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Creatures on Borderlands: Gendered Cyborgs and Human Boundaries in Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell Movies

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Introduction

They fascinate us because they are not like us and yet just like us.

- Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*.

The idea of artificial life created from inanimate materials has always fascinated human beings. Since Science Fiction emerged as a genre, it extended to explore fears and desires that run deep within our cultures. Sophisticated dimensions were further added to the genre with the invention of cybernetics in the 1960s and the subsequent emergence of cyberpunk in the 80s, but it could be argued that the most unique innovation in science fiction was the appearance of the cyborg. The issue has opened numerous debates in philosophy, art, ethics, etc. The figure of the cyborg is special not only because of the fact that it is partly organic and partly cybernetic, but because it is an "other" that challenges the "denotative stability of human identity" (Balsamo, 32).

This emergent use of new information technologies has raised new theories on the relations between technology and society as embedded in cyborgs. One of those theories has been labeled "cyberfeminism", and it refers to a range of theories, debates, and discourses all attempting to explore the relationship between gender and technological culture. One of the tendencies in cyberfeminism is to view cyberspace as a utopian site, free from social constructs such as gender and sex differences, because it is a site that offers a body-free universe. The perfect embodiment of this narrative is Donna Haraway's cyborg. Donna Haraway, the predecessor of cyberfeminism, with her 1985 essay "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century" theorized the liberating potential inherent in women's interactions with information technology. She used the "cyborg as an imagery" to inspire a new cognitive mode of identity and body, which had

been allegedly dominated by the three ideological categories of 'white,' 'male,' and 'West'"(Sato, 336). The theory did not only dismantle the binary opposition of gender, but of many others; as she points out:"The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust" (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"). Arguably, Haraway's manifesto has challenged the concept of the human subject, as many taken for granted binary oppositions with which intellectuals used to make sense of their social world were now contested.

Nevertheless, not all cultural analysts agree with Haraway. Anne Balsamo, for instance, in her book *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, concludes that technologies "serve to reinforce traditional gendered patterns of power and authority" (Balsamo, 10). By her account, the posthuman body will serve as yet "another site for the technological and no less conventional inscription of the gendered, race- marked body" (Balsamo, 131), because "its symbolic form is always constructed in interaction with real material bodies" (Balsamo, 160).

My paper will offer an examination of Mamoru Oshii's animated cyberpunk films *Ghost in the Shell*, and *Ghost in the shell 2: Innocence*, which are fascinating examples of science fiction narratives that seemingly participate in the dismantling of binary oppositions and conflicts of the self. In analyzing these movies, I will attempt to answer the question how does Mamoru Oshii use representations of the gendered cyborg in his movies to explore the boundaries between human and machine, and reflect social processes in Japan?

In these films, it seems as though whenever the body is reconstructed, and some stable boundaries are disrupted by technology, other boundaries are reinforced; gender remains an unchallenged categorization. Although one might expect the opposite, cyborgs in the films seem to reinforce traditional gendered patterns of power and authority.

There are many interfused contexts in Oshii's films. However, the films demand to create their

own reality therein, so that it no longer makes sense to ask whose perspective is represented in them; rather one must consider how this internal reality articulates relationships among technologies, bodies, and narratives.

Nevertheless, these films ripen into a more intriguing site of exploration because they come from a Japanese context and not a westerner one. We may therefore ask, why does Japan seem so focused on producing anthropomorphic machines, and stories about them? In "The Promises of Monsters" Haraway writes: "Science fiction is generally concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries of problematic selves and unexpected others" (320). If we consider this quote we can conclude that the answer to my former question lies in cultural context of identity politics in Japan. The cyborgs (called *Ningyou*¹ in the films) are different from western representations of cyborgs because, just like the cyborg, Japan is a hybrid. Japan represents a unique nation which is simultaneously exotic and foreign to western interpretive structures, and familiar enough for western eyes to project their 'self' onto. The fact that Japan is at the lead of technological progress in the world, makes their representations even more interesting because cyborgs for them are almost already a reality.

¹The word *Ningyou*- 人形 means "doll" or "dolls" but could be literally translated to "human shaped".

Representations of the Gendered Cyborg

"I feel confined only free to expand myself within boundaries."

– Kusanagi, *Ghost in the Shell*.

