philip Seaton informs in his book Japan’s Contested War Memories, 40 per cent of book and magazine publications in Japan are manga, and educational – gakushū – manga are frequently adopted in schools – which includes Japanese history and the war years – as learning tools for children (Seaton 132). This relevance indicates a complex relation between fictional and non-fictional war narratives
in manga. Nissim Otmazgin introduces the book *Rewriting History in Manga* by pointing out that manga is viewed “as an effective means to shape historical memory” (2), and questioning the impact of such a wide readership in shaping the world views of the Japanese population. The portrayal of war events in manga does not have the same barriers of a non-fictional work in terms of academic authority or historical accuracy, and as a consequence manga can deal with real events in a fictionalized manner (Otmazgin 2-5). Naoko Shimazu asserts in her article “Popular Representations of the Past: The Case of Postwar Japan” that

> The Japanese case has shown that popular culture can bring to bear an inordinate amount of influence in creating and molding representations of the past. Quite clearly, agencies other than the state are just as or even more effective in ‘redesigning the past’. (116)

The importance of Japanese manga in constructing contemporary perspectives on war events provides a rich site for research. Depictions of power relations in manga war narratives can be observed in interactions between fictional individuals and groups. In the next sections of this study, representations of Japan’s wartime in contemporary fiction will be further addressed and the ‘postwar’¹ problematized as a concept in the Japanese context. In order to analyse the relation between war, manga and violence I have chosen the *seinen* manga series *Gantz* (2000-2013). *Gantz*’s characteristics of having a young male protagonist, character development, action-driven plot and other *seinen* common tropes such as dystopian settings and sexual content are illustrative of its target demographic, while the central role of war and violence in this manga provide fertile ground for discussion.

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¹ The term will be problematized but nevertheless used for demarcation of historical periods.
Hiroya Oku is the writer and illustrator of the science fiction manga series *Gantz*, which was originally published in the Japanese magazine *Weekly Young Jump* from December 11, 2000 to August 19, 2013 (Gantz Wiki). It was later licensed in the United States by *Dark Horse Comics* from June 25, 2008 to October 28, 2015 (Dark Horse Comics). The manga series is comprised of 37 volumes – containing 383 chapters in total – whose plot revolves around the protagonist Kei Kurono in a series of game-like situations. The first chapter sets the narrative in 21st century Japan and introduces the protagonist, soon depicting his death\(^2\), after which he and other deceased humans find themselves in an empty apartment – apart from a black sphere – in Tokyo. The sphere – called Gantz – gives the characters weapons and instructions for alien-hunting missions, through which they could – if successful in killing their targets – gather points and use them to quit the “game”. The game is later revealed to be a military training for an upcoming alien invasion on Earth. Eventually an alien ship appears over Tokyo, abducting humans into it, and Gantz teams from different countries engage in war with the alien species both on Earth and on the ship to repel the invasion.

The first alien-human encounters involve moral conflicts between characters, who are divided between killing for survival and killing for pleasure. Human characters display reactions of disgust, inferiorization, fear and violence towards aliens. The interactions between different species both on Earth and on the alien ship are in many cases analogies of relations between humans and other animals, which include aliens being referred to as animals and humans in situations of domesticity – taken as pets or cattle –, of display in “alien zoos”, and of extermination.

The representations of Self and Other in *Gantz* can be observed through conflicts between characters and power relations that intersect their interactions. Taking into

\(^{2}\) The materiality of human characters is an important aspect of the narrative. They are not resurrected after death, but their bodies and memories are reconstituted through alien technology.
consideration wartime and postwar discourses of racism and the complex perspective of *sengo*, this research discusses the possibility of war representations in *Gantz* as analogies of past wartime events. Dialogues and images in selected panels from the manga are analysed through the perspective of speciesist criticism, observing how power relations and animalization/dehumanization of characters are connected in the manga.

The eleven images selected from *Gantz* are from chapters 8, 18, 177, 322, 327, 325, and 363, where the characters find themselves in distinct positions of power in the war narrative. The manga is translated from Japanese to English, an issue discussed in the Analysis section.

2. Review of the literature

In the next subsections the relation between racism, speciesism and war are contextualized in postwar Japanese fiction. The central concepts of the analysis of *Gantz* are explored, World War II racist and speciesist practices and images are discussed and the term ‘postwar’ is problematized.

2.1 Speciesism and war

Second World War discourse, including the Holocaust – and the view of the Jewish people as rats or parasites– and the Pacific front with the United States propaganda’s depiction of the Japanese as animalized subjects is illustrative of the connection between war and speciesism. According to Johannes Steizinger, dehumanization of the Jewish was part of Nazi ideology as one of the “psychological prerequisites of the Nazi mass murder.” (3), in which animalization of a group is used as justification for violence. Wartime depictions of animalization of the Japanese were not different. Sheep, ants, dogs,
monkeys and other non-human animals were used as designations for the enemy, associated with exterminationist language (Dower 83-91).

