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# Hybrid: Reading Godzilla Through Posthumanism

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**Abstract:** This essay proposes to read the classic cycle of Godzilla films (roughly, 1954–1995) using a posthuman perspective that makes its emphasis on animal, vegetal and mineral life. We will use posthuman and materialist philosophy to analyze hybrid monsters as part of new interdisciplinary studies about non-human agencies and their creepy potential. As such, we want to offer the first posthumanist readings of the Godzilla franchise, in time to celebrate its 70 years of existence and, in consequence, highlight how posthumanist the series has always been.

**Keywords:** posthumanism; minerals; Godzilla's foes; humanism; atomic energy; materialism

## 1. Introduction

In 1957, the military–industrial complex[1] began to express concerns about the environmental effects of recurrent atomic detonations in desert areas. That year, the U.S. began to practice underground detonations, for which the consequences were manifested on the rocks, rather than upon life. This operation was named for a monstrous metaphor: "Caging the dragon." After the first underground detonations, the military leadership expressed its satisfaction, the monster's "foul breath" no longer polluting the air (Fehner and Gosling 2006, p. 40).

Adam Knee finds a connection between deserts and the nuclear in many B-movie science fiction/horror hybrids from the 1950s. According to the author, "the 1950s cycle of US science fiction films is known for its often-outlandish representations of all manner of nonhuman others, which provide a means, in turn, for articulating a broad range of Cold War fears over the threats posed by 'them' versus 'us'" (Knee 2016, p. 146). The consequence, following Knee, was the production of a negative discourse on vegetal life in deserts. The giant, mutated lizard Godzilla, in turn, albeit never attacking in desert locales but in tropical/urban areas, is critically addressed as the embodiment of social fears about the advances of science, nuclear experimentation and animal life (Land 2023, p. 85; Vohlidka 2018, p. 57; Parsons and Zaballa 2017, p. 96; Shapiro 2013, p. 112). Mineral life, on the other hand, is still absent in most ecocritical studies and, more striking, in horror studies.

This essay proposes to read the classic cycle of Japanese Godzilla films (between, roughly, 1954 and 1995) using a posthuman perspective. It may seem baffling reading the classic Japanese Godzilla franchise from the perspective of posthumanism, as this particular discipline looks for the decentering of the human (Ferrando 2019, p. 22). As Angel Sala argued, the Godzilla franchise, especially during the Heisei era (1984–1995), emphasized melodrama, with the series taking notice of the drama of innocent citizens trapped under the rubble and the climate of destruction that the radioactive monster created (Sala 1998, p. 31). Thus, a melodramatic saga centered on a mutated lizard seems to have little to offer in terms of the posthuman. However, not only is the titular monster a hybrid creature that mixes the animal and the inorganic (nuclear power), but many of Godzilla's powerful enemies complicate readings that neatly divide the animal, vegetal and mineral realms. For example, *Godzilla* vs. *Hedorah* (*Gojira tai Hedora*, Yoshimitsu Banno, 1971) offers as its

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antagonist an ever-evolving alien life form from the Dark Gaseous Nebula, which arrives to consume pollution and spew mists of sulfuric acid and corrosive sludge. As the scientists argue, the monster is more mineral/metal than flesh. *Kaiju* monsters show up in the franchise not just as part of a (then new) discourse on ecology and atomic power, but also to test the limits between the organic (and its agency) and the inorganic (and its own agency).

In this article, we will use posthuman and materialist philosophy to analyze hybrid monsters as part of new interdisciplinary studies about non-human agencies and their potential to subvert human supremacy. As such, we want to offer the first posthumanist readings of the Godzilla franchise, in time to celebrate its 70 years of existence and, consequently, to highlight how posthumanist the series has always been.

