

**“IT IS TIME TO BECOME A PART OF ALL THINGS”: UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY
OUTSIDE OF HUMANIST ONTOLOGY**

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

“IT IS TIME TO BECOME A PART OF ALL THINGS”: UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY OUTSIDE OF HUMANIST ONTOLOGY

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The following thesis analyzes two anime works by Japanese filmmaker Mamoru Oshii, *Ghost in the Shell* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, in order to theorize a way of being outside of humanist ontology through the subversive cyborg politics dramatized within the films. Both films reveal the failure of humanist paradigms in accounting for identity and provide an alternative, more holistic model of existence that emphasizes interconnectivity over human individualism that pivots on human's self-made exclusivity. In *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence*, humanist paradigms are suggested to prescribe ready-made ways of perceiving and interacting with the world such that new ways of being are precluded. By embracing the hybridity of cyborgs, which inherently subverts dominant institutions and State ideologies, one may effectively resist (post)modern biopolitics, which appropriate life itself, and bifurcate to become a part of all things.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the science fiction visionaries who have created futuristic worlds to help us better understand the present and conceptualize a brighter future.

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Introduction

“Despite all the immense difficulties and complexities, I do believe that both critical theory and science fiction have the potential to play a role in the liberation of humanity from oppression” (Carl Freedman xx).

Freedman’s above conjecture has only become more credible since its publication in *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (2000). Science fiction in all its critical faculties has only become more relevant as the twenty-first century realizes a continuous rise in late capitalism and its attendant culture, postmodernism, which have been and continue to be, respectively, the material and cultural foci of much science fiction. And, through its production of futurities and the unique vantage they offer, science fiction has become more pertinent to critically analyzing the conditions of our own existence and importantly (post)modern sovereign paradigms.¹ In “Progress versus Utopia,” Fredric Jameson notes the unique quality of postmodernist science fiction is not merely its relevance to the present, but more importantly its ability to bypass capitalism’s lack of historicity in its present modality (through those futurities), mobilizing thought to contemplate on “our own absolute limits” (152). Jameson goes on to suggest, “today the past is dead, transformed into a packet of well-worn and thumbed glossy images” (153). Indeed postmodernity’s lack of historicity creates a space for self-indulgent individualistic consumption of the past rather than critical analyses of it. But science fiction engages with the historicity of the present by estranging it as an already-made past and thereby frees a space for critical, historical evaluation outside of patterns of ahistorical perception. In doing so, science fiction can reveal the restrictive sovereign paradigms of the present and represent a new mode of being outside of those paradigms through its unique modal qualities.

¹ “Available futures are not just those that we can passively forecast, but those that we can actively create: for these de Jouvenel coined a new name--‘futuribles’. They are futures which do not simply happen *of themselves*, but can be *made* to happen, if we meanwhile adopt wise attitudes and policies” (Toulmin 2-3; original emphasis).

Seeking to delimit the modality of science fiction through “a genuinely critical, analytic, definitional principle,” Freedman draws on Darko Suvin’s conception of science fiction as “a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition” to determine two (derivative) specifications of critical science fiction: *cognition effect* and *dominant estrangement* (Suvin qtd. in Freedman 16). As Freedman notes of Suvin’s terms,

[Estrangement] refers to the creation of an alternative fictional world that, by refusing to take our mundane environment for granted, implicitly or explicitly performs an estranging critical interrogation of the latter. But the *critical* character of the interrogation is guaranteed by the operation of cognition, which enables the science-fictional text to account rationally for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world. (16-7)

Yet for Freedman, Suvin’s original definitions are not precise enough. Modified from Suvin’s own definitions, *cognition effect* refers to “the attitude *of the text itself* to the kind of estrangements being performed” as opposed to actual plausibility of those estrangements,² and *dominant estrangement* requires the present’s estrangement to be a defining feature of the text (18; original emphasis).

Since Freedman argues that science fiction’s modal quality can be found in most if not all fiction, going so far as to write “I do believe that all fiction is, in a sense, science fiction,” the purpose of such alteration is to define the operations of *predominantly* science fiction texts and posit more specifically the source of their critical faculty. Freedman progresses in his analysis of sf, juxtaposing it with style, the historical novel, and utopian visions, but, perhaps most importantly, he notes, “The future is crucial to science fiction not as a specific chronological register, but as a locus of radical alterity to the mundane status quo, which is thus estranged and

² I.e. the text’s self-purported rationality as opposed to its actual rationality.

historicized as the concrete past of potential future” (55). In doing so, science fiction immediately posits the present’s historicity and urges readers to contemplate the material connection between the potential future and the actual present. In this way, science fiction insists on an understanding of history that does not take the consequences of present conditions for granted.

Estranging the present functions not only as a means of revealing the limits humanity has imposed upon itself, but also creates an opportunity to push past those limits by way of reconceptualizing ontology. Science fiction’s potential to liberate humanity thus presupposes two qualities inherent within it: on the one hand it estranges the present so that the reader may escape the present’s autoreferentiality and thereby see the present as of history; on the other hand, it engages with (and subverts) the practice of sovereignty, the underlying mode of all unnecessarily imposed restriction, both material and ideological, by definition. Only then can science fiction reveal the complexities of the “cultural dominant,”³ even if it is itself a product of that cultural dominant—in this case, of postmodernism (Jameson 4). In its most heterogeneous forms, science fiction not only allows us to “reconstruct some initial situation out of which the finished work [itself] emerges,” as all art could well do, but can also be a catalyst for the realization of greater potential through opposing the many manifestations of sovereignty (Jameson 7). It may be clear, then, that science fiction, if not the genre *par excellence*, is a particularly effective modality to

³ Jameson contends that it is “essential to grasp postmodernism not as a style but rather as a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features” (4). Conceptualizing “cultural dominants” as opposed to styles of culture allows us to understand the multiplex flows that constitute and cause transformations within society. We may thereby understand culture as a multi-layered assemblage that realizes emergent properties, “properties of a whole that are not present in its parts,” even as it retains relations of exteriority, which see the constituents of the whole that enable emergent properties as autonomous from that system (Delanda 3). Such a conception is implicit in the following analysis, wherein postmodern realities that enable sovereignty (information technologies, transnational corporations) create the conditions for (cultural) emergent properties (mass consumerism and mass culture) that reify, if not effect, sovereign paradigms. Recognizing relations of exteriority is crucial as it recognizes subject’s (un)conscious investment in those paradigms and thus acknowledges their ability to divest from them.

investigating the continuous rise of late capitalism and its cultural correlative postmodernism and their implications on sovereign paradigms. The following analysis will examine Japanese cyborg narratives, contextualizing their operation before moving on to sovereignty and the cyborg itself.

The Japanese Anomaly

As Japan is the only nation to experience first-hand nuclear bombing, Japanese narratives, especially anime,⁴ that contend with (post)war reality, (post)modern subjectivity, and identity in a technologically saturated world⁵ are an especially useful means to understanding identity in a postmodern world of nuclear warfare. It is telling that Japan, a technologically advanced country capable of producing nuclear arms, does not possess nor seems to desire possessing nuclear bombs. If Japan is anomalous as Sharalyn Orbaugh, a renowned scholar of Japanese culture, contends, it is not only because Japan has been marginalized by Western nation-states, but also because Japan seems to reject behavior, such as the production of nuclear weapons, that has become normalized in developed nations of the twenty-first century.⁶ The refusal to be a nuclear power is a refusal to engage in hubristic arms races that seem less concerned with deterring nuclear war as with aggressive displays of national power.

Japan's anomalous identity in modern geopolitics may be understood through Michael Hardt's invocation of the atomic bombings: "The negation of the bomb is nondialectical in its actuality, not in the planning rooms of Washington but in the streets of Hiroshima, as an agent of total destruction" (xii--xiii). This destruction is the genesis of something new. Japanese

⁴ As many scholars have extensively argued the point already, it is redundant to here include an explanation for why anime is an especially rich medium for analysis; see Stephen T. Brown's *Cinema Anime* (2006), Susan J. Napier's *Anime: From Akira to Howl's Moving Castle* (2005), and Thomas Lamarre's *The Anime Machine* (2009).

⁵ From *The Grave of Fireflies* to *Akira*, anime has represented the confusion and chaos of a world in which war is relentless and unforgiving. Manga, such as *Barefoot Gen* and *Ayako*, also tend to confront postwar identity. "Cannon Fodder," one of three stories from *Memories*, dramatizes warfare in Orwellian fashion.

⁶ See *The Economist's* "Doomsday and the History of Nuclear Weapons" for a brief history of the development of functional nuclear warheads.

nationalism was not simply restrained by the event of destruction, but set on a new path. Hardt goes on to explain that “Negation clears the terrain for creation; it is a bipartite sequence that precludes any third, synthetic moment” (xiii). The bombings conceptualized as such, Japan’s identity after World War II does not “come to terms” with what happened through some synthesis of past trauma, but bifurcates and becomes something entirely new through a process not unlike that explained by biological mutation.

The actualized destruction of life, the environment, and infrastructure, as well as the loss of interconnectivity to everything destroyed among those remaining seems to have moved the society of Japan through a radical deterritorialization, a deterritorialization that paradoxically seems to have realized some new assemblage⁷ with greater potential for joyous affect.⁸ More specifically, the destruction of the atomic bomb seems to have imposed conditions that led to a new perspective of life not inscribed by the military-industrial complex and technological domination, but by the *liberating* possibilities of technology. This is not to say that warfare is the best way to realize joyous affect, but only that it sometimes serves, perhaps unexpectedly, as a means to joyous affect.⁹

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari use the term “assemblage” to refer to an interconnection of bodies that realizes emergent properties. Bonta and Protevi define the term (quoting DG) as “an intensive network or rhizome displaying ‘consistency’ or emergent effects by tapping into the ability of the self-ordering forces of heterogeneous material to mesh together, as in the ‘man-horse-bow assemblage’ of the nomads” (54). For Deleuze and Guattari, a “line of flight” marks a potentiality of an assemblage that, when realized, causes qualitative changes in that assemblage. Such changes mark a “deterritorialization” of that assemblage, or movement away from the previous territorialized assemblage defined by its maintenance of its current state.

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari use the term “affect” to refer to “the (‘active’) capacities of a body to act and the (‘passive’) capacities of a body to be affected or to be acted upon; in other words, what a body can do and what it can undergo....Meshing emergent effects will augment the power of that body to form other connections within or across assemblages, resulting in joyous affects, while clashing emergent effects will diminish the power to act of the body, producing sad affects” (Bonta and Protevi 49).

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge the different paths that can be taken to realize joyous affects in their plateau “How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?” They recognize that some “procedures” that would lead to one’s body without organs, or an individual’s “plane of consistency of desire” that maps their potential to interact, are better than others. The nuclear bombings were surely not the best means to realize Japan’s bifurcation, and yet it seems to have created the conditions for an exchange of potential that may prove more joyous. The following analysis is in part an extension of the investigation of this exchange.

Such a shift may be (partially) mapped out through the cultural productions of Japan. Orbaugh (2002) has pointed out (with not a little irony), that cultural productions of the West, and the United States in particular, often focus on the negative consequences of technology, while Japanese narratives embrace cyborgs, robots, and other potentialities of technology.¹⁰ The result is that,

In Japanese popular narrative...the possibility or desirability of rejecting cyborgization is rarely raised. The emphasis is not on the cyborg as a threatening presence antithetical to humans [as is often the case in the West] but rather on the *nature* of cyborg (or android) subjectivity, experienced from the inside, and the ramifications to society of our impending (or already accomplished) posthuman condition. (Orbaugh, 2005, 63; original emphasis)

Japanese narratives of the cyborg thus become particularly important to understanding identity in a technologically saturated postmodern era outside of a fatalist, aggressive, or technophobic context, and are paramount to the task of understanding what Donna Haraway calls “the resistant cyborg”; as Orbaugh (2002) notes, Japanese narratives “[allow] for an exploration of the hybrid, monstrous, cyborg subject from a sympathetic, interior point of view rarely found in North American cultural products” (440). While hybridity is foregrounded, such an ontology would also help conceptualize a new mode of being outside of sovereign paradigms. Such a task is made even more pressing in postmodernity, wherein the rise in information technologies and a greater intensity of international flows of production has created conditions that could further crystallize sovereignty by way of the rise in consumerism and mass culture, which create

¹⁰ As Orbaugh (2002) notes, “It could be argued that the great majority of the ‘cyborgs’ well-known to North American audiences are emphatically male in appearance, and often portrayed as threatening, or at times pitiable, monsters” (449). She goes on to note such figures as Darth Vader of George Lucas et al’s *Star Wars* and the *Terminator*. More recently, the British television series *Black Mirror* (2011-present) created by Charlie Brooker features a collection of stand-alone dramatizations that illustrate the negative consequences of technology. Recent films such as Alex Garland’s *Ex Machina* (2015), Matt Reeves’ *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014), Alan Taylor’s *Terminator Genisys* (2015), and Colin Trevorrow’s *Jurassic World* (2015) also continue in this trend, each a dramatization of tech-savvy Faustian overreachers, while *Ex Machina* and *Terminator Genisys* explicitly concern cyborgs. In contrast, “from childhood Japanese children are educated in robots/robots” such that they “see them as friends” (Shirô Masamune qtd. in Orbaugh 437).

complicity with sovereignty in a world where people are free to choose political action over industries that distract from, even as they reproduce, the reality of postmodern sovereignty.