The concept of speciesism is based on the anthropocentric\(^3\) notion of hierarchic differences between humans and non-humans. Popularized by Peter Singer in the book *Animal Liberation*, the term describes the conflict of interests in which human supremacism seeks to normalize and support exploitation of non-human species (Singer 6). Such moral arbitrariness determines which lives are expendable, besides representing a concept linked to dominance and violence. Dominance over other species allows for the comfort of exploitation and a hierarchy-based, socially accepted oppression over the lives of those rendered inferior.

In his series of essays published in *Mechademia*, Thomas Lamarre examines speciesism in Japanese wartime animation and manga. In “Speciesism, Part I: Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation,” he discusses how speciesist discourses overlap with racism. Informed by John Dower’s *War Without Mercy* – in which wartime and postwar American media’s racial prejudice towards the Japanese is explored – Lamarre describes speciesism as a “displacement of problems associated with race relations onto species relations, and vice-versa.” (76). In his preface to *War Without Mercy*, Dower explains how his research relied on popular sources such as wartime cartoons to recreate “the ethos which underlay the attitudes and actions of men and women during these years” (x). Following his statement, this research will utilize images from publications in magazines and other sources to illustrate violent American depictions of the Japanese during the war years. The criteria for selection of the images were the animalization of the Japanese through images and descriptions and the violent

\(^3\) The term means ‘human-centered’ and includes the interpretation of reality exclusively under human perspective; the anthropocentric moral perspective informs an hierarchical attitude towards human existence among other life forms (Ashcroft et al 15).
suggestions of extermination. The context of production of these images is central to the analysis of images from *Gantz* as analogies of wartime racist and speciesist discourse.

The first image (Fig. 1) appeared in Leatherneck magazine, published by the U.S. Marine Corps, March 1945.

![Image of Louseous Japanicas](image)

**Louseous Japanicas**

The first serious outbreak of this lice epidemic was officially noted on December 7, 1941, at Honolulu, T. H. To the Marine Corps, especially trained in combating this type of pestilence, was assigned the gigantic task of extermination. Extensive experiments on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan have shown that this louse inhabits coral atolls in the South Pacific, particularly pill boxes, palm trees, caves, swamps and jungles.

Flame throwers, mortars, grenades and bayonets have proven to be an effective remedy. But before a complete cure may be effected the origin of the plague, the breeding grounds around the Tokyo area, must be completely annihilated.

Fig. 1—Louseous Japanicas

The terms “louse” and “lice epidemic”, “pestilence” and “plague” are associated with the image of the “Louseous Japanicas”, a pseudotaxonomy of the Japanese, which are described not only as animals to be annihilated⁴, but as a plague or disease to be cured with the use of weapons as remedies. Not only does the image of a six-legged furry creature with horns and claws morphologically distance the Japanese from other humans,

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⁴ Wartime public opinion polls estimate that from 10 to 13% of the population in the United States of America were in favor of the annihilation of Japanese people, while a comparable percentage supported retaliations such as torture after Japan’s defeat (Dower 53).
but the “taxonomy” allows for no association with the human species. One month after the publication of the cartoon, the United States used incendiary bombs in Japanese cities, followed by the August atomic bomb attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Russel 119).
Fig. 2 is a homefront postcard with a cartoon illustration of a Japanese soldier’s skin stretched onto a wall, referred to as a “pelt” and “hide”. The representation of a captured Japanese in analogy to a captured skinned non-human animal is not only dehumanizing but speciesist for its normalization of trophy-hunting. The text in the bottom of the image is a rhyme that uses the derogatory term “Jap”, a racist slang largely used in the media and official U.S. publications (Dower 78). The line “He never deserved to be preserved” has a similar connotation to exterminationist cartoons such as Fig. 1. The image is also not that far-fetched from a representation of World War II practices: body parts of the Japanese were collected as souvenirs and loot during the war. Gold teeth, ears, skulls and other bones were kept by combatants or sent as gifts to mothers and fiancées in the United States (65).

Different from U.S. depictions of the Japanese, animalized depictions of the enemy were not common in Japanese cartoons, where Anglo-Americans were frequently represented as demons. Dower describes them as “less ethnocentric and culture-bound than the general output of their western counterparts” (258) and adds that the images were “accompanied by specific allusions to English or American oppression of other races or to atrocities in battle” (242), a feature this research will take into consideration in the analysis of images and narrative in Gantz.