## 2. Humanism vs. Posthumanism

Every discussion of posthumanism must begin with reference to the way in which Western thought has constructed life through the politics of humanism and the Anthropocene, both theoretical constructions that describe reality in terms of human superiority. Humanist ontology established a radical alterity that presents humanity as superior—via "essential" traits such intelligence or the presence of a soul—to all things non-human. Of course, these purportedly essential things are also naturalized cultural constructions. In the humanist position, the human (meaning, the Western, white, heterosexual, Christian man) "naturally stands at the centre of things [. . .] is absolutely known and knowable to 'himself'; is the origin of meaning and history" (Badmington 2004, p. 1345). The politics of exclusion implicitly stipulate that all things nonhuman (objects and animals but, also, "less-than-human" beings such as African Americans or homosexuals) are objectified to serve (patriarchal bourgeois) humans. This "thingfication" and "commoditization" of some beings implies the loss of inherent rights, thus becoming "the Other," more specifically, "things, no-things, or, simply, nothing" (Stalwood 2016, p. 195).

The decentering of humans has been crucial to the posthuman turn. Posthumanism offers a faultless illustration of Michel Foucault's critique of humanisms in *The Order of Things* in which "man" is just a discursive construction, "no more than a kind of rift in the order of things" (Foucault 1974, p. xxiii) and as such, doomed to disappear. To the politics of posthumanism, humans are just another species sharing the world with animals and plants. As Robert Pepperell explains: "Posthumanism is not about the 'End of Man' but about the end of a 'man-centred' universe or, put less phallocentrically, a 'human-centred' universe" (Pepperell 1995, p. 176). In brief, posthumanism equals the human and the nonhuman—animal and vegetal life, minerals, landscapes and objects (including machines)—rather than positing a hierarchy.

In his groundbreaking essay, Cary Wolfe refers to the humanity/animality dichotomy, namely, that the concept of the human is "achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether" (Wolfe 2010, p. xv). Humanity, to work as such, must negate its own embodiment and any non-human assemblage the human body could contain. In fact, as argued by Jane Bennett, notions of material embodiment are insufficient; "we are, through and through, an array of bodies, many different kinds of them in nested sets" (Bennett 2012, p. 258). We, humans, are a complex composite of cells, atoms, minerals. That is why the author calls for an "inorganic sympathy" (ibid.).

Within the material world, animals and vegetal life, both coded as without soul or consciousness, occupy the lowest floor in a hypothetical pyramid, with (white Western) man occupying the apex. There is only one thing even lower than animal and vegetal life: minerals. Rocks, stone, and minerals in general were "condemned to silent roles in human dramas" (Cohen 2012, p. 6), their passivity favoring human mastery and exploitation. Their lack of visible movement and traces of life, their hardness and passivity render minerals the complete opposite to humanity. Unlike animal and vegetal life, there are no visible

communicating vessels to be found between man and stones. Thus, minerals are still invisible in our comprehension of the world.

Posthumanism blurs the boundaries dividing not just the human from the non-human, but life from (un)life as well. Godzilla, the mutated lizard, faced many opponents that mixed the animal, the vegetal and the mineral in monstrous assembled bodies; these *kaiju* offered strange, flexible bodies that can be, at the same time, metal and flesh, animal and mineral. Thus, the classic era of the Godzilla franchise maps a posthumanist ethos of monstrous proportions.

This essay will take as its case study the classic era but avoids a detailed analysis of the film that begun it all, Ishirô Honda's *Gojira* (1954). Honda's film has been the object of much scholarship, including works on Godzilla and ecology (Rhoads and McCorkie 2018; Murray and Heumann 2016) and animal and posthumanist studies (Nayar 2014; Danter 2019). Furthermore, Godzilla's subsequent films after the original are mostly ignored in academia, with little (if any) Kaiju scholarship regarding them. It is productive to read these films, some of them made with a child audience in mind, and find how the posthuman ethos has been integral for the history of fantastic cinema.

## 3. Posthumanist Energies and Monstrous Mixes

"The dragon was caged," as mentioned, was the metaphor used to speak about the power of the atomic bomb, and *Rodan* (*Sora no daikaijû Radon*, Ishirô Honda, 1956) uses a similar nuclear metaphor as well. In one scene, after a brutal attack against Tokyo by the titular monstrous pterosaur, the military uses the term "sonic bomb" to refer to the destruction brought by the beating of Rodan's wings. "Sonic bomb" evokes images of World War II. It is stated, in the same scene, that Rodan was awakened by the Japanese experiments with hydrogen bombs carried out in natural and volcanic areas.