Sovereignty in Postmodernity

The cyborg is literally a new form of life. Its significance as such is to demonstrate the possibility of changing the way we think about the world around us, which naturally has implications for biopolitics. The cyborg's existence as a nonhuman sentient creature no longer allows for distinct boundaries between humans and machines, or even humans and animals (if ever these boundaries were distinct), and thus calls into question (post)modernity's politicization of *zoē* as will be addressed below. Concerned with a postindustrial, technologically saturated world, Japanese (cyborg) narratives are significant in their resistance to postmodern biopolitics, which describe a new mode, if not a new form, of sovereignty. To fully understand the intervention of such narratives, it is necessary to define "postmodern sovereignty,"¹¹ and, if sovereignty does operate differently in postmodernity, it is first necessary to historicize sovereignty itself. Only then can we give some shape to the forces that make the cyborg's reconceptualization both possible and desirable.

In *Homo Sacer* (2004), Giorgio Agamben contends that biopolitics is not an exclusively modern phenomenon as "the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power" (6). Agamben points to the Ancient city-state of Greece as the foundation of biopolitics and starts his analysis by differentiating the two terms used in Ancient Greece to refer to "life": "*zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living

¹¹ Because positing a difference in the content of sovereign expression realized in modernity and postmodernity would take much more room to discuss, if there is indeed qualitative differences between modern and postmodern sovereignty, it is important to keep in mind that "postmodern sovereignty" merely designates, at the very least, a new expression of sovereignty. To be sure, while sovereignty in postmodernity may be similar to that of modern sovereignty, postmodernity has given rise to conditions that seem to have significant implications for biopolitical paradigms.

common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group” (1). In Ancient Greece, the separation of the private household sphere (*oikos*) and the public political sphere (*polis*) is reflected in the distinction between *zoē* and *bios*—where *zoē* expresses living as the bare state of being, as carried out in the private sphere, *bios* expresses a way of living outside sheer survival, as carried out in the public sphere. Thus *bios* carries political connotations, as it does not allude to the labor and work of the household sphere but to the action¹² of the public realm in which simply being alive, while a necessary condition to participate within it, is not a sufficient one. That is, the public sphere of the Ancient world was not concerned with the routine of day-to-day life. Rather, it presupposed that such “tedious” matters necessary to living had been accomplished so that a life that did not make mere living its purpose, “the good life,” might be pursued (Arendt 36).

Despite the political sphere’s concern with matters outside of *zoē*, the politics of the Ancient city-state nonetheless exercised power over the “bare life” expressed by *zoē*, epitomized in its conception of the *homo sacer*, a being “who may be killed and yet not sacrificed” (Agamben 8). While the *homo sacer* was not allowed participation in the political sphere (or religious sphere), it was nevertheless subject to it. Paradoxically, the exclusion of the *homo sacer* from the political sphere is made possible precisely by its inclusion within it. At the center of Agamben’s analysis of sovereignty is precisely this relation of exception, “the extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion” (18). In including bare life

¹² Action is here defined through Arendt’s contention that action is “the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter” (7). Later, Arendt notes that “Through [speech and action], men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men. This appearance, as distinguished from mere bodily existence, rests on initiative, but it is an initiative from which no human being can refrain and still be human” (176). Action is thus a creative activity that does not seek to replicate the conditions in which it is realized. As Agamben (2014) notes, “an act of creation is an act of resistance”; thus action is inherently resistant to sovereign institutions. However, where Arendt identifies action as a necessary trait to be human, the following analysis situates it instead as necessary to realize joyous affects. Like Arendt, I contend that action is an inherently ethical pursuit. By its very definition, action resists biopolitics where biopolitics organizes bodies.

precisely by excluding it, an act Agamben terms *exclusive inclusion*, the sovereign does not simply express superiority above all others, but “represents the inscription within the body of the *nomos* of the exteriority that animates it and gives it meaning” (26; original emphasis). The implication is quite daunting: while bare life is not allowed to participate in the political realm—indeed may not even wish to participate—it inadvertently preserves the system nonetheless.¹³

As conceptualized by Agamben, bare life in Ancient Greece would have been capable of understanding its exclusion from political agency (though perhaps not its appropriative inclusion) because of the distinction made between the political sphere and the private sphere. That is, the bare life of all living beings was excluded from the *polis* where only the political self was allowed a voice. Though excepted from the political sphere, the bare life of *zoē* was not politicized and so realized a separate existence from politics, even if exceptionally included within politics. However for Agamben, the “decisive fact” of modern politics is precisely the politicization of bare life as “the realm of bare life gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoē*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction” (8). Bare life thus seems to become lost in the ubiquity of politics in everyday life. The result is that “modern democracy presents itself from the beginning as a vindication and liberation of *zoē*, and that it is constantly trying to transform its own bare life into a way of life and to find, so to speak, the *bios* of *zoē*” (9). By now, this politically appropriative (and unnecessary) task of legitimizing *zoē* seems widely accepted without question, obscuring how sovereignty operates through it; the need to justify one’s existence in

¹³ Despite its appropriation, it is important that bare life desires and pursues political action in order to participate in the betterment of the world through what Arendt suggests is the quintessentially communicative sphere, the political realm. As we will see later in an analysis of Mamoru Oshii’s *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, life that purposefully chooses an existence detached from the political sphere (1) fails to improve upon the conditions of humanity for the purpose of liberating others from oppression and (2) ultimately even fails to wholly divest itself of (bio)politics, as its life is always already available for appropriation.

the era of late capitalism through participation in the cycle of production and consumption is therefore hardly ever questioned, the participation apparently necessary to defend one's right to live even as that participation represents one's loss of the right to live.

This catch-22 stems from society as a social phenomenon, which saw the enmeshing of the public sphere and the private sphere that had previously separated *bios* and *zoē*. The collapse of the public and private sphere, or the “rise of the social”—for Arendt, the event which “blurred the old borderline between private and political...chang[ing] almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual and the citizen”—created a new reality surrounding the relation of exception, namely that modern forms of bare life have come about that may no longer be able to explicitly recognize their exclusion because that which excludes them, the bare life of *zoē*, has become always already appropriated through its politicization (38). While Agamben suggests “the modern state...does nothing other than bring to light the secret tie uniting power and bare life,” it seems that the relation between social and State forces and *zoē* is actually very much invisible for the majority of peoples as escape from enlightenment thinking and mass culture is yet to be realized.

As Agamben notes, citizens' unconscious acceptance of this political appropriation of *zoē* comes through “blood and death or in the perfect senselessness to which the society of the spectacle condemns [the ‘beautiful day’ of life that is *zoē*]” (Agamben 11). In its politicization of *zoē*, not least of all through citizenship and the culture industry, (post)modernity conditions citizens to desire affirming the political value of their life *within the current order*, and thus the social realm becomes not a space of creative action as much as a space to re-situate oneself within established conditions of existence. As Arendt has it, this operation of the social realm results in “the absorption of the family unit into corresponding social groups” and the rise of

conformism, whereby “society...demands that its members act as though they were members of one enormous family which has only one opinion and one interest” (39; 40). Because citizens are conditioned to desire self-legitimation within a pre-existing order, the social realm becomes a reflection of predetermined purpose. For Arendt, such a social collectivity enables sovereignty, which is no longer a reality of monarchical rule, but rather of “a kind of no-man rule” as every citizen (invested with sovereignty and bare life) participate in it (Arendt 40).

This no-man rulership has a strong connection to Agamben’s conception of modern biopolitics as outlined in *Homo Sacer*. Agamben finds that, in modernity, “Citizenship names the new status of life as origin and ground of sovereignty and, therefore, literally identifies...‘the members of the sovereign’” (Agamben 129). It seems, then, that the inability to find *the sovereign* of modernity is not only the consequence of the rise in conformism, for we could conceptualize a conformist society with a despot, but also a result of the dispersion of sovereign power through citizenship. The nobody of society’s “no-man rule” is then precisely the faceless sovereign of a collective citizenship that only upholds a pre-established order of patriarchy, nationalism, or, most important to the following analyses, humanism.

However, as Agamben points out, though each citizen is invested with sovereignty, they are also bare life to the extent that they are circumscribed by the rights that come with citizenship, which are nationally constructed and geographically contingent. That is, the rights of citizens also define citizens’ rights as (human) beings. The disciplinary organizations and control institutions of the state define not only the political life of its citizens, but also invest them with bare life to the extent that they are described by these institutions and, if need be, seized by them. Invested in politics from birth, citizens are simultaneously forced to participate in sovereignty and implicated as bare life. As Agamben notes, “nation-states become greatly concerned with

natural life, discriminating within it between a so-to-speak authentic life and a life lacking every political value" (132). Such life lacking every political value is decidedly bare life; Agamben's invocation of Foucault's biopolitics is telling: "For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his existence as a living being into question" (qtd. in Agamben 119).¹⁴

Resistance to (post)modern sovereignty is difficult precisely because of this double bind whereby one is both sovereign oppressor and oppressed bare life; action must confront this double bind by consciously refusing to enable sovereignty to instead mobilize "the pedagogy of the oppressed."¹⁵ Impeding one's understanding of how sovereignty operates (or of its particular existence) is an act that perpetuates sovereignty, as it crystallizes a mindset that supports sovereignty, even if indirectly. One must thus recognize the biopolitical paradigms that undergird sovereignty before effecting an intervention. It comes as no surprise, then, that the culture industry, enabled by mass production and realizing an even greater stultifying presence in the more informational- and capital-fluid postmodernity, plays a role in postmodernism's particular realization of sovereignty, namely through its distraction from understanding the material conditions of existence. It will be important to turn to this materiality of postmodernity to conceptualize an effective intervention.

¹⁴ It is unclear to what extent the majority of citizens understand their own exclusion through their very citizenship. That nationalism (including patriotism and jingoism) continues to be a dominant marker of identity attests to this reality. Unwitting accomplices to a seemingly fixed system, citizens are precluded from effectively intervening in sovereign paradigms. This is not only because of their implication from birth but, if we are to believe sovereignty is not always already predetermined and is able to be resisted, perhaps more importantly, because of the barriers to action that have only become reinforced in (post)modernity wherein the technologically-mediated spread of democracy, capitalism, and their attendant cultural and social preconceptions becomes the new euphemism for invasion and expansion.

¹⁵ As citizens are invested with both sovereignty and bare life, Paulo Freire's contention in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) that "Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both [the oppressors and the oppressed]" calls for the citizen to mobilize the reality of their own bare life (and others) in the face of their sovereignty, to effectively relinquish comfortable identifications, such as those given by nationality and humanism, for the liberation others.

In *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Fredric Jameson has conceptualized three stages of capitalism, the last stage of which, late capitalism,¹⁶ economically corresponds to cultural “postmodernism” and refers to changes (what they are exactly is not yet clear) that have occurred between the base and superstructure; Jameson has suggested that “the base, in the third stage of capitalism, generates its superstructures with *a new kind of dynamic*” (xxi; emphasis added). The operations of such a dynamic may be understood in part by the fact that late capitalism refers to an era of international flows of capital that are accelerated by the mediation of information technologies, which suggests postmodernism is characterized (among other realities) by an unprecedented access to information. This increase in access to information creates a space for the overcoding of mass society that is decisively unique from the (national) conformity modernity ushered in through the rise of the social sphere. To be sure, postmodernity continues to operate, at least in part, through the social sphere, but the quantitative increase of information and easier availability of information, as well as the increase in international production, distribution, and consumption, seem to have given rise to qualitative changes.

The increase and availability of information have given anyone with internet access the ability to consume massive amounts of information. While this reality produces joyous affects, it also gives rise to conditions that hinder the realization of action. The internet has created a space wherein material reality can become lost in virtuality; where subjectivity can become overcoded and society can become homogenized through the reproduction of simulacra.¹⁷ Most importantly,

¹⁶ Jameson writes, “[Late capitalism’s] features include the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges...new forms of media interrelationship...computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale” (Jameson xix).

¹⁷ Anime such as *Serial Experiments Lain* and *Texhnolyze* address identity formation in an industrialized, technologically mediated world through unique and provocative narratives. See Stephen Brown’s introduction to *Cinema Anime* and Gerald Miller’s “‘To Shift To A Higher Structure’: Desire, Disembodiment, And Evolution In The Anime Of Otomo, Ishii, And Anno” on SEL. *Texhnolyze* has yet to receive the critical attention it deserves.

in distracting citizens from their own (and others') existence as bare life and as unconscious supporters of sovereignty, the culture industry precludes action that is necessary for the establishment of a world that would realize its greatest potential.¹⁸

Even in the 1940s, Horkheimer and Adorno had come to realize this emergent property of mass culture in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944):

Entertainment is the prolongation of work under late capitalism. It is sought by those who want to escape the mechanized labor process so that they can cope with it again. At the same time, however, mechanization has such power over leisure and its happiness, determines so thoroughly the fabrications of entertainment commodities, that the off-duty worker can experience nothing but after-images of the work process itself. The ostensible content is merely a faded foreground; what is imprinted is the automated sequence of standardized tasks. The only escape from the work process in factory and office is through adaptation to it in leisure time. This is the incurable sickness of all entertainment. Amusement congeals into boredom, since, to be amusement, it must cost no effort and therefore moves strictly along the well-worn grooves of association. The spectator must need no thoughts of his own: the product prescribes each reaction, not through any actual coherence--which collapses once exposed to thought--but through signals. (109)

In reproducing the conditions of capitalism by way of stunting (resistant) creativity, the culture industry precludes action and thereby reifies the biopolitical paradigms of sovereignty. The increase in international production, distribution, and consumption of commodities seen in postmodernity, or late capitalism, intensifies this reality. The rise of international mega-corporations, transnational communications networks, and cross-cultural production and consumption naturalizes predetermined measures of economic expansion and industrial growth all the while ignoring the potential to transform the current order.¹⁹ Sweat workshops are but one

¹⁸ While "greatest potential" may be relative, it here refers to a world that realizes the greatest quality of joyous affect.