2.2 Science fiction and war anxieties

The term ‘postwar’ in the Japanese context has been problematized and discussed in relation to the cultural manifestations of war in contemporary fiction. Seaton divides the postwar into four phases, of which the last – from 1993-2005 – marks the raised

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5 This image was taken from the website History on The Net, accessed 22 October 2017
concern over the fading of war memories (34). The necessity of revival of war memories – or rather new perspectives on past war events – is part of the ongoing postwar debates in Japan. In that regard, Seaton states that

[…] despite the generational transformations, the constants within Japanese war memories over the whole of the postwar have been their contested nature and the inability of the Japanese people to establish a dominant cultural narrative of the conflict. (56)

The complex relation of the postwar generation with past events can be observed by attempts to mark the beginning of a new historical phase for the country. In “Speciesism, Part II: Tezuka Osamu and the Multispecies Ideal”, Lamarre problematizes the periodizing term “postwar Japan” as one that may cause the misleading idea of a complete break between prewar and postwar Japanese paradigms. The permanence of speciesist representations of Japanese – from vicious gorillas during the war to domesticated chimps after defeat – challenges the idea of a rupture with wartime Japan (76). In Gantz, instances of cooperation between humans and aliens are central to the resolution of the war, similar to the “abrupt transition from merciless racist war to an amicable postwar relationship” (Dower 302) between defeated Japan and the United States.

The historical trauma of the Japanese defeat in World War II and its manifestations through animation are discussed by Susan Napier in her article “World War II as Trauma, Memory and Fantasy in Japanese Animation”. Science fiction works such as the anime series Uchu Senkan Yamato (1974 - 1975) are analysed as revisions of war, “predicated
on coming to terms with a past event” (3). The Yamato series, for example, features alien invasions and the eventual unity of Earth’s nations “against blue-skinned enemies”, and a transformation of the traumatic war experience by both defamiliarizing it – through animation – and revising defeat through science fiction (6). Similarly, Gantz portrays a final solution to the alien invasion, in which humans from different countries on Earth unite to destroy their common enemy. The protagonist Kei Kurono becomes the Japanese hero, defeating the last alien and “saving Earth”. The erasure of defeat and Japan’s centrality in the war effort suggest a transformation of the war narrative into one of victory. The erasure of defeat and revision of war events is a common feature of Japanese postwar fiction, referred to as “‘simulation fiction’: novels and manga in which Japan wins the war” (Seaton 49).

Following the discussion of this scholarship, my analysis of the series Gantz will take into consideration how the narrative of sengo “depended on situating it both after the war and along the course of the modern” (Gluck 64), transferring the war from the historical past to the present through fiction. The representations of Self and Other in Gantz will be observed considering wartime and postwar discourses of racism, animalization of the Japanese and the complex perspective of sengo.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The power relations between characters in Gantz will be analysed with the aid of the concepts articulated by postcolonial theorists and other sources linked to speciesism critique. The theoretical background of postcolonialism will be approached in this

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6 Yamato is the name of a battleship which sank in the last days of World War II (Napier 3); it is also a designation for Japanese people and the “mythic founding of the imperial line by Emperor Jimmu” (Dower 1986 228), a representation of Japanese identity as race and nationality.
research through concepts that will aid the analysis on discursive operations of subject representation and power relations.

The concepts of speciesism (Singer 6) and Othering (as in Bill Ashcroft et al. 188) will be employed in order to understand discursive constructions of Other that give way to biased perspectives on certain groups of individuals, allowing for examinations of human/non-human relationships in fiction as representations of this process.

Othering is a process or set of processes through which identities are produced, in which the notion of Self is discursively constructed through the Other by constitutive polarity. The dichotomous construction of identity, by which a group produces its own centrality by means of the split Self/Other, ultimately depends on the construction of an Other (Ashcroft et al. 188). Othering then refers to the “social and/or psychological ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group” (188). Stuart Hall points to the definition of Other as a term which is not fixed, but “a positionality of differential marking within a discursive chain” (252), thus relative to the system in which it operates. The relative position of the Other will be observed in the analysis of power relations in Gantz.

Processes of Othering and dehumanization are central to the analysis of the war narrative in Gantz as postwar fiction. As John Dower comments in War Without Mercy, in the context of World War II the dehumanization of the enemy though racism was a process which allowed for violence:

Prejudice and racial stereotypes frequently distorted both Japanese and Allied evaluations of the enemy’s intentions and capabilities. Race hate fed atrocities, and atrocities in turn fanned the fires of race hate. The dehumanization of the
Other contributed immeasurably to the psychological distancing that facilitates killing […] (11)

The terms “race hate” and “dehumanization” point to central aspects of speciesism, as dehumanization implies inferiorization on an anthropocentric scale of importance. The consequences of dehumanization are subliminally understood as the perspective one has towards non-human animals applied to humans. The naturalized aspect of this process manifests the underlying assumptions of a hierarchy generated by speciesism: the anthropocentric notion of human superiority justifies violence over the lives of those in lower scales of importance, which include all non-humans.