Still, the reconfigurations of meaning offer readings beyond the monster-as-weapon to include the animal, the vegetal and, even, the mineral. The registers of the discourse of minerals radically reconfigures the meaning of stones through an engagement with human figuration: simple phrases such as "heart of stone" or "heart of gold" show that minerals were unable to escape the totalizing effects of humanity. *Gamera* vs. *Barugon* (*Daikaijû kettô: Gamera tai Barugon*, Shigeo Tanaka and Noriaki Yuasa, 1966), in which a giant monster that emits a freezing ray from its back attacks Japan, offers a confusion where the egg of the titular *kaiju* (Barugon) is mistaken for a giant and valuable opal. In *Ghidorah, the three-headed Monster* (*San Daikaijû Chikyû Saidai no Kessen*, Ishirô Honda, 1964), Ghidorah's eggs are mistaken for interstellar rocks.

Not all assemblages with the non-organic remain at the metaphorical level, however. Many *kaiju* upset the "conventional distinctions between matter and life, inorganic and organic, passive object and active subject" (Bennett 2004, p. 353). Myra J. Hird and Kathryn Yusoff argue that mineral evolution is inextricably linked to forms of life, as "two-thirds of all known mineral species are the consequence of the earth's transformation by living organisms" including bacteria, in what they call the "mineral-microbial chatter" (Hird and Yusoff 2019, p. 275). Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's study, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (2015), investigates our lithic relations and demonstrates that "late medieval understandings of materiality presumed continuity between rock and flesh" (Cohen 2015, p. 22). This posthuman continuity is exploited in many Godzilla films through mineral–biological systems, the most common being the mix of animal life with atomic energy.

Rodan, King Ghidorah and Godzilla's atomic breath all depict the creatures as posthuman, not because they "transcend" the human (as they are animals, albeit monstrous ones) but because of their blurring of categories, mixing animal organisms with nuclear power. Lynn Badia (2022) takes an ecological, materialist and geological turn to describe the different relationships of energy with posthumanism. Firstly, in the fossil fuel infrastructure and planetary conditions (p. 902). Fossil fuels are inextricably tied to numerous human practices that irremediably transforms the Anthropocene and, as such, both are inseparable. It is common for the films to illustrate each first appearance of Godzilla as a rebirth from

the Earth's crust. In *King Kong* vs. *Godzilla* (*Kingu Kongu tai Gojira*, Ishirô Honda, 1962), for example, Godzilla is awakened when a U.S. submarine crashes into an iceberg, thawing out the ice where Godzilla sleeps. Later, Godzilla re-emerges from the earth, shattering the crust (that it was sleeping behind) in pieces, as if both the bombs and the earth itself, as a cradle, had served as a breeding ground. The latter, however, is more akin to a primordial organic–mineral reaction. Godzilla also resurfaces from the earth in *Ebirah, Horror of the Deep* (*Gojira, Ebira, Mosura: Nankai no daikettô*, Jun Fukuda, 1966) and *Godzilla raids Again* (*Gojira no gyakushû*, Motoyoshi Oda, 1955).

Second, "the lines of critical posthumanism most influential in energy humanities are those that contend with the ecologically situated subject, the actancy of matter and objects, the embodied nature of matter and energy, and the constitutional nature of geologic materials for human life" (Badia 2022, p. 903). Monsters with atomic breath such as Godzilla, King Ghidorah or Rodan complicate the relations between the organic and the non-organic, with atomic energy being a key part of their respiratory systems.

Atomic energy not only awakens the monsters but is also an integral part of their complicated organisms. In *King Kong* vs. *Godzilla*, Godzilla not only exhales atomic breath, but the scaly ridges that protrude from his back glow every time he expels it, as if he had an energy reserve lodged in its body, showing a capacity to project light that in fact very few animals can achieve. This recurs across the series, including later entries, such as *Shin Godzilla* (Hideaki Anno and Shinji Higuchi, 2016) and *Godzilla Minus One* (Takashi Yamazaki, 2023). In *The Return of Godzilla* (Gojira, Koji Hashimoto, 1984) Professor Hayashida (Yosuke Natsuki) describes Godzilla as "a living, invincible nuclear weapon". This vision is reinforced when the monster is never depicted (in any film in the whole franchise) ingesting any natural food.