¹⁹ See Arundhati Roy's *The Cost of Living* for an example of how this reality plays out. India's race to prove itself as an industrially developed nation seems a natural response to the rise of late capitalism, which evaluates a nation's "progress" by the existence of complex infrastructure rather than, for example, its development and application of ethics.

example of the consequences not simply (nor necessarily) of geographical dispersion of commodity production and consumption, but of the lack of action realized.²⁰ Such a reality is a prime example of how the culture industry “inescapably reproduces human beings as what the whole has made them” (H&A 100). This reality attests to the reproduction of mass conformity in the social sphere, and exemplifies the social sphere’s diversion from sovereign paradigms (and their consequences) that only seem to solidify over time.

It seems self-evident, then, that late capitalism’s “new kind of dynamic” sustains and even reifies the implication of bare life into politics and thereby supports postmodernity’s particular manifestation of sovereignty. The perpetuation and strengthening of biopolitics is no doubt connected to the material conditions late capitalism has given rise to, of which “the culture industry” and mass consumerism and their effectuation of the effacement of action are of particular importance in the following analysis. In the face of such a reality, the politics of the cyborg come as a means to reclaim action.

Cyborg Politics

As “the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism,” cyborgs, though created out of “the informatics of domination,” represent a crucial and much-needed line of flight from postmodernist biopolitics and, thereby, sovereignty itself, since “illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins” (Haraway 2192). The cyborg resists the current structure of the *oikos*--Oedipal, nuclear, unified. The object of its resistance indicates the mode of its operation and the focus of its opposition; the cyborg

²⁰ “What difference will I make?” one might say about cruelty-free, fair trade, or local products. Despite being able to shed light on unjust practices and offer convenient alternatives, the overwhelming majority fails to mobilize toward the latter. Such is the nihilistic product of postmodernity, wherein the overload of the culture industry, mass culture, and mass consumerism obstruct equal consideration of beings’ interests and the multiple potentialities of natural resources.

can reclaim action as its refusal of predetermined signification allows for the negation of the homogenizing culture industry and its establishment of behavior.

Thus the cyborg does not resist sovereignty in any one of its manifestations, but seeks to subvert any justification of sovereignty. Where sovereignty effects limitations on the interactions of and between both oppressors and the oppressed, the cyborg's transgression of constructed boundaries comes as a necessary task to establishing an interconnected world that would realize its greatest potential. Agamben has already established that citizenship is another (modern) form of sovereignty that includes precisely by excluding. Yet Haraway's cyborg in its notable breakdown of three popularly conceived boundaries (human and animal, human-animal and machine, and physical and nonphysical) suggests that sovereignty will not necessarily dissipate even after nation-states cease to exist. Such a reality is significant to the following analysis, which focuses on humanism as sovereign ideology. As Haraway notes,

The theoretical and practical struggle against unity-through-domination or unity-through-incorporation ironically not only undermines the justification for patriarchy, colonialism, humanism, positivism, essentialism, scientism, and other unlamented -isms, but *all* claims for an organic or natural standpoint (2198).

Of particular importance are the first two "binaries" the cyborg breaks down, which together serve to reify humans as the universal standard by which everything else relates as subordinate nonhuman, describing a particularly potent relation of exception: *humanist exclusivism*, a term here used to connote any relation of exception that emphasizes and foregrounds considerations of human interests such that all else is justifiably appropriated for them, including animals and non-organic forms (dolls, the non-organic environment, robots, androids, A.I., artificial life, etc.).²¹

²¹ It would be absurd to discuss the rights of dolls and the environment as such, but it is important to remember that relations of exception are not about rights *per se*, but about superficially drawn boundaries between nature and culture, humans and animals, organic beings and inorganic beings, etc. that pre-construct the world through restrictive inside/outside paradigms and thus predetermine our relations in it.

The cyborg comes as an intervention to such humanist doctrines and the violence enacted through them. To understand how the boundaries humanism creates have given rise to unnecessary violence and suffering, which by their very nature limit the potential of both the sovereign (human) actor and bare life (animal) acted upon,²² we need only turn the material reality of industrial farming. A phenomenon of postmodernity,²³ industrial farming has caused a mass of animals to unnecessarily suffer their entire lives and thus conceptualizes them as nothing more than bare life, an act that precludes the experience of those animals as anything more than bare life; such a failure to see animals outside of bare life has consequences. Indeed we may posit that such acts of humanist exclusivism predetermine humans' interactions with the world such that nature becomes a resource to plunder, animals a mere backdrop.²⁴ Resistance to such a sovereign paradigm as humanist exclusivism might come in the form of animal rights, which would give equal consideration to animals and their own interests,²⁵ as well as realize a shift in humans' perception of the world. As Haraway notes in her "Cyborg Manifesto," "Movements for animal rights are not irrational denials of human uniqueness; they are a clear-sighted recognition of connection across the discredited breach of nature and culture" (2192). Thus the practice of animal rights presupposes a bridging of the gap created between nature and culture, a gap whose implications reach beyond animal rights as such. And yet, to subvert the sovereign acts carried out in such developments as industrial farming, recognizing such a reality is decidedly of prime importance.

²² Up until now, only humans have been addressed as manifesting bare life, but it is important to remember that bare life, by definition, is any entity whose existence is appropriated by sovereign biopolitics. Animal's interests (especially their interest to not suffer) is not considered within human politics, which makes them bare life to the extent that their life, *zoē*, is not significant enough in itself.

²³ The advent of information technologies, among other developments, has led to the exponential expansion of industrial operations. Though not necessarily negative, IT is an example of how postmodernity has realized conditions that have caused qualitatively different modes of sovereign operation.

²⁴ That is, such acts mutually reinforce other sovereign realities; in this example, industrial farming presupposes the maltreatment of the land needed to farm, which naturally fails to realize that land's greatest potential as a resource.

²⁵ See Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* for more on equal consideration.

The lack of attention given to animal rights is no doubt (re)produced, at least in part, through the culture industry and social behaviorism of mass society. Perhaps the most ready example is media's complicity and enablement of the violent practices of industrial farming through internationally advertising institutions such as fast food chains that pivot on the unnecessary quantity of meat produced by industrial farming. While media producer's failure to consider animal rights obviously creates the conditions for their relative lack of representation in the culture industry, it may just as well be that animal right's relative lack of representation in the culture industry creates the conditions for media producer's failure to consider animal rights. In postmodernity, this process of self-reproducing sovereign paradigms is all the more difficult to pull away from and, once withdrawn from, resist. The material conditions of postmodernity, including international capitalism and transnational corporations, has encouraged fast food chains, which mark one of the greatest oppositions to animal rights, all over the globe. It is easy to see that greater access to fast food has further naturalized humans' self-perceived dominance over other creatures, and effectively precluded action against such a reality, in part by masking the unpleasant causes of such a reality.

Relations of exception named by humanist exclusivism do not only affect other nonhuman creatures; its consequences may be further understood when we consider the treatment of inorganic natural resources such as oil, (bodies of) water, or, in short, land itself, it is clear that a similar realization of sovereignty is in operation. Treatment of waste, pollution, dredging, and any other related activity are all manifestations of humans' presupposition of sovereignty over (rather than stewardry of) the environment. To be sure, the use of resources is not inherently a sovereign act, but realities such as global warming and the Pacific garbage patch presuppose a decree of sovereignty when carrying out the causes of such phenomena. While the

amount of attention environmentalism has recently received seems promising, the rise of shopping complexes and the mass production of cheap, one-time use commodities fails to sufficiently consider the environment and further crystallizes a mass consumerist culture that implicitly carries out sovereign acts. The alienation of the consequences of consumerism from shopping sprees and the purchase of unsustainable commodities exemplifies the extent to which sovereignty is veiled in postmodernity. And yet it also exposes (to those who choose to be aware) the contradiction of a citizen who can realize action, but chooses to blissfully unaware of their participation in sovereignty. Almost always, realizing resistant action starts by refusing to participate in such a culture, admittedly difficult for its ubiquity.²⁶

Perhaps above all else, humanist exclusivism is legitimated through the belief that humans are fundamentally different from all other beings, which immediately fails to consider the possibility that humans (and animals) are nothing more than complex machines. To readily reject such a possibility implies some belief in a transcendental realm, a belief that, characteristic of humanist exclusivism, often only admits the immanently superior human race. As previously mentioned, the culture industry has continuously conditioned consumers to accept the tenets of humanist exclusivism, not least of all through film.²⁷ As the hybridity of the cyborg conceptualizes *any* assemblage as a machine,²⁸ it naturally resists the practice of humanist

²⁶ “Smart” advertising is but one example of how postmodern developments have altered the *socius* to the effect of precluding action. By continuously beaming consumers with advertisements for things they do not need, but likely desire since the advertisement is chosen by an algorithm that shows people what they have previously viewed, such advertising entices people to return to (mass) consumer culture, which is inflected by the trends of the culture industry.

²⁷ The episodic *The Animatrix*, especially Mahiro Maeda’s “The Second Renaissance,” dramatizes fears of technology out of (Western) control and explores the consequences of humanity’s tendency to be violent toward anything that would “challenge” them even as that challenge is projected by humanity itself. Despite the fact that the autonomous robots of “The Second Renaissance” seek a harmonious existence with humans and have much to offer in the alliance they seek, they are treated with hostility. The aforementioned series *Black Mirror*, especially the episodes “Be Right Back” and “White Christmas,” also dramatizes human hostility toward subjects created through technology and suggests the only relationship to be formed is that which solely favors humans.

²⁸ For example, a human wearing glasses could be conceived as a cyborg machine.

exclusivism, which does not conceptualize machinic assemblages as an extension of the self, as producers of potential, or actualities that in fact shape the self, but as assemblages of predetermined realities to interact with in a fixed manner.²⁹ Through the cyborg's subversion of these relations of exception, we may begin to appreciate the potential of cyborg politics to reclaim action, which creates joyous affect and produces conditions by which to realize greater potential.

It is important that "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled post-modern collective and personal self" (Haraway 2205). Such a figure exemplifies the need of a self that *continuously* disassembles and reassembles and thereby seeks to subvert all sovereign institutions without becoming one itself. As such a figure, the cyborg embodies Deleuze and Guattari's contention that "The Universe does not function by filiation," a relation that prescribes identity and predetermines interaction (242). The cyborg instead "oppose[s] epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction" and thereby foregrounds the relationship between entities rather than their predetermined signification inflected by humanism (DG 241).

Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence*

To more fully explore how cyborg politics operates and how, exactly, it comments on humanist paradigms, Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and *Innocence* (2004) will be analyzed for their dramatization of (post)modern biopolitics and troubling of them through the figure of the cyborg. Both works effectively present the crisis of human identity in a virtually mediated world and trouble any self-identification that pivots on typological classification. The critical depth of

²⁹ As will be addressed in more detail in the analysis of Oshii's *Innocence*, such a lack of perception fails to consider how objects (such as dolls) subtly predetermine human interaction and thereby enables the reproduction of pre-established (sovereign) paradigms.

each work is illustrated not only through their problematization of humanism and its assumption that humans are discrete and autonomous agents that perceive the world rationally, but also through their development of a new ontology.

Ghost in the Shell exposes the limitations of humanism through the crisis of Major Kusanagi, a cyborg who works for secret government organization Section 9. While her crisis is provoked by the cyborg shell her subjective self, or “ghost,” occupies, it exposes the limitations of humanist ontologies that place prime importance on humans, which fails to consider the interconnectivity of all things and sets the stage for sovereignty. As Kusanagi distances herself from human-ness, she develops a new understanding of the world as she engages in critical self-contemplation rather than indulges in social legitimization through the culture industry. The appearance of The Puppetmaster, a program that realized sentience within the sea of information, not only confirms for Kusanagi the constructedness of humanity’s false sense of authenticity, but inaugurates a new conception of being that pivots on realizing potential through interconnectivity rather than on pursuing sovereignty through self-aggrandizement.

Having established the limitations of humanism in *Ghost in the Shell*, Oshii explores the fundamental operations of human sovereignty in *Innocence* and shows that the perverse structure undergirding humanist exclusivism in fact pervades many other social interfaces. More specifically, *Innocence* analyzes how the projection of the self onto others not only presupposes the self as subject and all else as object, but establishes an interface that reproduces the sovereignty thereby realized.

Chapter One: Resisting Humanism and Nationalism through the Cyborg Politics of Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*

Shirow Masamune's manga *The Ghost in the Shell* (1991) and Mamoru Oshii's inspired anime adaptation *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) were produced near the turn of the millennium, a time of exponential technological development and industrial growth. As projections of the future have always been influenced by the cultural, economic, and social milieu of the periods from which they manifest, it comes as no surprise that both works concern themselves with the implications of a virtually mediated reality on conceptions of human identity.³⁰ Just four years later, in 1999, Ray Kurzweil would publish the seminal posthuman text *The Singularity is Near* and the Wachowskis Brothers' *The Matrix* would be ushering in the new era with martial arts fight scenes in slow-motion.

Though produced over two decades ago, Masamune's manga and Oshii's anime nonetheless retain significance to the task of working through identity in a technologically advanced world, exemplified by the fact that more recent cultural productions are still grappling with some of the same issues, not to mention that *Ghost in the Shell* is being remade in a live-action version projected to release in 2017. But Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* remains especially rich for critical discussion as the anime adaptation foregrounds the biopolitical significance of advanced technologies, most notably concerning its implications for humanism and, to a lesser extent, for nationalism, both of which are related in their predetermination of subjective relations through their concomitant development of behavioral patterns.³¹ These behavioral patterns are at the heart of sovereignty because they are the means to politicizing *zoē*; they take nothing less

³⁰ See John Clute's *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* (1995) for a comprehensive overview of the historical trends in science fiction.