Almost three decades ago, Donna Haraway first published "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist- Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," which initiated a discourse that still persists about the potential inherent in women's interactions with information technology. Haraway illustrated how the female body was historically constructed as a hybrid, thus making it compatible with notions of cyborg identity. She depicted how the cyborg may be re-coded to dismantle binaries and boundaries that have characterized the history of western culture. However, many cultural analysts preferred to emphasize the other half of Haraway's argument; that the cyborg equally figures the potential for increased social domination. The cyborg may be a figure that yields hope, because "by disrupting the stable meaning of human- machine dualism, other reliable oppositions are also rendered unstable" (Balsamo, 33). Nevertheless, our interaction with the products of information technology often reifies traditional dichotomies and thus increases the capability of structures of domination.

What one encounters in the films *Ghost in the Shell*(1995) and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004) is a case where information technology presents itself as potentially liberating form of resistance, while subtly rearticulating the power relations of a dominant social order. The female body in the film (Major Motoko Kusanagi) participates in events that are traditionally understood to be the domain of male bodies. Although her body seems to transgress gender boundaries, it is not reconstructed according to an opposite gender identity. Instead, the films reinforce the system it seems to deny at first. It does so by juxtaposing *male human* with female cyborg or female child, but never with *female human*.

The revolutionary promises that the films fail to deliver, are made through the character of

Major Kusanagi. Kusanagi, often referred to as "Major" in the films, is the narrative's central protagonist in the first film and one of the main characters in the second film, although in the second film her body is not actually present. She is a female cyborg manufactured by Megatech; a corporation that makes high tech cyborg 'shells'. Her 'ghost', a composite of organic brain cells, computer brain and a titanium skull, allows her to have access to the minds of other cyborgs. She is one of the best agents in Section Nine. At first impression, her positioning through the films seems to invert the gender roles conventionally given to fictional characters.

But even before one delves into the contradictions in her character, the representations of women in both films reflect the female traditional roles if not stereotypical roles. The only women figures that appear in the first movie (other than Kusanagi) are a few vague female characters at the market that are in the background of a chase scene, five identical office lady-cyborgs that work for the chief of Public Security Section Nine, and one hacked cyborg that has a female body. In the second movie *Innocence*, the female figures are gynoids (sex dolls), and young girls.

One need not forget that gender is a boundary concept. It is related at the same time to "physiological sexual characteristics of the body and to the cultural context within which that body makes sense" (Balsamo, 9). All the female roles depicted above are part of the cultural context that is given to women's bodies. The penetrated "*hacked*" woman and the woman as a sex doll are both universal stereotypical representations of females in a patriarchic society. On the other hand the Office Lady and the woman as the housewife who buys goods for the family are specifically Japanese gender stereotypes.

Turning back to Kusanagi, it becomes even clearer that no feminist revolution takes place in these films. In the first film all kinds of comments are made to define Kusanagi as a female. For example at one instance when Kusanagi and Batou are talking via their computer brains,

Batou comments: "there is a lot of static in your brain" and Kusanagi answers: "It's that time of the month²" implying menstruation. This reference is important because Kusanagi's body is mechanical and does not bleed. The effect of this implication is that it fixes Kusanagi's body as a female one, even though she is virtually all machine, the only part of her that could be traced back to a female body is her brain stem.

Likewise, Kusanagi is visually a female. She appears about a dozen times naked in the first film. This is because her cyborg shell comes with a thermo-optic camouflage, which is built right into her skin and works by bending light rays around her making her invisible. Thus whenever she enters combat, she removes her cloths to become invisible. But the audience sees her completely naked visually female body numerous times throughout the film and this effectively establishes her body as a female one. Interestingly, all other characters that use camouflage use it in the form of special clothing, none of these characters ever appear naked, and all of these characters are males. Anne Balsamo explains in her book how the media performs a process of objectification on the image of athletic women. In most cases the media finds a way to mention the female's body, "not only in reference to its athletic capacity, but more obviously as it served as a mannequin for her flamboyant track outfits" (Balsamo, 45). Thus putting her in the common historical custom of connecting 'female' to body and emotions, and 'male' to mind and reason. *Ghost in the Shell's* almost obsessive objectification of Kusanagi's body seems to serve the same purpose.

Other markers of femaleness are also present in the film. Kusanagi is associated throughout the movie with water and fluidity. Her preferred sport is diving and she is often seen in combat with water surrounding her. Solidness and fluidity are symbolic of the binary opposition of male and female.

² This dialogue is only in the Japanese original version of *Ghost in the Shell*. The English dubbing changes Kusanagi's statement to: "Must be a loose wire".