Badia argues that energy humanities emerged as a node in historical crises and amidst discourses of transition. *Kaiju* monsters' energy/atomic breath codify the fear against the unbound power of atomic bombs and how the latter were becoming increasingly obsolete as experimentations created small-sized but more powerful weapons such as the hydrogen bomb. Pieter Vermeulen argues:

> The detonation of the first atomic bomb also coincides with the so-called Great Acceleration—an exponential boost in earth system trends (think of increases in ocean acidification, tropical forest loss, marine fish capture, and atmospheric carbon dioxide levels) as well as in socioeconomic trends [. . .] that dwarfs the increase since the eighteenth century. These interlocking developments show the escalating impact of economic globalization and the expansion of consumer capitalism. The *scale* of these changes provides overwhelming evidence for the complex causal interactions between socioeconomic and earth system changes, even if that influence is not linear: because of the *very size* of human impact, the earth system has now passed irreversible tipping points beyond which processes of thawing, heating, and devastation become self-reinforcing. (Vermeulen 2020, p. 64, my emphasis)

*Kaiju* illustrate such escalation on power, destruction and obsolescence. The *kaiju* are hyperobjects (Morton 2013), beings whose scale is so immense that humanity is diminished before proportions that transcend the human. Further, energy humanities take a posthumanist ethos when declaring that the human is "profoundly intra-active and dynamic" (Badia 2022, p. 906), with the human, animal and vegetal using energy as part of their lives, while power itself presents characteristics close to life. Scholars such as Barad argue, following a materialistic turn, that materiality is always more than matter; it is energy that enlivens things as well. There is a "refraction" between some forms of materialism (for example, animal life, organic and alive as it is) and others, such as energy, the latter un-living yet full of life (Barad 2007, p. 29). Godzilla and Rodan contain, as part of their organisms, atomic energy, as if they were atomic bombs, thus blurring the differences, through refraction, of what organic life is.

In *Godzilla* Vs. *Destoroyah* (*Gojira tai Destoroyah*, Takao Okawara, 1995), Godzilla not only faces Destoroyah but also the imminent danger of his heart having absorbed too much atomic radiation after the destruction of Baas Island by a nuclear fission explosion, transforming the monster into a weapon of global proportions. Ten years before the film, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster was still latent, the trauma embodied in Tokyo's destructive monster. While Godzilla does reach meltdown towards the end of the film, slowly and painfully melting to its death, it does not cause the massive destruction scientists predicted. The cooling systems that the Japan Self Defense Force (JSDF) used to attack Destoroyah also control Godzilla's temperature, with the monster's son absorbing the residual energy that would have left Tokyo uninhabitable. Japan, consciously or not, gives a lesson on temperature control in a nuclear reactor, foreshadowing the Fukushima disaster.

Originating from a colony of Precambrian anaerobic crustacean organisms, Destoroyah was mutated by the Oxygen Destroyer used to kill the original Godzilla in 1954. Destoroyah grows rapidly and takes on various forms throughout the film, including its microscopic form, 3 mm form, 2 m sized insect form, 18 m crab form, a larger crab-like form, and a 120 m bipedal as its final form. Destoroyah's animal status is complicated by its assemblage with the Oxygen Destroyer, a weapon made by humans and composed of a metal capsule with a glass central chamber main weapon. Destoroyah's main weapons are inextricably linked to this non-organic invention. The *kaiju* has an oxygen-destructive beam it fires from its mouth; it can vaporize organic matter, including most metals. Destoroyah also possesses a pair of secondary jaws that inject micro-oxygen directly into an opponent's bloodstream, draining the victim's energy. In its final form, the horn protruding from Destoroyah's forehead had the ability to generate an energetic wisp powerful enough to cut through Godzilla's flesh. The tail also had the ability to drain energy from its foes and deliver an energy discharge. Destoroyah is, basically, the living incarnation of the unloving Oxygen Destroyer, a human machine made flesh/animal to destroy the human.