Speciesist discourses and Othering processes can overlap, similar to Lamarre’s observation on the relation between racism and speciesism. In his essay “Discourse on Colonialism”, Aimé Césaire points that dehumanization is as part of the colonizing process:

[…] colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal […]. (5)

Cesaire’s analysis of racialization, while focused on the colonizer and not mentioning speciesism, brings to light how dehumanization carries an implicit, naturalized concept of exploitation and violence towards non-human animals. The construction of the Other as inferior within the human species is realized through the animalized human, and the concept of racism then becomes a metaphorical interspecies relation, one between the discursively constructed human colonizer and non-human
colonized; to become non-human is to become an animal Other. Speciesism and processes of Othering are related within discourses of colonization, which seek to normalize intraspecies hierarchies by making them pass as interspecies hierarchies, ultimately as a means to justify domination and violence. Dehumanization of the Japanese in the context of World War II can be observed as a similar process of distancing that justifies violence and translates race hatred through animalization.

Lamarre’s idea of translation of racial anxieties through representations of non-humans in Japanese manga will inform the analysis of Hiroya Oku’s manga Gantz with the aid of a postcolonial theoretical framework to illustrate how power relations and speciesism interconnect in a contemporary science fiction manga that depicts war as one of its main narrative aspects. The analysis offers a chance to observe both discursive representations of Other and Self and the operations of speciesism in these representations.

3. Analysis

First of all, it is important to mention the contemporary relation between manga readership and informal manga culture. On the one hand, manga are sold in print or as digital content: Dark Horse Comics, for example is a licensed American manga publisher, which translates and prints manga in English – as is the case of Gantz –, and Crunchyroll is one the most famous example of a licensed company which sells manga as digital content. On the other hand, a movement of readers which scan, translate and upload manga for free on websites dedicated to online reading is part of a growing culture in contemporary manga. Copyright infringement as in the specific case of scans is not widely discussed, although in relation to independent manga fan-fiction – doujinshi –, which in some cases are pirate versions of “official manga”, the unauthorized use of
fictional worlds and characters are allowed by Japanese publishers, and as a result there is a decriminalization of copyright infringement (Halbert 134). Voluntary groups of translators, editors and redrawers\(^7\) produce informal versions of manga and upload them on the internet, allowing for a wider readership and alternate versions of official translations. As some manga are not available in the official market, readers resort to fan-made “scanlations” – a term used in the online community to refer to scanned and translated manga –, as a reading material they would not have access otherwise. As a former contributor in informal translations and reader of online manga, manhua – Chinese comics – and manwa – Korean comics –, I have a personal experience with scanlation culture as a translator from English to Portuguese. Although the discussion on creative rights and intellectual property as a commodity is not part of the main topic in the present research, it should be further addressed in the future as a feature of contemporary manga culture.

The images selected from *Gantz* were obtained from the manga reading website *MangaFox*, where they are translated from the Japanese to English. The figures 3 to 11 are from chapters 8, 18, 177, 322, 327, 325, and 363 of the manga, respectively. I have selected the images from *Gantz* based on depictions of power relations and moral conflicts amongst humans and/or between humans and non-humans; constructions of human identity in relation to aliens; displays of humans in situations analogous to non-human animals in domesticity and instances of cooperation between alien and human characters. Japanese manga are read from right to left, top-to-bottom sequence.

\(^7\) Person responsible for removing the Japanese text in parts that are not the dialogue boxes and therefore need to be redrawn after the translated text is inserted.
3.1 They are not human

This subsection focusses on the analysis of speciesist and Othering processes underlying depictions of the first alien/human encounters set in Tokyo, Earth. Characters’ moral conflicts and power relations are the emphasis of the analysis.

Fig. 3 is from page 14 of Chapter 8 – “Slaughter” – and depicts the reaction of the human group after the first killing mission ordered by Gantz. In an alley in the middle of Tokyo, the group found, pursued and executed what Gantz named the Onion Alien. The weapons provided by Gantz also have X-ray functions, which revealed the Alien’s bone structure as different from a human’s. The group establishes the Other as an opposition of themselves, as that which is non-human. The assertion of non-humanity is repeated by the murderous character (second top panel, from right to left) both as a form of distancing himself from the creature – in an anthropocentric scale of importance – and justifying his violence. The murder of a non-human being is compared to fishing by another character, a human activity widely accepted as natural. Ashcroft et al. mention the animalization of the enemy as an endorsement of violence (285), which is an underlying speciesist assumption.