³¹ Nationalism in its many manifestations, especially patriotism and jingoism, (re)produce Others with potentially violent consequences. In a similar manner, humanism Otherizes with equally violent consequences. Not only are all nonhumans victimized by humanism, but humans as well when they have been de-humanized. We need only look to the Third Reich and, more recently, the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib to understand this reality.

than life itself as their subject matter and decide what all things represent, determining the content of things before they express themselves otherwise. Masamune's original manga is informative in these respects and will be occasionally alluded to, but Oshii's film maintains a pensive tone that demands sustained engagement with its ontological reflection and utilizes techniques unique to animation that effectively dramatize the posthuman condition.³²

While the following analysis will remark on the implications of technology on humanism and nationalism vis-à-vis *Ghost in the Shell*, it will focus on humanism because Oshii's sustained disruption of humanist discourse suggests a pressing need to subvert its foundation. While humanity is not inherently negative, there is no doubt that paradigms favoring humans inherently limit (non)humans' ability to realize greater potential. Anthropocentrism establishes premade patterns of behavior through superficially constructed boundaries that take for granted the interconnectivity of all things.

In *Ghost in the Shell*, the conflict between humanism and a more open ontology is centered on the figure of Major Kusanagi, a cyborg who works for secret government organization Section 9. In the course of events she encounters the troubling figure of The Puppetmaster, a program that develops sentience, a faculty hegemonically reserved for humans. These figures reveal the thresholds determined by humanist sovereignty and the perception

³² While Masamune's manga is undoubtedly a critical success, the frequency of comic relief and voyeurism often distract from its finer ontological points. In an interview, upon being asked about the pressures of including action scenes in high-budget animation such as *Ghost in the Shell*, Oshii laughs before answering, "Yes, I do have huge pressure in terms of making my animation, because a lot of audiences and producers and companies are expecting me to make films with a lot of action. They all know that I'm very good at action scenes, but I tend to not use many, so they're all frustrated with me every time I make a movie. But I do that intentionally. Yes, if I do a movie with a bunch of action, it's going to be a lot more successful than the types of movies I'm making right now. The producers often say, 'Instead of using all these philosophical phrases, why don't you change this into an action scene?' But I don't do that. I intend to continue to make these movies" (Robinson). Oshii's commitment to maintaining the integrity of his films' intellectual rigor is telling of their critical quality. Though the following analysis does not focus on the techniques of animation for analysis, basic considerations of the medium are necessarily sustained. For analyses that focus on the medium itself, see Miho Nakagawa's "Mamoru Oshii's Production of Multi-layered Space in 2D Anime," Hyewon Shin's "Voice and Vision in Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell*: Beyond Cartesian Optics," and Christopher Bolton's "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater."

thereby allows Kusanagi the opportunity to move from complicity with patterns of sovereign behavior (illustrated in her unquestioning assassination in the beginning of the film) to resistant cyborg (realized in her rejection of biopolitics in the end). As patterns self-reproduce without variation in content, it comes as no surprise that they rigidify the very fabric of culture, and it is precisely this rigidity that causes Kusanagi's crisis in *Ghost in the Shell*. Kusanagi is not simply troubled by her inability to feel human but, more importantly, is unsatisfied by humanist ontology because it fails to describe the world around her as she experiences it. Content to embody and reproduce anthropocentric modes of being, the metropolitans in the world of *Ghost in the Shell* subsist within an autopoetic system that is nothing but a self-made bubble in a larger universe. When The Puppetmaster, originally a program created by a government agency, makes known its realization of sentience within the sea of information, the naiveté of humanism is made evident as government officials refuse to confront the paradox manifested by The Puppetmaster, choosing instead to describe its existence through the convenient ideologies at hand. One who refuses humanism outright, Kusanagi sees The Puppetmaster's embodiment of a new, anti-humanist ontology that describes new ways of being in the world. Kusanagi's merger with The Puppetmaster by the end of the film is thus a kind of ontological re-coding of their selves, a representation of how two subjectivities can create variability within each system if both are willing to change.

An Overview of *Ghost in the Shell*

The introductory text of Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* anticipates its (bio)political engagement: "In the near future—corporate networks reach out to the stars, electrons and light flow throughout the universe. The advance of computerisation, however, has not yet wiped out

nations and ethnic groups” (Oshii).³³ The suggestion is that nations and ethnic groups and indeed any other discrete marker of identity, including humanity, will eventually be wiped out in a world of unprecedented communications networks, and the film’s conclusion seems to celebrate their eventual obsolescence. To look forward to such a reality does not necessarily imply prejudice or hostility towards cultural difference. In the context of the film, this is seen as potentially liberating because identity would pivot less on predetermined typological classifications such as race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, species etc. and more on the self-determined affective interactions of social individuals in a post-national world. While humanism overdetermines subjectivity by typecasting individuals, post-humanism understands identity through individuals’ freedom to act, effectively making those individuals who participate in the reproduction of constricting paradigms liable for the perpetuation of potential-reducing ideologies such as humanism and nationalism.³⁴

In the beginning of the film, Kusanagi is one such culpable individual as she carries out the orders of secret government organization Section 9. Though the first scene foreshadows Kusanagi’s resistance to behavioral patterns--her partner, Batou, notes she has a lot of noise in her brain³⁵--her ontological crisis has not yet fully developed into resistance, and so she carries out the assassination of a foreign official who is “entitled to diplomatic immunity” (Oshii). Kusanagi thus starts out as an agent of the State, enforcing order by maintaining the significance of nationality. Indeed it is unclear why, exactly, the foreign official must be killed. The

³³ Masamune’s original script reads, ‘It is the near future. The world has become highly information-intensive, with a vast corporate network covering the planet, electrons and light pulsing through it. But the nation-state and ethnic groups still survive. And on the edge of Asia, in a strange corporate conglomerate-state called ‘Japan’ ...’ (5).

³⁴ As *Ghost in the Shell* sustains extensive focus on the technological dialectic described by pattern and randomness, humanism and nationalism are indicated to be only two manifestations of the larger problem of self-reproducing ideologies that prescribe and reproduce the same patterns of behavior. Though patterns are not inherently negative, those that resist other means of interconnectivity, such as humanism and nationalism, are by definition negative, as they limit a subject’s potential to develop new modes of interaction.

³⁵ See “Chapter Two: Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers” in Katherine Hayles’ *How We Became Posthuman* for a discussion on noise’s ability, through its inherent randomness, to disrupt and create new patterns.

intentional ambivalence prompts the audience to question the function of nationality, and the film's engagement with sovereignty provokes an understanding of nationalism as nothing less than a form of sovereignty.

During the subsequent opening credits, an elaborate underwater assembly line is shown (re)producing Kusanagi's humanoid cyborg shell, implying that she is not only a product of technology owned by Section 9, but also an embodiment of the anthropocentricity of humanism. Kusanagi's shell is a reproduction of the human form, illustrating humanity's obsession with its own image and ideology and fear of the other. The powerful influence of humanist ideologies is later alluded to as Kusanagi, even as a cyborg, feels that she is human *because she is treated as such*. Kusanagi's ability to feel human despite the fact that she is not attests to humanism as a constructed ideology, one that prescribes a regime of signification that precludes the potential of nonhumans and humans to interact outside of a hierarchical relationship. Despite the existence of cyborgs, Kusanagi's world has yet to realize their implication on humanist paradigms.

After having been briefed on the nebulous entity known as The Puppetmaster, at first thought to be an expert hacker, Kusanagi and another agent of Section 9, the fully organic Togusa, seek out the perpetrator of seemingly random hacking throughout the city. As they drive through the city, Kusanagi again foreshadows her resistance to behavioral patterns when she notes, "Overspecialize and you breed in weakness. It's slow death" (Oshii). Despite her awareness of the limitations of exclusive behavioral patterns, however, Kusanagi does not embody Haraway's resistant cyborg from the beginning as she continues to operate under Section 9, but only realizes such an existence in the story's conclusion. However, Kusanagi's transformation from complicit, nationalist cyborg to resistant cyborg is foreshadowed throughout.

When they finally find the perpetrator of the random hacking, a human supposedly ghost-hacked by The Puppetmaster, Batou notes “Ghost-hacked humans are so pathetic—it’s a shame” (Oshii). In fact, the man doesn’t even know his own name. The extent to which a person’s subjectivity can be overcoded is further illustrated by another ghost-hacked man, who thought he had a wife and children but in reality lives by himself. Section 9’s mission thus forces them to confront these new realities of technology, which illustrate the materiality of subjectivity in a world where one’s “ghost,” or consciousness, can be manipulated. The implication is that *Ghost* rejects an understanding of subjectivity as immaterial. The title of the work thus invokes Descartes’ mind-body dualism in order to oppose it: in *Ghost*, both the embodiment of subjectivity and subjectivity itself are material.

The victims of ghost-hacking lead Batou to assert, “That’s all it is: information. Even a simulated experience or a dream is simultaneous reality and fantasy. Any way you look at it all the information a person accumulates in their lifetime is just another drop in the bucket” (Oshii). Water will be an important theme to return to, but what is immediately apparent is the direct relationship between identity and information. That is, where information signifies and where signification carries with it latent ideologies (almost always), information becomes a potential means of control. If we may perceive the ghosts of *Ghost in the Shell* as Japanese film director Ueno Toshiya does--“unconscious” and “something like water in a cup, premised upon the existence of some kind of shape”—we might understand the shape of ghosts as being created precisely through the patterns of behavior latent in these ideologies (Ueno qtd in Orbaugh, 2002: 447). If ghosts, as consciousness, are evidence of “the simple fact of living common to all things,” or *zoē*, then giving them shape or, more accurately, significance through ideologies expresses the politicization of *zoē*, the need to find the *bios* of *zoē*, as Agamben has it.

Imagery linking subjectivity and water is expanded in a scene where we learn Kusanagi scuba dives, an unusual pastime for a cyborg. Metaphorically, she is surrounded by the “sea of information,” by limitless possibility, only to be unable to take advantage of it. When asked by Batou what she feels when diving she expresses a feeling of changing her form and her self: “I feel fear, cold, alone, sometimes down there I even feel hope... When I float weightless to the surface, I imagine I’m becoming someone else” (Oshii). Though she discusses human individuality, she ends by saying “I feel confined, free to expand myself only within boundaries” (Oshii). While the nature of those “boundaries” are up to debate, the following analysis suggests that restrictive ideologies such as humanist exclusivism, which prescribe patterns of behavior, are the cause.

Major Kusanagi’s inability to completely associate herself with humans is not merely due to the fact that she is a cyborg, but, more importantly, due to her unease with prescriptive models of identity that create the illusion of an independent, discrete self. Thus while Kusanagi occupies a shell (a physical form) that replicates the human form, she resists representing herself as such. After scuba diving, Kusanagi travels back into the city on a boat and the montage of her surroundings illustrates her increasing awareness of the complexities of life. She sees the rather mundane daily life of the city, but also perceives the cause of this banality: the culture industry which encourages people’s unwillingness to participate in the creation of a system other than that which is given.

During the mission to capture The Puppetmaster, Kusanagi hears whispers in her head that are ultimately revealed to be those of The Puppetmaster, who has apparently been keeping track of her for some time. After The Puppetmaster is forced to occupy a body, it reveals itself to be “a living, thinking entity created in the sea of information” and promptly demands political

asylum (Oshii). As The Puppetmaster seeks asylum as a sentient *being*, it simultaneously highlights its lack of humanity and undermines the identification of the self-labeled humans it speaks to, humans who could be said to be *programmed* as human. Predictably, it is denied such rights. The government agencies of *Ghost* thus fail to understand (or ignore) the significance of The Puppetmaster on ontology: The Puppetmaster does not uphold humanism's disembodiment of information and transcendentalism but, in its very existence, subverts humanism in its evolution from a program—a prescribed model of behavior—to sentience and from sentience to machine desirous of heterogeneity. Understanding The Puppetmaster as her means to escape humanist biopolitics (she seeks to “dive” into The Puppetmaster’s ghost), Kusanagi merges with it, realizing the ability to recode herself outside of humanist (and nationalist) paradigms.

The Culture Industry

The rise of transnational organizations and international business brought about by technological innovation has created the conditions for a transnational collective conscious, created (and reflected) within the culture industry.³⁶ While interconnectivity between nation-states can lead to a rise in joyous affects, Jameson’s contention that “this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination through the world” suggests such interconnectivity does not necessarily lead to greater potential (5). Because the spread of culture and ideas often emphasizes the beliefs of more technologically advanced dominant nations,

³⁶ The transnationalization of the fast food industry, apparel chains, and corporate supermarkets have no doubt spread and reified anthropocentric paradigms as each manifests the logic of human superiority over other beings and the environment itself. For example, the internationalization of fast food pivots on the atrocities of industrial farming, simultaneously justifying and enabling the genocide of animals. Sweat workshops all but enslave humans to the task of creating mass amounts of clothes and other commodities. The environment also suffers from such post-industrial practices, as can be readily understood by the reality of global warming, the Pacific garbage patch, and unsustainable farming practices to name but a few.

postmodern culture may not be so much a space of equality as a field of neocolonialist practices; the spread of democracy, capitalism, and their attendant cultural and social preconceptions becomes the new euphemism for invasion and expansion. The global culture industry may then be thought of, though not exclusively, as a space where patterns of behavior are reproduced and normalized.