## 4. Mutated Stones, (In)Organic Lives

Destoroyah, Rodan and Godzilla dissolve "the borders that separate the organic from the inorganic, since, being a hybrid combination of both, it renders meaningless the categories that distinguish these elements as separate" (Goldwyn 2018, p. 195). Posthuman ecocriticism expands the material ecocritical vision of stone matter to critically discern the cultural implications of the human. Not only do human and (some) animal bodies share many traits, such as mobility, energy, growth, sexual reproduction, flesh, blood, skeleton, etc., but both human and animal bodies contain minerals, non-living stones, as part of a curious entanglement via "relational materiality" (Oppermann 2014, p. 21). As the posthuman subject is an amalgam of heterogeneous components, including calcium, salt, etc., John Dupré argues for a redefinition of living organisms as "cooperating assemblies" (Dupré 2012, p. 120) where life only exists as the effect of symbiotic systems of linkage. Jane Bennett argues that discourses of free will marginalize the materiality of things, as if humans and/or animals were "self-movers", thus ignoring the "*particularly rich and complex* collection of materiality" (Bennett 2004, p. 359, emphasis in the original), presenting nonhumanity and the nonorganic as active actants. Beings move thanks to the processes of mineralization in the production of bones (Bennett 2004, p. 360). Recognizing the presence of the nonhuman within the human is impossible for humanist discourses because, as mentioned in our introduction, the human is constructed via exclusion: the human is what the human is not.

*Kaiju*, due to their monstrosity, can manifest their defractions in explicit ways, as negation is not necessary: they are already Others and any mixing only furthers their classification as different. *Godzilla* vs. *SpaceGodzilla* (*Gojira* vs. *Supesugojira*, Kenshô Yamashita, Takao Okawara and Kazuki Ômori, 1994) offers a main menace that is both a fleshy monster and a mineral creature at the same time. Spawned by some of Godzilla's cells which were cast into outer space, SpaceGodzilla made his way to Earth with the goal of conquering the planet and eliminating the original King of the Monsters. SpaceGodzilla

is a malevolent fusion of Godzilla's DNA and an array of extra-terrestrial minerals and energies. SpaceGodzilla looks similar to Godzilla in many ways, but his skin is blueish. He is taller than Godzilla and has two massive white crystals that erupt from his shoulders, with its tail ending with several crystal-like spikes. The dorsal fins on his back are made of similar crystals white in color. SpaceGodzilla traps Godzilla's son in a crystalline prison, before traveling to Fukuoka and forming a crystal fortress that drains the city of power, channeling it through the Fukuoka Tower and transferring it to the space monster. SpaceGodzilla is a kind of devourer of worlds as it needs the energy of the Earth's core to maintain its power. It is clear that his particular power is to control all rocky material and, in turn, the crystalline elements increase the monster's power, since by deploying the body crystals it can perform movements such as flying. There is a symbiotic connection between the sidereal crystals and the animal creature.

Even if SpaceGodzilla is the clearest example, because its appearance emphasizes the union of flesh and mineral, this assemblage is common in the franchise through the classic era. Many of Godzilla's foes are uncanny blends of flesh (the organic) and the inorganic, the latter working, however, as agential actant. In *Godzilla* vs. *Megalon* (*Gojira tai Megaro*, Jun Fukuda, 1973), the *kaiju* Megalon is a gigantic insectoid being, his body and wings evoking that of cicadas and beetles. This kaiju is a guardian worshipped by the vast subterranean nation of Seatopia, and it is brought to help in the war against the surface, Earth. Megalon has two drill-like front appendages, which it uses both for burrowing into earth and as weapons. Insect-like Megalon, curiously, mixes flesh with the inorganic, as the monster's "arms" are clearly metallic. During the climactic battle between Godzilla, Anguirus, Jet Jaguar (a heroic robot created by humans, but stolen by the Seatopians and used to guide Megalon to the surface world) and Megalon, the latter buries itself into earth. Amidst the battle, Megalon emerges from the earth, its arms drilling the crust. Its arms rotate like what they are: drills. Why an insectoid monster has mechanical arms is never explained. Lastly, one of Megalon's weapons are the volcanic rocks it can throw through its mouth. When the rocks touch a surface, they explode and create fire. Megalon's organism produces fire rocks, thus mixing the animal and the mineral in one body. Though a robot rather than a posthuman creature, Jet Jaguar also presents characteristics that blur the boundary between human and non-living objects: during the story, Jet Jaguar becomes self-aware of his (its?) own existence and reprograms itself (himself?) to aid Godzilla in the battle against Megalon, the creature of flesh and metal.