While most characters in the situation try to justify their violence, others do not distance themselves emotionally. Masaru Kato – character with his back turned to the reader, in the bottom right panel – cries over the incomprehensible scene and in the sequence of the narrative laments not having saved the creature. The emotional reactions of different characters in the narrative affect how they position themselves in relation to their alien “targets”, which generates conflicts within the human group. The human identity is depicted not as a homogeneous group which oppresses the perceived Others, but as a categorization that proves complex as the story develops and power relations change dynamics according to the circumstances.
HE WASN'T HUMAN!! THAT'S RIGHT!!

...HE AIN'T HUMAN.

IS IT REALLY TV?

IS THIS A TV SHOW ...?

WHO GIVES A SHIT?

WASN'T HUMAN AT ALL!!

THE SKELETON THIS X-RAY THING ON THE GUN SHOWED

I GUESS WE GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY, KILLING THAT THING.

HMMM.

YES ...

IT'S JUST LIKE FISHING ...

HE'S CRYIN'. WHAT'S WITH THIS KID?

Fig. 3 – He is not human
Fig. 4 is from page 4 of Chapter 18, “Conditions for survival”. After the murder of the Onion Alien, a similar albeit bigger creature appears and takes revenge on the group. All humans in the scene but one are murdered: the protagonist’s former schoolmate, Masaru Kato apologizes to the bigger Onion Alien, who is implied as being the first Alien’s father. Kato is then mortally wounded by the creature while protecting the protagonist Kei Kurono. Another character – Nishi, shown in the bottom left panel - appears and immobilizes the creature, offering Kei the chance to kill them and gather the points in Gantz’s game. Kei’s hesitation to kill the alien is confronted by Nishi with the argument of non-humanity: the creature is “some kind of livestock”, therefore the killing of which should not imply a difficult moral choice. Dower comments on the description of the Japanese soldiers as a herd, incapable of thinking by themselves (84). The characterization of the enemy as an animal and its violent implication reveal the speciesist assumptions which permeate the racialized Other. In this context, Japanese characters using recognizable racist and speciesist images which were used against Japanese soldiers in World War II reveal a complex relation between violence, war and Othering, as there is no clear parallel to actual war events in *Gantz*.

The suit both human characters are wearing grants them superhuman strength and agility, a fact Nishi also uses in his argument. The power given by the suit is also representative of the power relations between the creature – bound and at gunpoint – and the two human characters deciding his fate. To have power over another’s life – although he chooses to refer to the creature as a thing, an object – is pleasurable in Nishi’s perspective. Nishi’s objectification can be elucidated by the dynamics of both speciesism and Othering: the materiality of the Self and the materiality of what is not the Self – therefore the Other – are the boundaries which constitute what is “me” and “other things”. Speciesism allows for both the distinction between species and the organization of a
Fig. 4 – Some kind of livestock
hierarchy among them, while in this context, Othering is the assumption of human identity as morally superior, producing inferior, alien Others. Both processes work similarly for they are anthropocentric notions of identity that exclude non-humans and justify violence. Objectification is an additional discursive distancing from the Other, which is observed from the perspective of the Self as violable.

Fig. 5 corresponds to page 5 from Chapter 177, “The Truth Is Revealed”, and depicts a conflict between human groups. Gantz’s current mission is to kill the human Tae Kojima; something that divides the team of hunters. The moral conflict arises when human life is regarded in different perspectives: a part of the team does not agree to kill humans, whereas the other places the point-gathering element of the game above the categorization of their target. The hunters that seek to kill Tae are led by Izumi Shion – shown in the first panel –, a character who claims not to differentiate alien from human lives. He confronts the opposing team, raising the question “you’d kill it if it was an alien, but if it’s a human, you won’t?”, demonstrating a seemingly neutral perspective in relation to identity: he does not necessarily Otherize alien targets, as he does not regard human life as superior in relation to other lives. The opposing group’s reaction can be observed as both a protection of their human identity – by refusing to kill one of their own species – and their supposedly fixed position as hunters, the latter an assumption which proved incorrect. The protection of the characters’ position as hunters is protected by the underlying belief that the group would not be hunted in the game, which could create a dichotomy hunters/prey within the group.

The dichotomies alien/human and target/hunter are maintained, however the power relations that correlate human to hunter and alien to target are destabilized, exposing the relative nature of such categories. Speciesism in this context is implicit in the opposing team’s target boundary, which allows naturalized violence towards non-
humans and questions the murder of humans. The complexity of intraspecific and interspecific relations can be observed in different situations, which allows for a wider perspective on power relations and the consequent constructions of Self and Other in Gantz’s narrative. In the next subsections, analogies of domesticity and depicted power relations are analysed from the perspective of polarization of Self/Other and in relation to diplomatic shifts of the war.
Fig. 5 – Hipocrisy

Are you okay with killing a human?