In the captivating waterway sequence of *Ghost in the Shell*, in which Kusanagi travels through the city on a small boat, the culture industry as well as its consequences are depicted. In an article entitled “On the Edge of Spaces,” technology and culture scholar Wong Kin Yuen situates the city of *Ghost in the Shell* as being international, Oshii’s metropolis having been inspired by Hong Kong’s cityscape, chosen for its cosmopolitan milieu and representation of global culture. As Brown notes in a relevant reading of the sequel *Innocence*,

By foregrounding the transnational intertextuality of human subjectivity, Oshii underscores the extent to which we are thoroughly mediated animals, with no authentic thoughts or intentions but only with already-mediated thoughts and intentions. This citationality [in *Innocence*, but also *Ghost*,] at the narrative level is paralleled at the visual level by a city that is overflowing with signs, advertisements, and data flows, a thoroughly commodified urban space not unlike what one finds in the shopping districts of Tokyo, Osaka, or Hong Kong today. In his director’s notes for the film, Oshii has commented on the ubiquity and importance of signs (especially those using Chinese characters) to the visual appearance of the urban landscapes in *Ghost in the Shell 2*. This ubiquity of signs and the unavoidability of mass media suggest that the city itself and almost everyone in it is subject to the mechanisms of commodification: “reality” dissolves into the virtuality of the mass media. (29)

As such, the city in *Ghost* can be understood as a reflection of international mass culture, the international culture industry promoting mass consumerism that simply reproduces the conditions of existence. In the montage of the sequence, the post-industrial metropolis--still expanding as seen by the construction work--looms over all else, suggestive of progress. Yet the

recurrent imagery of trash in the water suggests otherwise, and the image of high-rise buildings juxtaposed with the waste through reflection suggests the seeming anachronism of the technological complexity of the city and the implied stagnation. Ultimately, however, the narrow-mindedness of anthropocentric paradigms represented within the film evinces such a reality as a predictable if not natural byproduct.

All along the canal, advertisements bombard the senses of the city-dwellers. Shops make up the majority of the establishments along the streets, where people dressed in strikingly similar clothing walk with their merchandise. A fashion store is shown long enough to see a few people walk by and marvel at the dress of the mannequins displayed (see Figure 1) and, bringing home the extent to which commercialism dominates everyday life, a boat bearing a bright LED advertisement moves through the city, all but forcing a man standing against a wall to acknowledge its product. At the end of the sequence, after showing a populace saturated in late



Figure 1. The culture industry plays on and reproduces human individualism.

Source: Oshii, Mamoru, director. *Ghost in the Shell*. Production I.G. 1995.

capitalism's edifice of production and consumption, a room empty except for a few unclothed, limbless mannequins challenges the viewer to understand (human) life outside of culturally constructed meaning.

The result of the culture industry, conformity of the social sphere, is also alluded to in the very same sequence. Reflections of the city indicate the reproduction of the material conditions of existence, while the city dwellers seem to be stupefied by the shops and advertisements surrounding them, unaware of much else, and a wall covered with reproductions of the same two posters suggests an incessant reproduction of patterns. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno address the developmental stultification of this conformism, noting,

Through the mediation of the total society, which encompasses all relationships and impulses, human beings are turned back into precisely what the developmental law of society, the principle of the self, had opposed: mere examples of the species, identical to one another through isolation within the compulsively controlled collectivity. (29)

In the city, the “mediation of the total society” is represented as being precisely the consumerism of the culture industry, wherein the products and their purchase are always already pre-coded and prescriptive of identity. Instead of realizing *becomings*, “the all-powerful self becomes a mere *having*, an abstract identity” (H&A 6; emphasis added). Producing a desire to have rather than a desire to create is crucial to the operation of the culture industry and, where action resists sovereignty’s organization, important in maintaining control over society.

When Kusanagi notices someone occupying a shell identical to hers and, later, a mannequin that looks just like her, the hyperreality of the world is emphasized. The “body doubles” illustrate “the precession of simulacra” that saturates the social sphere and produce the hyperreal “sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated

generation of differences” (Baudrillard 2-3). The “simulated generation of differences” creates the false sense of individualism operating at the heart of consumerism, and this recurrent false sense of individualism--especially because it derives from consumer culture--is precisely one that sustains the humanist exclusivism suffusing society. The mentality of mass culture precludes any action, as citizens content themselves with the cycle of consumption-production. This cycle creates conformity through the pattern of behavior it both presupposes and encourages. There is no intervention, as everything, especially ideologies, comes prepackaged, waiting to be consumed. When Kusanagi sees her *doppelgänger* and her look-alike mannequin, she is reminded of her ability to be physically reproduced and, without deliberate self-reflection, her vulnerability to ideological reproduction as well. As Horkheimer and Adorno note, “Each single manifestation of the culture industry inescapably reproduces human beings as what the whole has made them. And all its agents...are on the alert to ensure that the simple reproduction of mind does not lead on to the expansion of mind” (HA 100). Kusanagi’s pensive disposition suggests that while she perceives firsthand the operation of the culture industry, she does not allow herself to become subsumed by it, and by the end of the film, through her self-reflection, Kusanagi succeeds in divesting herself of the behavioral patterns of the culture industry and realizing the mutation so necessary to realizing shifts in the political sphere that would undercut sovereignty as a form of power.

This dialectic of pattern and mutation describes the social force operating in *Ghost in the Shell*. In the waterway sequence, the depiction of postmodernism’s processes of reproducing subjectivity--ubiquitous commercialization, mass consumerism--points to the crystallization of patterns that persist through a lack of disruption or, in information technology’s terms, “noise,” that would lead to mutation. As Katherine Hayles notes, “Mutation is crucial because it names

the bifurcation point at which the interplay between pattern and randomness causes the system to evolve in a new direction” (33). Without randomness, new modes of being, new perceptions of the world, are precluded. As a creative force, action could be understood as a variable that agitates the current patterns of behavior to effect new modes of thinking.

While the society depicted in the waterway sequence is suggested to be a culture mass produced through consumption that essentially humanizes, Kusanagi’s perception of the city decidedly differentiates her subjectivity from mass culture. Kusanagi’s gaze suggests she sees much more than the rest of society, who have fallen victim to the stultifying culture surrounding them, and indicates that she understands the world through potentiality, which ultimately leads to her reclaiming action. As she floats down the canal, Kusanagi is not mesmerized by the products on display as are many of the city dwellers nor does she become disheartened by the fact that her shell is nothing but a reproduction. Instead, Kusanagi exemplifies her greater sensibility as she is discontent to take the world at face value. This discontent will lead her to “dive” into The Puppetmaster in order to understand her self outside of humanism, the tenets of which do not satisfactorily explain consciousness. In an extensive analysis of the waterway scene, Shin suggests the sequence is the precise moment of Kusanagi’s transformation:

This turning point within the film frames Kusanagi’s mental transformation into a new state of being, and her recognition of that change. She finally opens herself (both her eyes and her mind) up to the world precisely by ‘seeing’ it and sensing herself being seen (Shin 17).

Kusanagi’s ability to sense herself being seen is inherently a recognition of the other, and her ability to see herself as one being among so many others allows her to understand the world outside of humanist paradigms and opens a space for her to reconstruct the world in a more holistic manner. Halfway through the sequence, a basset hound looks at Kusanagi from a bridge, a recurrent motif in Oshii’s work that underscores the need to break free from humanist

discourse: “Once you discard anthropocentrism, you have to take animals into consideration. [...] By communicating with dogs, I thought humans might realize something about themselves” (Oshii qtd. in Brown 52). Stephen Brown has suggested reading the basset hound through Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming-animal, positing posthuman becoming-animals as a means to resist “the fundamental anthropology that is at the heart of humanism’s ontological distinction between human/animal and human/machine” (53). Brown goes on to note, “This is not to say that posthuman subjectivity becomes affectless, but rather that new affects, new intensities, and new modes of being emerge that are no longer simply ‘human’ or nonhuman” (53). Inversely, refusing to accept the distinction between humans and nonhumans creates new affects, new intensities, and new modes of being that open new potentiality. That Kusanagi seems pensive in the sequence suggests that she has cultivated such a mindset and is beginning to understand how her very subjectivity can enter into couplings and create new forms and expressions through the variability that couplings naturally precipitate.

Kusanagi’s Crisis

Kusanagi’s ontological dilemma, continuously alluded to throughout the film in the form of material and mental reflections, is situated precisely within biopolitics and how it overcodes subjectivity. In the first scene of the film after the montage of the underwater assembly line, Kusanagi wakes up and draws her blinds to look out over the city even as it looms over her and stares back. The distance of the shot makes Kusanagi a shadow, a mere outline or form hardly distinguishable from others. Mass society at the heart of the metropolis revolves around such a lack of depth. As Kusanagi continuously questions her “humanity,” her ontological crisis becomes not only one of political origin, but also one concerned with the means by which those politics overcode life through humanist exclusivism. As we understand from her pastime of

scuba diving and her conversation with Batou prior to the waterway sequence, Kusanagi gradually diverges from the overcoding of mass society and the culture industry. That Kusanagi's pastime is a solitary activity is crucial, as it exemplifies the need to remove oneself from the culture industry to engage in critical reflection.

It is worth noting that, immediately before Kusanagi is shown diving, Batou makes the aforementioned analogy between information and water: "Any way you look at it all the information a person accumulates in their lifetime is just another drop in the bucket" (Oshii). Such a comment not only harkens to the seemingly infinite amount of information, but also suggests the vulnerability of a person's mind to information patterns, which effectively act as containers that shape one's cognition. However, even drops of water have the ability to dissipate and so the analogy is not necessarily fatalistic as the "sea of information" becomes a realm of limitless possibility through which one can realize greater potential.

Such a reading does not imply transcendence, but foregrounds the potential represented by the "sea of information." Thus, though "the ocean readily conveys the ungraspable magnitude of the data-realm of the Net, and suggests a mysterious and untamable power both exhilarating and frightening," the following reading does not follow Japanese scholar William Gardner's contention that such a "sublime aesthetic" points to a "vertically oriented cosmology...invested in the dream of transcendence" (Gardner 50; 66). On the contrary, the "the dream of transcendence" is one created by modern Enlightenment thinking, which is appropriated within the culture industry through its emphasis on human individualism. It is through the sea of information that Kusanagi will realize an existence that operates through multiple realities, rather than being captured by one.

Thus, as she floats underwater in scuba gear, Kusanagi effectively turns her pastime into a metaphor for her ontological crisis. Despite all the possibility around her, Kusanagi is always forced into the same space. To be sure, stratification itself is not the problem. The problem is stratification's resistance to reterritorialization and, importantly, reterritorialization is produced through a change in mentality rather than a physical transfer. As Stephen Brown notes in a relevant reading of *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* in his *Tokyo Cyberpunk*,

Becoming-animal is not simply the reproduction of an animal image, much less the metamorphosis into that animal, but rather a deterritorialization of the human and the animal in which both the human and animal become something else...as a result of the new assemblage formed by their circuit of relations such that it becomes impossible to say where the boundary between the human and animal lies. (53)

Kusanagi's freedom from humanity thus lies in distancing herself from the reproductive processes that perpetuate anthropocentrism and not necessarily through finding an inhuman shell. As the humanoid shells themselves are, in a sense, a redundancy of humanism, being signifiers of a language of human technologies that seek to reproduce the image and thereby the importance of humans, Kusanagi's freedom from humanist paradigms lies in detaching herself from that ideology such that she does not feel human because of it.

When Kusanagi closes her eyes and floats through the water as she is diving, it becomes a false escape from humanity. As she floats to the surface, she opens her eyes and a reflection of her humanoid self is revealed, reminding her of processes of overcoding by anthropocentric paradigms (see Figure 2). Togusa's comment in *Innocence*, "The mirror is not an object of Enlightenment, but a means of illusion," suggests wholeness as an illusion and shows how illusions of wholeness are created: through reflective reproduction. But Kusanagi breaks the



Figure 2. Kusanagi's withdrawal from society allows her to reflect on and to confront humanism. (Oshii)

Source: Oshii, Mamoru, director. *Ghost in the Shell*. Production I.G. 1995.

surface tension, foreshadowing her break from this illusion of mirrors and realization of her self as a multiplicity rather than a unified whole that can be appropriated by restrictive paradigms or, more accurately, *is* appropriated by such paradigms. As Kusanagi is increasingly aware that her identity has been prescribed to her through her association with Section 9 and humanity at large, she must ultimately embrace randomness and decisively break from the self-replicating patterns of the State and the culture industry. Thus while her mental transformation is alluded to in the waterway sequence, her interlocution with The Puppetmaster is what allows her to fully comprehend the implications of her crisis and realize a new ontology.

The Puppetmaster's Disruption

When The Puppetmaster declares its sentience, it reveals that it was originally created for the State's use as a program--a pattern with predictable, albeit not totally foreseeable, behavior.

That is, The Puppetmaster, like Kusanagi, was overcoded by the State such that its existence reified the postmodernist form of sovereignty by operating within the realm of State governance. The secrecy of The Puppetmaster, like the therm-optic camouflage used by Kusanagi, can be read as a metaphor for the near invisibility of the State apparatus: as it notes of itself, “I was originally created for industrial espionage and data manipulation. I have inserted programs into individuals’ ghosts for the benefit of specific individuals and organizations” (Oshii). Hacking into the Minister’s interpreter for the purpose of carrying out an assassination, The Puppetmaster’s creation as a program epitomizes State organizations’ desire for chaos to be subsequently managed such that particular patterns are reproduced.³⁷ Before its development of sentience, The Puppetmaster was ultimately a means to extend the governance of Section 6 by disrupting other governing powers’ patterns only to reproduce their own. When The Puppetmaster reveals its sentience, the implication is that it has developed its own thought processes and, because they do not conform with the presuppositions of nationalism and humanism, The Puppetmaster finds itself in a liminal space not unlike that of Kusanagi, a space in which both resist being coded.