Another *kaiju* suturing together metal and flesh is Gigan. In *Godzilla* vs. *Gigan* (*Chikyû kôgeki meirei Gojira tai Gaigan*, Jun Fukuda, 1972), aliens attempt to conquer the Earth using a children's theme park as their base. Gigan is the interstellar weapon of the Nebula aliens, and it is used in the invaders' attempted conquest of Earth. Gigan is a dinosaur with a shape inspired by birds, with a head that resembles an eagle. Bird-like Gigan also has scythe-like appendages which look metal-like. The creature sports a visor eye which projects a laser beam and, more striking, its main weapon is a rotating chest saw the creature uses to spill Godzilla's blood. As with Megalon, there is no explanation as to why the creature's body contains metallic parts. This lack of explanation creates ambiguity at the real nature of these *kaiju*; as cyborgs, they may be called "transhuman." As noted by Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, there is still a confusion about the terms "transhuman" and "posthuman:" while posthumanism was defined above in this essay, transhumanism is "a current movement and worldview is indeed an expression of the innate human quest for transcendence—but, crucially, through the means of human agency in the form of technological innovation" (Thweatt-Bates 2012, p. 44). Yet, (a) there is no indication in the films about any enhancement practiced on the monsters, the metal in their bodies is just a continuation of their flesh; (b) the kaiju are not "human" to begin with, so can hardly represent a progressive point of view regarding humanity. Gigan is another posthuman composite kaiju that discards any border separating flesh from metal, organic from inorganic. It seems that alien beings can more easily escape the traps of humanism and present amazing assemblages that continually reveal the human fiction of the closed body.

Are *Dogora* (*Uchû daikaijû Dogora*, Ishirô Honda, 1964) and Biollante from *Godzilla* vs. *Biollante* (*Gojira* vs. *Biorante*, Kazuki Ômori, 1989), however, the most posthuman monsters of all? Dogora is a single-celled organism floating in space that is affected by Japan's radiation, especially that produced by the metallic elements strontium and cobalt, and grows to become a massive, jellyfish-like monster who sucks carbon (especially from diamonds) from the surface of our world, as the monster is mostly mineral in nature. Dogora is, basically, Jane Bennet's arguments about "vibrant matter" (matter that has organic, living characteristics as agency) made nightmare. However, even as basically a monstrous colossal floating interstellar rock, Dogora presents agency, thus depicting, to new extremes, what Bennett calls "the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite-human things" (Bennett 2010, p. ix). To eat minerals, Dogora destroys Tokyo, including its factories, buildings, banks and human life. The mineral monster is uninterested in human supremacy, its appetite unquenchable. As Dr. Munakata (Nobuo Nakamura) mentions, the creature does not distinguish between carbon-in-things from carbon-in-humans, the monster becoming a posthuman nightmare that decenters the human from its position of privilege. In the film's climax, monstrous Dogora is defeated thanks to the help of an animal. Wasp toxins can crystallize the monster's cells, thus furthering the posthuman ethos of *Dogora*.