What about you?

What a bunch of hypocrites.

You'd kill it if it was an alien, but if it's a human, you won't?

It doesn't matter if it's human or alien...

It's all the same to me...

I think I'll stay on this side after all...
3.2 Human cattle

This subsection focusses on power relations and analogies of animal domesticity that take place after humans are captured by the alien ship. The term “alien” and its derivations will be used in quotation marks, as the non-human characters are now in a context of normality in relation to their location – in space, therefore not alien in relation to another planet as it was the case on Earth –, while human characters are outlanders in “alien” territory.

Fig. 6 corresponds to page 19 from Chapter 322, “The Very Bottom of The Food Chain”. The title of the chapter corresponds to the analogical situations depicted, as a group of humans find themselves naked in a proportionally gigantic “alien” city, surrounded by dressed humanoid “aliens”, after escaping a slaughterhouse. The image presents the moment when the group encounters a – also proportionally – big animal similar to an Earth domestic dog. The sixth and seventh panels – the first on a bottom-up angle, from the perspective of the group of humans – show the humanoid aliens at a table eating small pieces of unrecognizable meat while having a conversation. The reader does not have access to their language, which can be interpreted as the human characters’ perspective of the scene, a narrative strategy that exposes a dialogue while positioning the readers and the human characters in ignorance of its meaning. The choice of point of view directs the reader to observe the scene from the human characters’ angle, a position which is inferior both literal and metaphorically: the difference in size between “aliens”, the “alien animal” and humans is complementary to the power relation portrayed, as the first two consume the latter. This perspective can also be interpreted as an analogy of the position of non-human animals in relation to human animals on Earth, in which domestic animals are fed leftovers from under the table.
The following panels portray a plate of meat leftovers being given to the creature next to them, and the meat is shown as an assembly of human body parts. The analogous

Fig. 6 – The bottom of the food chain
relation of the scene with consumption of non-human animals by humans simultaneously causes the effects of familiarity and abnormality. Consumption of human meat is a dislocation of the anthropocentric expectation of the Earth food chain, in which humans are not prey. The inversion of prey/predator, consumer/consumed relations causes the human characters shock and disgust as a consequence of intraspecies identification, whereas for the “alien” characters it is a normal meal. Comparing this image with Fig.3, the assumption of normality of the human activity of fishing and the “alien” consumption of meat are depicted from different perspectives: while the first is a character’s justification of violence committed against the murdered creature – a justification that can only be established on speciesist assumptions –, the second is a disruption of anthropocentrism, and as the chapter’s title suggests, a radical relocation of humans in the food chain. Not only do the humanoid “aliens” themselves consume human meat, but so does their domestic animal. The “bottom of the food chain” is represented by an anthropocentric version of hierarchy in the “alien” society, as in a correlation to Earth. The consumption of humans by a non-human animal, in a lower position in a scale of importance – both in human and “alien” society – corresponds to an even lower positioning of the former species in this hierarchy.

Fig. 7 corresponds to page 33 from Chapter 327 “Little Birds in a Cage”, and depicts the human character Hiroto Sakurai encountering a group of “alien” characters in military-like uniform eating human meat. The images that precede Hiroto’s reaction are detailed panels of the murder of a female human, who is torn open by the “alien”. The resemblance of this situation to the previous analysed image (Fig. 6) is however marked by important differences: the non-human characters are wearing uniforms, there is access to the “alien” dialogue, and the power relation between human and non-human characters in the situation is different. The uniforms worn by the “aliens” and the suit Hiroto wears
– as do all Gantz’s hunters – resemble a non-civilian encounter of opposite sides in war: the “alien” and Earth’s combatants. Instead of a group of naked slaughterhouse survivors, a hunter in a suit that grants him superhuman abilities faces the human-eating group. The character also possesses psychic powers, which he uses to kill the “aliens” after the encounter. In this situation, the “alien” language is translated, and both the character and the reader have access to the conversation, which concerns the human meat they are eating. The comparison of its taste to the meat of “triffids”\(^8\) – the context implies a fictional creature whose meat is also consumed – conveys a sense of distorted normality, very similar to the scene in Fig. 6, in which human meat consumption is a daily activity for the “alien” Other, while perceived by human characters as a monstrosity. The translation of dialogue can be interpreted as a characterization of “alien” cruelty towards humans.