Figure 1. An image of Kusanagi in combat. Water is dripping from and around her. Ghost in the Shell (1995)

The first movie also invokes the familiar paradigm of "woman as the maternal body". The final scene of merging between Kusanagi and the Puppet Master replicates the rhetoric of conventional heterosexual reproduction. The Puppet Master describes Kusanagi as the "bearer" of his offspring, while in fact she is not, because they do not produce a new person after the merging, they become one. The Puppet Master explains that he chose Kusanagi because only through merging with an organic life form could he become a living entity. Obviously the whole process is further intensified when the entity's replacement shell is that of a child³.

But even more interestingly, the statements in this scene create a connection between 'organic' and 'female'. If the Puppet Master only needed an organic life form to merge with, Kusanagi should not have been his only choice; other male cyborgs have organic parts too. But he further adds to his explanation and says that in Kusanagi he sees himself. If we consider this statement on a literal level, we can see that the Puppet Master, who is an entity inside an apparently female body (which resembles Kusanagi to a great extent), needs to merge with Kusanagi because she is the only one that resembles him, hence the only female body in the film. Therefore a tie connecting organic to female is created.

³ To read more in details about the merging scene consider- Silvio, Carl. "Refiguring the Radical Cyborg in Mamoru Oshii's 'Ghost in the Shell'" *Science Fiction Studies* 26.1 (1999): 54-72.

While it could be argued that Kusanagi has no anatomical gender because she is almost all mechanical, the gynoids of *Innocence* are different. During the investigation, the forensic scientist, aptly named Haraway, tells Batou and Togusa that these gynoids have 'extra' organs. The gynoids are actually 'sexaroids': dolls of Maid type that feature functional genitalia, they are also powered by the ghosts of little girls. The film resolves this by saying that these ghosts will make the gynoids more human like, and that it is easier to "dub" the brains of little girls into ghosts, but I suggest that the choice of little girls is done precisely as not to put human male and typical human female side by side, but to oppose male with a she- cyborg.

Even the notion of female beauty still exists in the films. Haraway the cyborg coroner in *Innocence* says that the gynoids were designed as an idealized version of human females. Hence the ideal woman is a young, thin, white, blue eyed, and passive to a degree of having no voice and thus staying submissive to her male owner. In the case where one of the gynoids stops obeying her owner and develops a voice, it ends up destructing itself. If we were to interpret this on a textual level, we could say that the gynoids 'commit suicide' because activeness and beauty cannot be confined in the same body.

To sum it all up, Gender bias still exists in this cyberpunk representation. Culturally dominant gendered stereotypes continue to structure the interactions in the films. The repetition of gendered patterns of interaction tends to work in these movies to the disadvantage of women due to the fact that it reinforces stereotypical notions about the body, gender, and beauty rather than free the subject from the restrictions of 'flesh' judgments.

Constructing the Human-Machine Hybrid

"If the dolls also had voices, they would have screamed, 'I didn't want to become human.'"
– Kusanagi, *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*

The subject of boundaries between human and machine cannot be justly opened without considering the context of Japan's fascination with humanoid robots. This fascination seems to go back in time as early as Edo Period, when Chahakobi Ningyo, or tea-serving dolls were made by Karakuri master craftsmen to be a luxurious home entertainment for feudal lords (Hornyak, 25). The role of these mechanic dolls, as Timothy N. Hornyak puts it, "was not to express their own independent identities but that of human beings" (23). Japanese people have a different notion of robots than the notion that was historically constructed in the west. A western tradition going back to Marry Shelley's *Frankenstein*, explores the notion of robots (especially as cyborgs) as the monstrous creation of technology; an attempt to scientifically dethrone God. Japanese people on the other hand, tend to have an affinity toward robots and view them as heroes.

In the first movie, *Ghost in the shell*, Oshii tries to show how problematic is the issue of these boundaries. He does so again through the character of Kusanagi, who is desperately trying to grasp her identity. She presents the idea through concerns about what makes her who she is:

There are countless ingredients that make up the human body and mind, like all components that make up me as an individual with my own personality. Sure I have a face and voice to distinguish myself from others, but my thoughts and memories are unique only to me... each of those things are just a small part of it...all of that blends to create a mixture that forms me and gives rise to my conscience (Kusanagi, *Ghost in the Shell*)

What evokes these thoughts in her is watching the confusion on a man's face when he is informed that his memories were all a simulated experience; none of them were real, they were all part of his ghost hacking. After Kusanagi thinks about it, she seems to equate being

human with being an individual that has a real memory that is not changed by outer influence. Thus someone with an implanted memory cannot be a human. But soon, just as though the film was an essay, the Puppet Master presents her with the counter argument.