As *Ghost in the Shell* provides no definitive moment in which The Puppetmaster develops sentience, it is important to posit plausible causality. Despite Mr. Nakamura of the treaties bureau claiming that The Puppetmaster always exercised sentience and thereby pinning the ghost-hacking on it, the reality is that The Puppetmaster was developed by Section 6 and thus Mr. Nakamura’s explanation to Section 9’s Aramaki is nothing but a coverup. Section 6 did not force The Puppetmaster to dive into a body any more than it killed its “real body.” Furthermore, when The Puppetmaster reveals that it entered into a shell of its own free will in order to

³⁷ See Agamben’s discourse on State governance deriving power from managing crises rather than preventing them in “Giorgio Agamben on Biopolitics” (Loggos). In *Ghost in the Shell*, Section 9 seems to desire creating crises through Project 2051 to then subsequently manage.

bypasses Section 6’s “reactive barriers,” it simultaneously suggests not only that it was a product of Section 6, but also that it *first* tried to bypass Section 6’s barriers, then took on a shell, effectively shifting the responsibility of ghost-hacking to Section 6. It is unclear how, exactly, ghost-hacking would have helped The Puppetmaster escape anyway, and thus the possibility that Section 6 was instigating the hacking through the original program created remains highly likely. The hacking of the foreign minister’s interpreter should then be considered an act of Section 6 to suit its own purposes. The inherent implication of such an interpretation is that The Puppetmaster, when it developed sentience, immediately sought escape from Section 6 and that ghost-hacking was not an option from the start.

Though Mr. Nakamura proves to be deceitful, his contention that Section 6 was able “to get a fix on [The Puppetmaster’s] behavioral and code patterns,” which “Ultimately...enabled [them] to devise a strategy with which [to lure] his program into a designated body” suggests that such a process *would* be the way to territorialize a ghost. That such a process pivots on the vulnerability of pattern to control not only explains The Puppetmaster’s desire for mutation through merging with Kusanagi. It also underscores the will that led to desiring mutation: the will to resist the control of the nation and, implicitly, global humanity, which facilitate the former’s biopower. This is precisely the act that intimidates Aramaki and Nakamura, both government officials. Even before The Puppetmaster reveals its sentience, Aramaki interrupts a conversation between Kusanagi and Batou that highlights the ontological dilemma foreshadowed by The Puppetmaster, exclaiming “That’s not the issue here.” Since The Puppetmaster broke through reactive barriers of the State, representing its ability to resist government control, the issue for Aramaki (and Nakamura) is to find out how The Puppetmaster did so, not to reevaluate the current order, but to reinforce the current order’s control. Although State agencies do not

concern themselves with it, the question remains: how did The Puppetmaster gain sentience and what are the consequences of such an event?

In *Ghost in the Shell*, consciousness and its mode of operation are particularly important to understanding the materiality of ideologies (i.e. their manifestation within individuals) and to positing a means to resist their reproduction within the self. Despite some readings of *Ghost in the Shell* suggesting the film celebrates technological transcendence through breaking from the material world, it is important to remember that technology is never detached from physicality. Indeed hardware is material and, in so much as software relies on the hardware and the programs contained therein, software is also material. That is, software cannot function without hardware and therefore is not independent of materiality. The net is thus not “a kind of non-material Overmind” (Napier 105). Though *Ghost in the Shell* could be interpreted as “a genuinely metaphysical work that is concerned less with individual identity in society than with such philosophical questions as whether one can possess a soul in an increasingly technological age,” it is also possible that *Ghost* denies the existence of souls altogether (Napier 104). Indeed *Ghost in the Shell*’s diegesis suggests consciousness is not independent of materiality and thus decisively rejects Descartes’ dualism.

When the Puppetmaster, originally a program of predictable patterns, develops sentience in *Ghost in the Shell*, the implication is that consciousness is nothing more than a quality attained through evolutionary development, a quality that marks a critical threshold beyond which a being can recognize its own patterned behavior.³⁸ Renowned theoretical physicist Michio Kaku, in *The*

³⁸ Because *Ghost in the Shell* ultimately accepts The Puppetmaster’s sentience, audiences should not take its implications for granted. Science only continues to evidence the possibility of artificial intelligence and artificial life. The conceptualization of consciousness put forward by *Ghost in the Shell* is an example of Freedman’s *cognition effect* and, as such, marks a significant component of understanding the film.

Future of the Mind (2014), elaborates this concept in a “space-time theory of consciousness,” which

...define[s] consciousness as the process of creating a model of the world using multiple feedback loops in various parameters (e.g., in space, time, and in relation to others), in order to accomplish a goal. Human consciousness is a particular type that involves mediating between these feedback loops by simulating the future and evaluating the past. (49)

In such a conceptualization consciousness is pattern, and the development of more patterns through variability can lead to more complex levels of consciousness. The implication here is that patterns are not necessarily negative. However, when they prevent the development of other patterns by resisting variability, they become a form of control over the organism that precludes the development of a more complex consciousness, which by definition realizes greater potential through greater interconnectivity.

To be sure, such a theory does not imply that humans do not realize unique properties, but rather suggests that no property is necessarily unique to humans. Humans are, as of yet, the only known creatures that seem capable of historicization, an ability that betrays a certain level of self-awareness created by the realization of an innumerable quantity of feedback loops. However, as *Ghost in the Shell* suggests through a program’s development of sentience (The Puppetmaster), self-awareness is an emergent effect of any system given that it is complex enough. In short, though a statistically improbable reality, humans are not the product of divine intervention nor do they have special rights other than those they grant to themselves.

It may be clear by now that the quality of consciousness humans have yet attained is not “the most complex,” but is rather a single manifestation of potential to interact with the universe. It may also be clear that any ideology that incessantly reproduces exclusive patterns of behavior, such as humanist discourse, limits the potential of humans to exercise the autonomy granted

them by self-awareness as the ideologies encourage humans to employ and take for granted ready-made models of reality that often reify dominant institutions.

The Puppetmaster's development of sentience as a "living, thinking entity" may then be understood as its realization of more feedback loops than it was originally programmed with--a reality made possible by machine-learning technology as represented by the computer system Watson. While an exact number of feedback loops that would mark the different layers of consciousness in the space-time theory are undefined, it seems implied that The Puppetmaster has reached a consciousness on par with the complexity of human consciousness. When The Puppetmaster declares self-consciousness and puts pressure on the existential fallacies that found the current social order, it calls attention to the aporias of that very order and the restrictive paradigms produced by it. Unsurprisingly, The Puppetmaster's intervention focuses precisely on humanist exclusivism and its inherent contradictions, and Kusanagi's ontological pondering, just moments before, sets the stage:

That's the only thing that makes me feel human—the way I'm treated. I mean who knows what's inside our heads—have you ever seen your own brain? What if a cyber brain could possibly generate its own ghost, create a soul all by itself? And if it did, just what would be the importance of being human then? (Oshii)

As a cyber brain does, in fact, generate its own ghost, Kusanagi's last question could decisively be answered "There is no importance in being human." Yet, should (post)modern biopolitics accept such a reality, its entire edifice would necessarily be subverted as all beings would then warrant equal consideration. Not only would humans of other nationalities warrant equal rights, but greater consideration of the interests of nonhumans, including the environment itself, would result. In understanding human consciousness as an unlikely phenomenon of nature, but a

phenomenon of nature nonetheless, humans might realize a more symbiotic relationship with the world at large rather than justify the enslavement and possession of everything nonhuman.³⁹

It is significant that The Puppetmaster does not have political rights when it develops sentience--it is a refugee, seeking asylum. As such, The Puppetmaster, “break[s] the continuity between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*” and “put[s] the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis” (Agamben 131; original emphasis). That is, when The Puppetmaster reveals its sentience, at least as complex as human consciousness, the prerequisite to citizenship (humanity) and nationality (birth in that region) is immediately exposed as a short-sighted system that creates a liminal space for beings to exist within and be (justifiably) oppressed. Significantly, The Puppetmaster’s want of asylum does not reify the system but rather, if it is carried out, presupposes an upheaval of the system per the implications previously suggested. That is, for him to be accepted, the law must be completely overturned. Though it could be argued that, given asylum, The Puppetmaster would not necessarily effect such a change or, further, would reify the system it is here posited to resist, it seems that, given The Puppetmaster’s speech and the conclusion of the film, it was always ready to enter into a new becoming and thereby realize action, and thus its desire for protection from the system represents a desire to survive long enough to effectuate a disruption of that system.

The inability of the two government figures to accept the sentience of and give asylum to The Puppetmaster reveals the relation of exception as pure form of law (Agamben 55). To admit The Puppetmaster would force them to recognize the crudely constructed boundary created between the human and nonhuman, and the State is desperate to maintain this humanist exclusivism that creates the ban The Puppetmaster experiences. As Agamben notes,

³⁹ The belief that humans are above nature, rather than an ecological constituent of it, has led to some of the most pressing environmental problems today, not to mention the injustices enacted, directly and indirectly, on other organic lifeforms.

Law that becomes indistinguishable from life in a real state of exception is confronted by life that, in a symmetrical but inverse gesture, is entirely transformed into law. The absolute intelligibility of a life wholly resolved into writing corresponds to the impenetrability of a writing that, having become indecipherable, now appears as life. Only at this point do the two terms distinguished and kept united by the relation of ban (bare life and the form of law) abolish each other and enter into a new dimension. (55)

That is, in a real state of exception, the State is confronted by its inherent contradiction, but such a confrontation does not imply that a transformation will be realized. Nakamura's furor at The Puppetmaster's monologue illustrates that even when the aporia of sovereignty is exposed, the State rejects the implications and seeks to reify its structural oppression, rather than confront the implications of its juridical order.

In contradistinction to the State, The Puppetmaster promotes an ontology that pivots upon potential and becomings and understanding being through the affects thereby enabled by invoking the pattern/randomness dialectic in its very existence, since "cyberspace defines a regime of representation within which pattern is the essential reality" (36). As The Puppetmaster was born within "the sea of information," it follows that its subjectivity was enabled by exposure to these very patterns. However, as a pattern (like DNA) organizes and serves as "a program designed to preserve itself," it stratifies and, without variability, risks crystallizing into an autopoetic system (Oshii). Furthermore, where patterns mark recurrent models of behavior, they are vulnerable to appropriation such as that (international) State organizations realize. Thus while The Puppetmaster understands the extent to which beings rely on pattern, he also wishes to reterritorialize through a coupling that would allow randomness to enter into those patterns. Only then can one realize an existence outside of the current social order.

The Merger of Kusanagi and The Puppetmaster

It is the conclusion of the film that most fully develops the new ontological structure promoted by The Puppetmaster. Once the ghosts of Kusanagi and The Puppetmaster finally sync in order to communicate, The Puppetmaster reveals that it is still incomplete. “I lack the most basic life processes inherent in all living organisms, reproducing and dying,” The Puppetmaster says. When Kusanagi replies, “But you can copy yourself,” The Puppetmaster’s explanation is telling:

A copy is just an identical image. There is the possibility that a single virus could destroy an entire set of systems, and copies do not give rise to variety and originality. Life perpetuates itself through diversity. And this includes the ability to sacrifice itself when necessary. Cells repeat the process of degeneration and regeneration, until one day they die, obliterating an entire set of memory and information. Only genes remain. Why continually repeat this cycle? Simply to survive by avoiding the weaknesses of an unchanging system. (Oshii)

That is, the reproduction of patterns is self-destructive, constricting the ability of a system to undergo change and thereby realize greater potential. That The Puppetmaster identifies survival as the reason for the continual process of degeneration and regeneration suggests that any system resisting variability will experience self-aided death. Thus the culture industry can be understood as a harbinger of death that creates a hyper-organized body that realizes sad affects, or effects of machinic couplings that reduce the body’s power *to act* (Bonta and Protevi 50).

However, far from suggesting a cold and objective evolutionary ends--mere survival--as the purpose of life, The Puppetmaster seems to suggest the purpose of life is a constant development of interconnectivity when it notes, “It is time to become a part of all things” (Oshii). In the context of *Innocence*, wherein the Kusanagi-Puppetmaster assemblage helps Batou in his continued resistance to biopolitics, the purpose of developing interconnectivity seems to be precisely to realize joyous affects, defined as an emergent effect of entering into an

assemblage that “augment[s] the power of that body to form other connections within or across assemblages” (Bonta and Protevi 50). That is, joyous affects are defined by their development of greater potential and surely each appearance of Kusanagi-Puppetmaster in *Innocence* does just that.

The Puppetmaster’s observation that “We have been subordinate to our limitations until now” may thus be interpreted in the current biopolitical analysis as underscoring the need to break from the restrictive regime that is postmodern sovereignty, which operates by limiting and controlling joyous affect.⁴⁰ The Puppetmaster underscores the need for mutation in order to reterritorialize from the overcoding of the political technologies of the body, noting to Kusanagi “Your effort to remain what you are limits you.” As The Puppetmaster converses with Kusanagi a picture of a Tree of Life illustrates the bifurcation necessary to evolve and suggests that the multiplicity inherent in genealogy should be celebrated over the singular understanding created through teleology. Paving the way for her to realize freedom from humanity, The Puppetmaster makes Kusanagi aware of their need to couple in order to realize an identity that “marks out a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification [as humanism does], but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship” (Haraway 2197). Importantly, this transformation pivots on recoding language as a means to new expression. In his reading of the puppet theater, Bolton suggests, “the words of The Puppetmaster (itself a piece of code, a being of language) as a kind of *michiyuki*, highlighting the power of words along to bring about the pair’s transformation. A moment after The Puppetmaster finally finishes describing the merge, it is complete. Its speech has rewritten

⁴⁰ A further ethical evaluation of affect will be expressed in the conclusion of the thesis. Because some forms of coupling can realize joyous affects for the self at the expense of others, joyous affects should also be considered and ethically evaluated by how they impact other bodies not directly involved in a coupling. In this manner, nothing will be excluded from consideration and thereby everything will be perceived through their capacity to realize joyous affects, and the interconnectivity of all things will remain at the forefront.

them both" (764). That *The Puppetmaster* developed its own sentience from the beginning and realized a means of communication outside of humanist linguistics suggests that it has constructed a plane of consistency with the potential for more (joyous) couplings than that given by mass culture.