Dower cites a 1944 Japanese magazine publication about violent racist practices of white Americans, and how the latter perceived people of color as “races who should serve them like domestic animals” (qtd. in Dower 248). The speciesist implications of the sentence are the naturalization of exploitation of domestic animals and the inferiorization of humans who are compared to the former. Reminders of the enemies’ cruelty in Gantz serve as a narrative device to justify revenge, as is the case of Hiroto’s murder of the “aliens”. Japanese wartime demonic representations of cruel enemies can be observed in correlation to the monstrous alien invaders in Gantz. As Dower cites, Japanese wartime images made “allusions to English or American oppression of other races or to atrocities

\(^8\) A reference to John Wyndham’s 1951 science fiction novel *The Day of the Triffids*, in which the triffids are carnivourous plants that devour humans. This reference suggests a connection between the Gantz’s fictional creatures and other science fiction creatures. The consumption of human flesh by the triffids and the similarity of flavour between the later and human meat itself point to the existence of a food chain where humans are prey.
Really? Isn’t this slightly pongy?

Yum yum

This tastes similar to the meat of triffids.

Stop, you monsters!!

Stop!!!
towards humans in *Gantz*.

Fig. 8 corresponds to pages 19 and 20 from Chapter 325 “Exposed Reunion”. A group of survivors from the slaughterhouse follows Kei Kurono for protection. While fleeing a group of what resembled vermin exterminators, the survivors enter a building with different live creatures in exposition. The fascinated reaction of the humans is expressed verbally and emphasized by close-up panels of the “alien” creatures. When the group sees humans, however, their reaction becomes that of surprise and incredulity. The anthropocentric categorization of humans as non-animals persists even after the shocking events of slaughter and persecution in the alien ship. The position of human life in the context of an interplanetary affair does not change how the human characters perceive themselves, and the adaptation to a different hierarchy – in which humans are not dominant – is not accomplished. The characters doubt the possibility of the exposition of humans in a place that resembles a zoo, a fact that would imply the latter were in the same position as other animals. The anthropocentric notion of self-importance is dislocated when “aliens” are the dominant group, relegating humans to an inferior position. It is possible to observe a reversal of gaze as the “aliens” behave in a similar way to when humans observe other animals in Earth zoos. The fact that the human characters are naked and the “aliens” are dressed reinforces the animalization of the former, as wearing clothes is a characteristic exclusive to humans among life forms. The speciesist connotations of the image and the portrayed power relations reflect the anthropocentric perception of life that does not adapt to a different reality. Earth’s order is imposed on an interplanetary scale, and the characters construct the human Self in a way that makes being seen as the animal Other inconceivable. The images of humans living in facilities meant for other animals, however, are not exclusive to literary imagination. Dower exemplifies
dehumanizing wartime measures such as the evacuation and allocation of Japanese-Americans in horse stables, cattle stalls and pigpens (82).
3.3 War shifts

The sense of polarity between Self and Other is questioned in different moments in *Gantz*’s narrative, which includes instances of solidarity and cooperation among “aliens” and humans. Fig. 9 and Fig. 10 correspond to pages 5 and 6 respectively, of Chapter 363 “Sky Tower”. The context previous to this sequence is a battle between Gantz’s hunters from different countries on Earth and the “alien” army. Fraa is an “alien” character who was taken as hostage by Kei Kurono and forced to help him locate Tae Kojima, who had been abducted to the alien ship. Fraa then starts to cooperate spontaneously in various situations, which includes her locating and taking Tae to Kei’s transportation. However, her flying transport is hit amidst the war blasts and she pushes Tae out. The first image (Fig. 9) depicts Fraa holding Tae as high as possible, giving Kei time to rescue her in his flying transportation. Next, Fig. 10 shows Fraa pleading for her species not to be destroyed before releasing Tae and falling to her death, as a gesture of redemption through sacrifice. Fraa’s identification with her own species and empathy towards humans – considered by many “aliens” as insignificant as insects – form a metaphorical bridge during the polarizing war: her gestures prove interspecies cooperation and peace possible, while a shift in power is revealed through her fear of extermination. In presenting the problem of *senso*, Carol Gluck points to the feature of Japanese narratives of the postwar “around the new theme of peace and prosperity” (64), a characteristic that can be observed in *Gantz* as the resolution of the war is centralized in Japanese characters forming alliances with their enemy.
Fig. 9 - Redemption
Fig. 10 – Don’t kill us
Fig. 11 corresponds to page 10 from Gantz’s final Chapter (383), “Endpoint”. After Kei Kurono kills the best “alien” soldier, their last “alien” warrior commits suicide. The final battle is transmitted live to Earth, and victory over the “aliens” is announced. Kurono’s name is proclaimed as an individual and representative of Japan, “the greatest force of humanity”. In this context, Kei Kurono is an individual representing Japan, while humankind is represented as an opposition to the “alien” invaders. The construction of an “alien” Other made possible the construction of a human identity that could obliterate its common enemy. Japan wins the war, uniting all nations on Earth under the same identity. The themes of erasure of defeat and unifying cause were previously commented on as a feature of Japanese fiction concerned with the articulation of the war experience. This concern begs the question: when was the postwar? Has the U.S.-Japan racial conflict ended after the Japanese surrender in 1945 (Dower 298)?
4. Conclusion and questions for further research