The Puppet Master explains that it can be argued that genes which are the memory system of life are nothing more than a program designed to preserve itself. Memory cannot be defined in a computerized world. In the world of the film computers can create a new system of memories that is parallel to humans', and thus humanity has lost what defines it (Puppet Master, *Ghost in the Shell*). He claims that in this posthuman world, 'human' ceases to have any meaning that cannot be challenged. Because "all things change in a dynamic environment"(*GITS*), the closest thing to humans in a posthuman world is what he calls an "intelligent life form". In order for something to become an intelligent life form it must be a sentient that is able to recognize its own existence, it also must be able to reproduce and die, (to do that it needs an organic part in him). And as the puppet master explains to Kusanagi that entity is necessarily always changing.

The second movie, *Innocence*, is very much an exploration of the ramifications of ideas presented in the first movie. The first movie dealt intensely with Kusanagi's body because it is the site of the conflict, however, after the argument of the Puppet Master is accepted by Kusanagi her body is ripped apart, symbolizing its in-essentialism in the whole question. Accordingly the second movie carries this idea on. Kusanagi's body is not even physically there. And instead of the human- machine dichotomy, in *Innocence* "There are no human beings⁴" anymore, even though Togusa, who is almost all organic is still there. A wide range of post human entities ranging from little wooden dolls to huge mechanic figures are in the film, along with organic entities that are not human, such as animals (dogs) and children, who as Haraway says, are "excluded from the customary standards of human beings" (*GITS*).

⁴Mamoru Oshii, cited in Brown, Steven T. "Machinic Desires: Hans Bellmer's Dolls and the Technological Uncanny in *Ghost in the Shell 2:Innocence*". Lunning, Frenchy. Ed. University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 222

The films (especially the second one) depend on words as much as on images⁵, it is as though Oshii is writing an essay. He incorporates references to people whose works are of relevance to his, and alludes to texts from the Bible, Dante, Descartes, and Milton to Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and Raymond Roussel. One of the most interesting ways he plays with words and images is by stopping the movement in a frame, and only allowing the sounds or words to change. Thus creating an effect where the viewer is in a way reading the words in off the picture, almost like reading a manga. For example, in *Innocence*, when Togusa and Batou go ask Haraway questions, Haraway says: "humans are different than robots" and the frame stops, showing Togusa and behind him all the unfinished shells of the gynoids, the viewer's attention is drawn to the fact that they are actually not that different. The picture contrasts Togusa's black suit with the completely white gynoids, while Haraway says: "it is no different than saying white is not black". The only thing that moves in the frame is Togusa's breath (because the room is very cold), to sort of imply that the only difference between those two is the life inside Togusa's body.

This happens again in the movie in response to what is said in this scene. Haraway suggests that the gynoids do not only reflect the ideals of the culture that designed them, but that the same culture looks to them for possible model of the self (they are mirrors of our subjectivity), in other words humans also model themselves after the ideas embodied by artificial dolls. Haraway then claims that parenting is the "simplest, easiest way of achieving the ancient dream of creating an artificial life" and she explains it by considering the example of children playing with dolls: "Little girls use dolls to play house and pretend that the dolls are their babies, the dolls are not real babies, the girls are not practicing child rearing at all. It might just be that playing with the doll happens to be similar to raising children." In response shocked Togusa exclaims in protest: "children aren't dolls". But this idea is echoed one more

⁵ In the DVD version of *Innocence* there is a special extra part called "The Making of the Cyborg" that shows interviews with the staff and the cast. Oshii declares in one of his interviews: "To put it simply, half the film is made by sounds"

time at the last scene of the movie when Togusa returns home and gives his daughter a present, we see Togusa hugging his daughter and his daughter hugging the new doll that he has just given her, the camera cuts to a close up of the doll's face, followed by a close up shot of Batou hugging his dog. All in the same posture to sort of make us wonder are they really that different? What this seems to imply about humans is that they are a construction that always needs an 'other' to define the 'self' and that is why they always want to create reflections of themselves.



Figure 2. Togusa hugging his daughter, while she is hugging the doll.