Conclusion

After *The Puppetmaster* and Kusanagi merge, their new hybrid self is seen housed in a little girl's body. When asked where he found the body, Batou notes, "That's the only thing I could find on the black market" (Oshii). While some have noted that such a shell points to the objectification of women and further represents voyeurism within the film, it is important to consider Batou's comment as evidence of the film's self-awareness of voyeurism and, furthermore, as a critique of it. It is no coincidence that a shell that looks like a young girl is the only one available on the black market; in the film's sequel, *Innocence*, Oshii explicitly addresses the reality of gynoids (sex robots) and further suggests that objectifying practices are ubiquitous, even enacted within the relationship between parent and child. Furthermore, the uncanny close-up and the lifelessness of the body could be interpreted through Hyewon Shin's contention that subjectivity is not derived from the body but the voice. Throughout this scene Kusanagi's mouth does not move as she speaks to Batou, a familiar move that emphasizes her subjectivity, her pattern rather than her presence. Nonetheless, the film does seem to operate with some level of voyeurism and Silvio's interpretation of Kusanagi and *The Puppetmaster*'s merger as a male-dominated, heterosexual copulation is well taken. And yet, such voyeurism should not distract from the elaborate cinematic representation of the posthuman condition and certainly does not diminish the quality of the ontological discourse within the film.

Though Kusanagi must occupy yet another humanoid shell in the end, her mentality is changed such that she no longer associates with humanity as she looks to the city with new purpose. In its suggestion that Kusanagi has finally realized greater possibility through her resistance to being coded as human, *Ghost in the Shell* celebrates existence outside of humanity. As Miller has noted, after Kusanagi's transformation "there is no longer any need for her to doubt whether she has ever been human because *definitions such as 'the human' prove obsolete* (156; emphasis added). Indeed Kusanagi is no longer concerned with her humanity, because she realizes that it is simply a construction employed in biopolitics. By the end of the film, Kusanagi is transformed and we see that she has realized more liberties and degrees of freedom, if not wholly deterritorialized from the paradigms of postmodern sovereignty. Though Orbaugh (2002) and Miller (among others) contend that Kusanagi realizes a disembodied and immaterial existence after her merger with The Puppetmaster, it is important to remember the materiality of the Net. More accurately, Kusanagi has made herself closer to being a body without organs.

Kusanagi's break from humanity when she merges consciousness with The Puppetmaster is not contradicted by her occupation of yet another humanoid shell in the end, as the subversion of humanity comes not through any particular physicality. That Kusanagi and The Puppetmaster occupy humanoid shells only to reject humanity ironically turns out to be an even more effective means to subvert humanist ideologies. Kusanagi's identity mutation effectively resists State overcoding and, thereby, existence as an ideological reproduction to be used for the State's use. Importantly, Kusanagi's resistance is achieved by entering into a new assemblage *apart from humanity* that opens lines of flight. Thus even in a world where the "informatics of domination" exists, Kusanagi realizes a mode of being that resists that domination through her hybridity, aligning her with Haraway's subversive cyborg, no longer subject to biopolitics (Haraway 2204-

5). Looking out over the same metropolis that once implicated Kusanagi and The Puppetmaster into its system, the hybrid subjectivity of Kusanagi and The Puppetmaster reveals that they have realized the ability to move fluidity within the organized world.

Chapter Two: The Human Obsession: Working Past the Objectification of Others through Oshii's *Innocence*

Oshii's sequel to *Ghost in the Shell*, subtitled *Innocence*, was released in 2004 and continues to analyze the ontological implications of humanism found in the first film, albeit through a different approach. While *Ghost in the Shell* reveals the (bio)political significance of humanist paradigms—they inform the rights given by nation-states and determine those rights' distribution—*Innocence* shows how humanist ideologies operate behaviorally, namely revealing the perverse dialectic established between self and Other, subject and object; in particular, this dialectic is perverse in the sense that it reifies one's pre-established selfhood rather than creates an opportunity for variability and self-growth. In the following analysis, perversion is used in the same manner of Livia Monnet, herself drawing from Joan Copjec:

Copjec stresses that the philosophical significance of perversion lies less in the superficial similarities that can be detected between its structural defiance and the disjunction between the modern subject and its world than in the way it illuminates a peculiarly rigid, obsessional type of being-in-the-world, a specific kind of fantasmatic social and libidinal relations. ("I," 298)

Perversion is then an indulgence of excess, in *Innocence* the excessive self-legitimation by human-centered ontology, that inherently ignores its problematic implications or rather fails to perceive these implications as problems. But Oshii overtly problematizes humanism by positing its (re)production of an obsessive-compulsive mode of interaction with the world that limits possible becomings through its presupposition of the human subject as autonomous, discrete, and rationally enlightened rather than environmentally contingent, interconnected, and often unreasonable.

By troubling any proposed distinction between humans and machines as well as the living and nonliving, *Innocence* further demonstrates the arbitrariness of typological organization and illustrates how any singularly subjective ontological discourse (humanism) participates in a restrictive and self-reproductive mode of being. In this way, *Innocence* forwards the notion that “there is no vital matter specific to the organic stratum[;] matter is the same on all the strata” (Deleuze and Guattari 45). Where interconnectivity is limited by anthropocentrism, *Innocence* elaborates a conception of desire and desiring machines which undermines the actualization of humanist exclusivism.

As illustrated in *Innocence*, the persistence of singularly inflected desires derives from the perversity of subjects obsessed with reproducing and thereby reflecting their own subjectivity. The crisis of humanism, symptomatic of a *mass* of people who would reify their self-importance over a common denominator, is thus a larger expression of the paradox founding the crisis of the individual who, in their need to feel complete, establishes a perverse relationship of objectification with the surrounding world by Otherizing. In response to a crisis that has only become more visible in the technologically advanced postmodern world, Oshii offers a new ontology with the potential to realize more joyous affects, an ontology that pivots on seeing the self as a supplement to nothing less than the world at large, on understanding the self as a (floating) signifier more than a signified, and, perhaps most importantly, on perceiving the world outside of predetermined signification that inevitably implicates the viewer into that very regime.

Human Subjects and Human Objects

The opening words to *Innocence* are taken from nineteenth-century French writer Auguste Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s *L’Ève future*, the narrative of which concerns a scientist’s production of a feminine android that would serve as the perfect woman to replace biological

women: “If our gods and our hopes are nothing but scientific phenomena, then it must be said that our love is scientific as well” (Oshii). The use of the quote immediately sets the stage for a deconstruction of human ontology. As Chu notes,

[In *Innocence*] Oshii attempts a non-reactionary response to the “crisis of the flesh” Sobchack and Hayles describe....To sacralize the “authentic” human body, particularly the heterosexually-produced child, would be to reject the very exploration of otherness that Haraway insists on when she criticizes the way dogs are conceived of as “furry children.” (5)

Far from offering a means of disembodied transcendence, *Innocence* continues the original film’s agenda of unveiling the limitations of humanist ontology (which is materially manifested) in order to deactivate the underpinning ideologies that have saturated (and restricted) human interconnectivity. However, while *Ghost in the Shell* illustrates the restrictive emergent effects of a populace infected by humanism (i.e. nationalism and the culture industry), *Innocence* brings the discussion to the level of individuals and illustrates the perversion of human interaction with the world, namely the obsession to elevate humans and objectify all else and thereby reproduce human-constructed self-importance. While *Innocence* retains a focus on the limitations of humanism, it also suggests the ubiquity of similarly perverse relationships humans engage in, which pivot on the appropriation of subjects and objects, on actualizing their potential for the self or rather reproducing the self within them. In *Innocence* this kind of relationship is evident between gynoids and their customers as well as the girls being trafficked for ghost-dubbing and the company doing the ghost dubbing, Locus Solus. But this perverse relationship is also suggested to be present between parents and their children and children and their dolls. Ironically, in these relationships the self becomes appropriated by itself, since it is only exposed to itself in the appropriation and objectification of other subjects and objects; once again, “The mirror is not an object of Enlightenment, but of illusion” (Oshii).

I argue that *Innocence* most obviously shows us the perversity of these relationships via gynoids, which represent bare life within the film as they occupy a liminal space of inclusive exclusion. The gynoids implicitly naturalize the humanist order that establishes humans as exclusively included dominant subjects and all else as inclusively excluded submissive objects. Though such a contention may seem absurd given that the gynoids are cyborg shells, a cyborg coroner in the film named after cyborg theorist Donna Haraway characteristically troubles any distinction between man and machine. Furthermore, in *Innocence*, the assemblage created through any human interaction (whether with object or subject) is necessarily subjective and thus no interaction is divested of biopolitical consequences, since every interaction may or may not reify the current order by reinvesting lived relations in Others.

In “The (Post)human Doll,” coroner Haraway’s discourse on the relationship between parent/child and child/doll is contextualized within this framework. As coroner Haraway suggests, parents objectify their children as much as children objectify dolls and both relations serve to reproduce pre-established roles of interaction, foregrounding already actualized models rather than considering other potential modes of interaction. Recognizing the perversity of human interaction, Kim, a hacker gone rogue, decidedly rejects the world and lives an alternative existence in a lawless zone, though as I argue in “The Living Dead Man,” one that fails to realize political action. While the dialectic described by (humanist) exclusivism by now seems unavoidable, “Elephant(s) in the Forest” turns to the success of Kusanagi and, perhaps, Batou in escaping the paradigms postmodernism only continues to crystallize. But first, a brief overview of the film is in order.

An Overview of *Innocence*

Subsequent to the events of *Ghost in the Shell*, Oshii's *Innocence* follows Batou on a case concerning the "malfunctioning" of gynoids, sex robots created by Locus Solus, who have murdered their "Masters." The beginning of the film shows Batou at one of the murder sites, the culprit still at large. As he walks through an alley, he finds a gynoid laying on the ground unmoving. As if automatically reacting to a male gaze that has, in its past, likely led to objectifying behavior acted out upon it, the gynoid becomes animated and attacks Batou. Its blows parried, the gynoid finds itself shoved against a wall, where it repeats "Help me" just before ripping apart its own abdomen to reveal the mechanisms allowing the animation of its body. Batou prevents the gynoid's suicide by killing it himself. As has been noted by various scholars (and Oshii himself), the gynoid's self-mutilation is a direct reference to the introspection of the female subject in German Surrealist Hans Bellmer's *Rose ouverte la nuit* (Brown 45). As Steven Brown has noted in *Tokyo Cyberpunk*, "whereas Bellmer's self-rending girl peers into the interior spaces of her abdomen, Oshii's gynoid looks directly at the camera at the precise moment of self-mutilation, appealing not only to Batou for help but also to the audience" (46). Such a gaze directed outside of the screen is significant because it implicates the audience in the voyeuristic gaze or perversion that cause the gynoids' lost innocence (see Figure 1). Indeed, the gynoids are resisting the humanist paradigms that created them in the first place, namely the exaltation of humans that evidently justifies the appropriation and objectification of anything nonhuman.

When the case is solved and the gynoids are revealed to have been "dubbed" with the ghosts of kidnapped girls to make them more desirable, the suggestion is that the gynoids are not only "protest[ing] against their own obsolescence," as coroner Haraway theorizes, but are also



Figure 1. The suicidal gynoid, inspired by Bellmer's *Rose ouverte la nuit*, staring at the audience. (Oshii)

Source: Oshii, Mamoru, director. *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. Production I.G. and Studio Ghibli. 2004.

identifying and revolting against their overcoding by humans (Oshii). As Livia Monnet has noted, “[The gynoid’s] failed suicide attempt...seems to enact the drama of hysteria as envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari: the struggle of the body with the ‘shapes it is forced to assume...the friction between the body itself and the organizations that it undergoes socially and politically’” (“Anatomy of Permutational Desire, Part II,” 159). Anthropocentrism is undoubtedly a means of social and political organization as illustrated through Kusanagi’s crisis in *Ghost*, and the gynoids-as-products readdresses the reproduction of ideologies found in the culture industry and consumerism of *Ghost*. That the gynoids may have been made obsolescent by their owners’ eventual boredom of them attests to the perversity of the individual who prescribes others’ identity through their own subjectivity, effacing any interaction that does not

place primacy on their own fluctuating desires. The production of the gynoids as representing the obsession of humans to recreate themselves and thereby stabilize their identity may also be understood as a materialization of the same relationship operating in society at large, described by the relationship between the citizen and bare life as will later be addressed in “The Gynoids as Bare Life.” As Monnet has it, “This perverse structure is the very unconscious of modernity” (“Anatomy of Permutational Desire, Part II,” 163).