Biollante is, in turn, a hybridization of monster cells with rose cells. Biollante is born as a product of genetic engineering. Botanist and geneticist Dr. Shiragami (Kôji Takahashi), planning to perpetuate the memory of his daughter Erika after her death in a terrorist attack, fuses her human cells with a rose bush. Soon after, Shiragami moves to a smaller lab near Lake Ashino, where he kept the roses containing his daughter's cells in a terrarium outside the lab. He later contacts telepath Miki Saegusa (Megumi Odaka) to try to communicate telepathically with the roses, hoping that some faint trace of Erika's consciousness still existed within the plants. In time, an earthquake strikes the area, destroying the terrarium and most of the roses. Realizing that the last remnant of her daughter would soon die, Shiragami takes desperate measures. On a stormy night, Shiragami successfully merges Godzilla's cells with those of a single surviving rose, hoping that the powerful reproductive ability of the mutant saurian would make the rose immortal. The rose survives, its cell division rapidly accelerated, causing it to begin to grow substantially in size.

The hybrid rose, transformed into a sentient and mobile creature by Godzilla's cells, emerges from the laboratory and takes root in Lake Ashino, which attracts Godzilla's attention. Shiragami suggests that it was possible that Godzilla travelled all the way to see Biollante because the *kaiju* felt they were made of the same cells. As Shiragami states, they were more than just brother and sister, but the same creature, Godzilla being animal and Biollante plant. In brief, Biollante blends together the human with the animal and with vegetal life, rendering them both and neither. Biollante was the first *kaiju* opponent of Godzilla in the Heisei era, as well as the first creature originating from a vegetable rather than from an animal.

Biollante appears through archival footage in *Godzilla* vs. *SpaceGodzilla* as it is discussed as a possible catalyst for the creation of SpaceGodzilla. It is theorized that when Biollante ascended into space in the form of energy spores after his last battle with Godzilla, some of the latter's cells that the spores carried entered a black hole, were exposed to supernova energy and fused with crystalline organisms, quickly evolving into SpaceGodzilla. As such, SpaceGodzilla is an amazing assemblage of animal, plant and minerals, the ultimate posthuman *kaiju*.

## 5. Conclusions

The posthuman assemblage does not just refer to the *kaiju*, but other alien characters as well. The Nebulan aliens invading Earth in *Godzilla* vs. *Gigan* are human-size cockroaches who disguise themselves as humans to pass unnoticed. The Seatopians from *Godzilla* vs. *Megalon* were the first civilization to inhabit the Earth, thus predating homo sapiens by many centuries. More striking are the alien beings invading Earth in *Destroy All Monsters*

(*Kaijû sôshingeki*, Ishirô Honda, 1968). The Kilaaks hail from Planet Kilaak, and, after being defeated with cold (their weakness), they resort to their true form as metallic worms. *Invasion of Astro-Monster* (*Kaijû daisensô*, Ishirô Honda, 1965) features the Xiliens, evil aliens who control the machinery of their spacecraft through mental waves; according to their own claims, they can also control animals and plants by means of their will.

However, are *kaiju* the creatures that best represent the posthuman ethos, not from a "human" point of view, but with their blurring of categories? *Invasion of Astro-Monster* suggests the notion that both Godzilla and the other *kaiju* have characteristics similar to those of extremophile beings. The latter are organisms that can "live under harsh environmental conditions and carry out biochemical processes" (Durvasula and Subba Rao 2018, p. 5). According to a bio-chemical approach, extremophiles can be analyzed from a handful of specific categories, including pressure, temperature and radiation, which emerge as variable conditions in the film. They can outlive the human

Posthumanism, seen from the *kaiju* perspective, plays with a profuse negative component. It must be considered that these years are still witnessing a reflection on the deadly impact of the atomic bomb and its effect on Japan, including radiation and thermal rays, the latter literally burning human shadows into walls. Questioning life and (in)organic in such a context was neither whimsical nor superficial: posthumanist reflection was integrated into the daily life of postwar Japan amidst reflection on national trauma and the role of science. The atomic bomb blurred the boundaries of the human Self and the definitions of autonomous organism. Humanity not only loses the anthropocentric axis but may also be heading towards extinction as a species. Only a social reordering in harmony with the new rules of planetary nature, while considering that the new dominant species has no human characteristics, can maintain humanity as an integral part of this world under monstrous domination.

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## Note

[1] The "military–industrial complex" was coined as a warning by the US President Dwight Eisenhower in 1961 to frame (in negative terms) the roles of the different relationships between the industrial and the military in America through the 1950s.

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