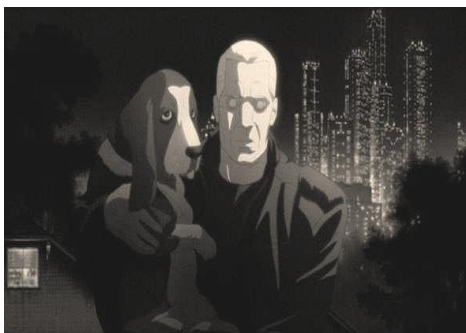


Figure 3. Batou hugging his basset hound.

It is impossible to deal with the notion of humanity in the films without dealing with the question of love. Love as an abstract notion that is connected to an affect is special only to humans⁶. The movies finally propose an idea that maybe love is what defines humanity in a

⁶Animals do not love they can only be affectionate toward something or someone.

post human world. Maybe love is the whole reason humans even create machines. The old theory of the family of species said that humans have no brother species; they have no family. Even the new theories say that Homo-sapiens are the only branch of the human family tree that survived. Perhaps the reason we create an 'other' that is a reflection of our selves is because we lack that family. The first movie shows at the last scene the tank shooting at Kusanagi which ends up firing upon an old model of species' family tree engraved into a wall. The top of the tree has the word *Hominis* engraved on it (which means mankind), but in one of the frames the camera shows it from afar, and it seems like the root of that tree is the mechanic tank. Which puts humans and machines in the same “queer family of companion species” (“The Companion Species Manifesto”, 11). We humans need that family, and that is why we self-replicate, and create humanoid machines.



Figure 4. Human family tree. Its top branch says “Mankind”, and the roots are the manmade tank.

The second film presents love in an entirely different way. The innocent love of Batou for Kusanagi is passed to the audience through the care and affection he displays for his pet basset hound. The film creates a clear connection between the dog and Kusanagi, emphasizing again the relation between organic and female. The dog is named “Gabriel” and Batou often refers to Kusanagi as his "guardian angel", Gabriel is a guardian angel. Almost every time Kusanagi is mentioned in the movie, the dog is somehow shown in the background.

By interacting with the dog we can also see Batou changing, sort of becoming more human. Historically the dog is an animal that has been changed through interaction with humans. If both the human and animal become something else by interacting with one another, maybe humans can also become something new by interacting with the new species of cyborgs. As a result of those relations of companionship in the movie, it becomes impossible to point to where the boundary between the human and the living cyborg lies.

The Films as a Mirror of Japanism

In all of my movies, including *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence*, I have always represented the relationship between human beings, inanimate things and divine with absolute Japanese sensitiveness. I hardly believe that this aspect could be understood in Europe or America... only the entertaining part is appreciated.

- Mamoru Oshii⁷

Reading this quote, one must ponder on two things. First, both movies were a success in the west. Second, the films are packed with literary, philosophical, and religious references to works from the west and they put themselves in a discourse with them. With these facts in mind, in this chapter I will try to explore the "Japanese sensitiveness" of the films, how do the films reflect Japanese society and what is so sensitive about it?

Cyberpunk literature was introduced to Japan by the west⁸. However, in Japan it developed its own cutting edge. Japanese science fiction as a genre is a very interesting place of exploration, because Japan itself has struggled with duality of identity ever since it started modernizing following western models. Since science fiction often deals with innovative technological changes, and the Japanese are among the first who are affected by these changes (since in many cases they are the ones that cause them in the first place), Japanese science fiction, presents its audience with a whole new experience.

Subjectivity in these movies is very important. The dichotomy of self and other seems to serve as the rhetoric of Japanese uniqueness in the modern formation of subjectivity. Ever since foreigners first stepped on this land, they were amazed by how different yet at the same time similar it was. When Europeans arrived to Japan they were the ones often called

⁷Interview by Luca Raffaelli. Part of this interview was originally published on the Italian newspaper La Repubblica on August 27, 2008.

⁸Works from the west were translated to Japanese in the Meiji era (Matthew, 7-12).

barbarians⁹, at the time Japan exceeded western nations on many levels¹⁰, some Europeans even though Japan was more civilized than European nations¹¹. Yet Japan modernized because of the west, and this created a conflict in its identity. One of the few things that Japan still excels many western countries in today is technological development.

It has been argued by anime critic Fred Patten that for example many Mecha anime plots were science fiction metaphors for refigting WWII to "defend Japan (and Japanese culture traditions) against the invading armies of western social influence"(qtd. In Hornyak,61).