The shifts in diplomatic relations after Japan’s surrender did not stop racist and speciesist depictions of the Japanese in Western media, but rather changed them. From gorilla to domesticated chimp (Lamarre 76) the images changed but not the idea of inferiorization of the now defeated enemy. Some images from Gantz resemble the animalized treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, for they were captured and maintained in facilities that were destined for non-human animals such as horse stables and cattle stalls for long periods of time before relocation to quarters (Dower 82). Other images reflect a fear of annihilation, represented by human slaughterhouses and meat consumption, which can be linked to racist wartime propaganda. Both the relative position of human identity – as hunters at first of aliens on Earth, then of cattle and finally as victors in an interplanetary war – and the permanence of animalized depictions of inferiority disclose the fundamental characteristic of an anthropocentric thinking of power relations. The correlations between historical racist and speciesist discourses during World War II and the analysis of Gantz as a postwar Japanese fiction – one that centralizes its power relations on interspecific conflicts – are ultimately a reflection of the continuity of speciesist discourse and an allegory of racist practices of the past reflected in contemporaneity.

Gantz’s narrative is focused on the shifting position of human characters as a species: when confronted with animalization of the Other as justification for violence or when taken as prisoners of war and consumed as food, put in zoos and so on, power relations determine who is the animalized Other. However, the narrative is ultimately centralized on human characters who can be recognized as humans even when put in situations that deem them analogous to non-human animals. The plot presents “normal” human life on Earth before the invasion and the return to normality after the war is over,
which reaffirms the abnormality of the situations of animalization that take place in the “alien” ship.

Does the recognition of animalization of humans as cruel also raise awareness, even if secondarily, of the cruelty of domestication of non-human animals? Why does one need to animalize the enemy “in order to ease his conscience” (Césaire 5)? The use of non-human animal analogies in the manga such as domestication and slaughter suggest a normalized categorization of cruelty when applied to humans only, when the anthropocentric discourse fictionalizes humans in the place of the animal Other. The dehumanization of the enemy though speciest war propaganda as exemplified in the review of the literature points to an important aspect of speciesism in the context of war: the animalization of the enemy facilitated killing, as mentioned by John Dower. This emotional distancing is possible because of processes of Othering that take place not only as a differentiation within the human species – such as racism – but also by means of transference of speciesist assumptions of non-human inferiority to human lives. In Gantz the representation of the human Self in the animalized place is a fictional version of speciesist assumptions which are central to processes of dehumanization in non-fictional war.

The cultural manifestations of speciesism and Othering as exemplified in Gantz point to the relevance of a discussion on the origins of the power structures that warrant and maintain hierarchies to justify violence and exploitation of marginalized individuals. Awareness of speciesist discourses is the initial stage towards a more critical approach to power relations between humans and non-humans 9 in fiction and in human practices. Othering processes are central in the construction of hierarchies through difference,

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9 An anthropocentric categorization, for it centralizes humans and categorizes all other forms of life in relation to them. The negative prefix (non-) also indicates the exclusion from a centrality which is the human, in which what is not human is marked as difference.
allowing for exclusionary categorizations of identity. Both speciesism and Othering processes subscribe to oppressive definitions of alterity that are built upon notions of polarization of Self and Other, human and non-human. Other fictional works that deal with war and speciesism can be analysed and compared in relation to the depictions of non-human species and the power relations among them and/or between humans and non-humans. The reflection on different narratives of war that portray speciesism and violence, which includes other media and authors, allows for different perspectives on the subject.
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6. Table of Figures

Fig. 1 – Louseous Japonicas........................................................................................................12
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Fig. 2 – Made in Japan................................................................................................................13
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Fig. 3 – He is not human.............................................................................................................22
https://mangafox.me/manga/gantz/v01/c008/14.html

Fig. 4 – Some kind of livestock...................................................................................................24
https://mangafox.me/manga/gantz/v02/c018/04.html

Fig. 5 – Hipocrisy.......................................................................................................................27
https://mangafox.me/manga/gantz/v15/c177/05.html
Fig. 6 – The bottom of the food chain


Fig. 7 – Slightly pongy


Fig. 8 – Zoo


Fig. 9 – Redemption


Fig. 10 – Don’t kill us


Fig. 11 – The force of humanity