Perhaps we can look at these cyberpunk movies as metaphors too; a way of embracing the concept of hybridity brought by technology, to develop a world that has modernized independently, not owing to the west, and in consequence finding a way out of the conflict.

Each element in the films seems to symbolize a social process happening in Japan. A culturally specific aspect of Japanese narratives is the frequent appearance of the "female" or in our case the female cyborg. This could relate back, to Japan's experience of feminization by the dominant western powers (Orbaugh, 177. in *Robot Ghosts*), many scholars argue that "Japanese culture now exists in a demasculinized state, overwhelmed by feminine "cuteness" and a problematic masculinity" (Napier, 171).

Lastly, the process of cute-ification, in the sense of becoming more like a child, is also hinted at in *Innocence*. While investigating the gynoids that kill their owners, Batou discovers criminal groups are being hired by the maker of the gynoids to kidnap little girls. This 'maker', a company named Locus Solus, is trying to 'dub' little girls' ghosts into the shells of the gynoids in order to make them 'more real'. The "little girl"(*shojou*) is represented ambiguously in *Ghost in the shell: "innocence"* and "*sexuality*" exist side by side in the same

⁹Nanban (meaning the southern barbarians) was a word used by Japanese to refer to Europeans in 1543.

¹⁰Japan was much more populated than powerful western empires, it had schools, and a fierce samurai army. Furthermore, Japanese people practiced habits that were considered more civilized, such as using chopsticks instead of their hands to eat and bathing every day.

¹¹As is implied from the description of a missionary from 1584, "[The Japanese] excel not only all the other Oriental peoples, they surpass the Europeans as well" (Alessandro Valignano, "Historia del Principio y Progreso de la Compañía de Jesús en las Indias Orientales").

"undeveloped" body (Clement, 31). It seems that the depiction of the gynoids as innocent yet monstrous girls, represents masculine fears of domination. The gynoids are made in reference to Hans Bellmer's dolls, which is made clear when Batou finds a young girl's picture inside Bellmer's book *The Doll*. Their fragmented body parts may be seen as the site of projection of male fears. As Lichtenstein explains: "By eliminating clear-cut boundaries between such categories as woman and child (represented by the liminal figure of the adolescent), passive victim and powerful seductress, Bellmer elicits a dramatic ambivalence between desire for and revulsion at the female body" (13). And so does the movie, the gynoids depiction as having the ghosts of little girls creates a troubling image of helplessness and vulnerability. These dolls become monsters "in order to combat abjection and, in turn, reclaim their 'innocence'" (Clement, 1). Perhaps Oshii is trying to warn of what will happen if the 'soul' of the 'child' keeps being abused and manipulated into other conflicting fields.

Conclusion

I began this paper by posing the question of how does Mamoru Oshii use representations of the gendered cyborg in his films to explore boundaries between human and machine. I was also interested in how these films reflect social processes in Japan. And I have shown that In *Ghost in the Shell* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* the female body is transgressed, through its placement in the cyborg. But instead of it being freed, it is altered in such a way that it is kept in its place. Boundaries of gender are re-inscribed and dominant patterns of power are sustained. We gain more insight to the world that the films create by looking at them from a Japanese background. The cultural context of identity politics in Japan projects Japan as a hybrid case, one that is modern by a western definition but still not on the same level as a western nation.

I attempted to show that these movies are not simply a surface upon which discourses are written, nor are they only a representation of Japanese cultural conflicts. I wanted to show that their importance is that they are an extrapolation that sheds light on the reality that entraps Japanese culture as we know it. The emphasize on technological development in Japan makes Science fiction animated movies a proper place to explore a constantly changing reality. Moreover, it is aptly fitting to present these issues through anime films, since animation can only be produced by technology and this extends the content to the form.

Furthermore, Science fiction gives us a view of the world which stands outside the confines of our preconceptions. In a world where everything is constantly changing, science fiction gives us a unique gaze upon the change itself. And it seems that it was Oshii's purpose to direct our attention to our own blind spots, so he explores dualisms and binaries through the point of view of the doll. And thus he gives us a unique view at a world where the 'other' is not fully excluded and the boundaries of the self are not secured.

Human beings are already absorbed in producing what it means to be human. But only when

we realize that we live in a world of connections, that everything exists in relation to everything else, then we can begin to understand that “body”, “gender”, “humanity” are all processes that shape and define us.

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