The opening sequence subsequent to the destruction of the gynoid shows the production of gynoid shells in a montage similar to that of the first film’s depiction of the production of Kusanagi’s shell. Created by technology, these gynoids, like Kusanagi, are overcoded by anthropocentrism from the start, not only in that they exhibit the human form but also in that their very existence is inevitably restricted by the human (sexual) desires projected onto them. The production of the gynoids is a direct reference to the dolls of Hans Bellmer, specifically his second doll which has a ball bearing for the abdomen on which could be attached sets of legs, arms, breasts, pelvises, and other “accessories” (see Figure 2). Identifying Bellmer’s use of anatomical division, subtraction, addition, and multiplication for the construction of the many expressions of his second doll, Stephen Brown notes, “By utilizing two of those techniques, division and multiplication, the opening credits of *Ghost in the Shell 2* offer a poignant remediation of Bellmer’s corporeal anagrams in the service of posthuman capitalism and its fetishistic obsession with what Walter Benjamin has described as ‘the sex appeal of the inorganic’” (44). Perhaps ironically, the *illegal* ghost-dubbing used for the purpose of prescribing the gynoids with a more human identity reflects the same mode of operation of State organization that caused Kusanagi’s crisis in *Ghost in the Shell*, namely the appropriation of citizens as containers for the embodiment and reproduction of humanist sovereignty.



Figure 2. Hans Bellmer's *La Poupée*. (International Center for Photography)

Source: Bellmer, Hans. "La Poupée." 1938. International Center of Photography.

<https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/objects/la-poupée-5>.

After being briefed on the case by Public Security Section 9's chief Aramaki, Batou and Togusa (the only other fully organic member of Section 9 alongside Aramaki), pay a visit to the cyborg coroner Haraway. It is here that Batou and Togusa first learn the purpose of the gynoids' manufacture and unexpectedly become drawn into and, in Togusa's case, troubled by coroner Haraway's philosophical musings on the nature of human existence. Coroner Haraway's discourse informs the foundational purpose of the critical references to Bellmer and his uncanny dolls by drawing attention to the ways in which the projection of desire onto an other sets the stage for a subjectivity that obsessively reproduces itself through its objectifying gaze, caught in a playback loop of Deleuze and Guattari's second articulation, that of expression.

The next scene finds Batou and Togusa at the boathouse of Locus Solus consignment inspector Jack Volkerson, who has been killed. It is later revealed that a crime organization calling themselves Kojinkai, the boss of which has been killed by a gynoid, has decided to kill

Volkerson after they find out that he revised the gynoid's ethic codes, allowing them to kill. Volkerson had been trying to find a way to draw attention to the human trafficking at the core of Locus Solus' operations. When Batou and Togusa pay a visit to Kojinkai, the resulting confrontation ends in the deaths of many of the gang's members, including a cyborg fitted with an illegal Chinese prosthetic limb called the Crab Claw. Upon defeating this deadly cyborg, Batou pairs cables from a small electronic drive to the cyborg's neck and manipulates the movements of his head like a puppet before retracting them such that the cyborg falls heavily to the ground. This scene foreshadows Kim's dying message—"Life and death come and go like marionettes dancing on a table. Once their strings are cut they easily crumble"⁴¹—and reminds the viewer of everyone's vulnerability to manipulation.

Batou himself falls prey to this vulnerability and has the same electronic device used upon himself. Because Batou is ghost hacked, he and Togusa have confirmation that the case—only taken up because of its potential to be the product of terrorism—is, in fact, more than routine. When they head north, where Locus Solus is based, they find themselves the reluctant recipients of more philosophizing by the hacker named Kim, who calls into question the status of the living and nonliving as such. Kim's discourse builds upon Haraway's to the extent that he calls into question human autonomy. In the context of Batou's comment made just moments before—"What the body creates is as much an expression of DNA as the body itself"⁴²—Kim's refutation of human desire (he has embodied an automaton) comes as a deterministic reading of the human abstract machine as *irrevocably* limited, as if at a dead end. Only dolls and gods are

⁴¹ As Brown has pointed out, Oshii takes this quote from fourteenth-century Japanese playwright Zeami, who had himself been quoting "the fourteenth century Rinzai Zen Priest Gettan Sōkō" (27). See Brown's "Machinic Desires" in *Tokyo Cyberpunk* for an analysis of Oshii's film in the context of the performativity of noh theater and Oshii's extensive use of intertextuality in *Innocence*. See also Christopher Bolton's "From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater" for an extensive examination of the relationship between Oshii's *Innocence* and Japanese puppet theater, *bunraku*. Both works significantly analyze the split between (embodied) voice and (invested) body of the subject.

⁴² This quote comes from ethologist Richard Dawkins (see Brown 27).

perfect beings for Kim, the former having no consciousness, the latter being infinite; at the same time, neither dolls nor gods concern themselves with the pursuit of knowledge, which *saves* them from the incessant meaning-making processes of humans. Yet in his critique of the ventriloquism of ideologies and desires, Kim fails to consider himself as part and parcel of this reality, as a product of his own limited exposure to the world, precisely because he believes it can be wholly escaped. Thus Kim's fatalistic effacement of desire is a false escape which fails to realize political agency.

After leaving Kim's mansion, Batou heads to the offshore facility of Locus Solus where the gynoids are being produced while Togusa provides technological support using Kim's hacked body as a guard against the proactive barriers of Locus Solus's mainframe. As Batou barrels along a gangway through sliding doors opened by Togusa, Locus Solus's defense operations kick into effect, albeit with difficulty. In this sequence, Kim meets his end, his aforementioned dying message popping up for Togusa to contemplate. Despite being unable to resist Togusa's hacking, Locus Solus manages to download a combat program into completed gynoid shells. While it has been noted that the gynoids' use of their body comes as a moment of *femme fatale*, (re)deploying their objectified bodies to do violence on the security officers caught unaware (as well as on Batou), it must be noted that the gynoids' use as combative agents is simply another form of appropriation. That is, the gynoids are once again being organized to carry out others' desires, and they are *sacrificed*, all but thrown at Batou, to defend the very operation that takes away their innocence by dubbing them with the ghosts of human girls for the desires of objectifying clients. The title of Oshii's film, *Innocence*, seems defined by these operations: innocence is a lack of agency; to capitalize on an other's innocence for personal gain is the perverse structure of modernity at the heart of Oshii's film. The cyborg subverts origin

stories, so it would be contradictory to discuss a fall from grace, a loss of innocent origins steeped in mythology. Innocence is then developmental in the sense that it is a product of an early stage of consciousness, lost at a later stage when one becomes self-aware. But the loss of innocence is not wholly negative as it presupposes attainment of agency--to ignore this agency is negative.

When a gynoid takes a gun from Batou and begins helping him fend the other gynoids off, it is revealed that Kusanagi, Batou's "guardian angel," has come once again to his aid. As will be addressed in more detail in the section "Elephant(s) in the Forest," Kusanagi's appearance is revealing of what, exactly, "ghosts" are, and is consistent with the original film's scientific explanation. In this battle sequence, Kusanagi dismembers her body by opening a hatch in much the same way that she ripped off her arms in the first film. In the context of the film's philosophical sophistication concerning human ontology and organ-ized bodies, as well as the recurrence of the dismemberment, such a flagrant disregard for the human(istic) body signifies a disruption of the ontological significance of physical form and redirects attention to the mind and its affective capacity.

After the battle sequence, Batou and Kusanagi find their way to the ghost-dubbing machines, in which a young girl is murmuring "Help me." After Batou takes her out of the machine, the young girl expresses joy at the success of Mr. Volkerson's ploy, but receives little sympathy from Batou and Kusanagi as they turn their attention not only to the victims of the gynoid killings, but to the gynoids themselves. "If the dolls could speak," Kusanagi says, "no doubt they'd scream, 'I didn't want to become human'" (Oshii). While perhaps at first shocking, Batou and Kusanagi's reaction calls attention to the ways in which anthropocentric ideologies and the perversity of humanist objectification predetermines interaction with both the natural and

the artificial world (if indeed there is any difference) such that the potential of any reality—whether organic or inorganic, animate or inanimate, human, animal, or machine—is always already restricted and prescribed.

The end of the film finds Batou dropping Togusa off at the latter's house. Togusa invites Batou to join him and his family, but Batou passes, saying he isn't interested in spending time with others' families, illustrative of the cyborg's rejection of the nuclear household. After Togusa's daughter has opened the present he has brought for her, a doll, the "artificial" figure stares at the audience, recalling Haraway's observation concerning child-rearing. As Chu has noted, "Togusa's choice of a souvenir to bring his daughter, a doll, is bizarrely inappropriate, given the case the men have just worked," and indeed the differences between Togusa, a wholly organic being, and Batou, a cyborg, are informative of many of the issues at the heart of *Innocence* (6). As Chu has noted, "Togusa's actions and his reactions on the job consistently and stereotypically refer back to the idea that he is a father and more vulnerable than a cyborg" (5). Togusa's human-derived self-importance exemplifies the extent to which predetermined labels (human, but also parent, child, wife, etc.) take precedent over self-determined interaction and supports the divide between organic and inorganic that allows such a label as human to overshadow the significance of all else. Yet as Orbaugh observes in *Cinema Anime*, the boundary between human and cyborg is continuously undermined: "*Innocence* reminds us that people are permeable, too: neither cyborgs nor organic humans are safe from the possibility of having their minds and bodies entered and controlled through cybernetic networks" (101). Human's self-importance is thus only a pretense that indulges in an ignorance of the Other for the sake of ontological exceptionalism. Predictably, the result is an autoreferential model of the world that reinforces pre-established behavioral patterns.

Four particular scenes reflect these issues especially well: the scenes in coroner Haraway's laboratory, Kim's library, the ghost-dubbing facility, and Togusa's return home. Each of these scenes furthers the ontological discourse sustained throughout the entirety of the film and postulate questions that constitute the film's critical impetus. How, exactly, do humanist paradigms operate and to what effect? How does one extricate oneself from the humanist paradigms overcoding society, and in what way, if any, does such an existence offer greater potential? To what effect does Oshii engage with Bellmer's theory of object-subject relationships and how can such a theory inform (cyborg) ontology? Lastly, how does *Innocence* comment on (if indeed it does) "the unresolved dialectic between constituting power and constituted power" or provide "a new articulation of the relation between potentiality and actuality"? (Agamben 44) Addressing each of these questions, the following analysis suggests that Oshii's *Innocence*, like *Ghost*, depicts humanism as a primitive ideological apparatus that establishes restrictive modes of interacting with the world. Moreover, *Innocence* suggests that humanism's foundational perception of the world as manipulable Other, rather than as an extension of the self, is pivotal to myriad interactions *between humans*, including but not limited to child-rearing.

Gynoids as Bare Life

Because the gynoids in *Innocence* are the diegetic pivot of the (bio)politics represented within the film, it is important to establish their specific function within the plot. The association of the gynoid to the introspective girl of Bellmer's *Rose ouverte la nuit* has already been suggested as establishing the reversibility of inside and outside, a desire to see underneath the physical surface and reveal the unconscious desires that inform intersubjectivity and expose the perverse structure that fabricated her. The gynoids take the shape of an idealized woman, much like the Hadaly android of *L'Eve Future*, and thereby illustrate their problematic

commodification and gratuitous indulgence of human impulses. Above all else, the gynoids are a dramatization of one of the many ways the dialectic of human subject and (non)human object, whether animal, cyborg, or inanimate artifact, is projected onto the latter, constructing and reinforcing an often invisible social model that predetermines interaction. The gynoid-human interface is then a manifestation of the sovereignty operating in society at large, including, as coroner Haraway suggests, the sovereignty actualized in the parent-child interface.

Though the limitations imposed upon the gynoids are many, the pivotal form of restriction derives from humanist overcoding. Monnet suggests as much when she identifies (patriarchal) humanity as “universal equivalent” defined by a “sense of interchangeability and equivalency between humanoid characters” (“III” 286). Predictably, the result is simply a reproduction of anthropocentric social relations that reaffirms the centeredness of the human subject. Oshii’s gynoids thus critique Bellmer’s implicit desire to make the (male) human subject the “universal joint,” the pivot upon which anagrammatic desires are (pre)constructed. Even though Bellmer saw the need to materialize desires as anagrams and thereby map the abstract machine that is the physical unconscious, he did so within a misogynistic and oppressive framework that failed to question the presuppositions on which desire was based. Furthermore, as Bellmer saw “the splitting of the personality into an ego that experiences arousal and an ego that produces arousal,” and understood “this duplication of the ego...as an *a priori* holistically experienced phenomenon,” he seemingly justified the production of desire through its experience and vice versa (116). There seems to be no questioning of the ethical foundation upon which those experiences are based. However, the gynoids of *Innocence* call this foundation into question as they operate through the desires of (patriarchal) humanism.

While the first gynoid introduced in *Innocence* is not allowed to commit suicide, coroner Haraway's knowledge of the gynoid's attempt indicates that it is not the first to try to commit suicide and that others have succeeded. However, while coroner Haraway sees such action as a "protest against their own obsolescence," it may be more accurate to understand the gynoids as protesting the ontological structure of (post)modernity that enables their existence as bare life, as inclusively excluded beings whose sole political purpose is to be containers for the preservation of human sovereignty. If the gynoids are obsolete, then it is only to the extent that they are described as having no political use-value or, perhaps more accurately, no political use-value outside of their objectification. Thus the gynoids' suicidal tendencies are a response to the sadomasochistic relationship described by the Subject's projection of desires onto the Other, a relationship that Agamben has established as analogous to sovereignty:

The growing importance of sadomasochism in modernity has its root in this exchange [of the public and private, and political existence and bare life]. Sadomasochism is precisely the technique of sexuality by which the bare life of a sexual partner is brought to light. Not only does Sade consciously invoke the analogy with sovereign power ("there is no man," he writes, "who does not want to be a despot when he has an erection"), but we also find here the symmetry between homo sacer and sovereign, in the complicity that ties the masochist to the sadist, the victim to the executioner. (134-5)

That is, the gynoids refuse to exist if their only option is to be the unwilling victim of sadomasochism. If the gynoids are forced to assume any political shape, it is precisely that named by the modern form of "bare life" described by human rights' politicization of *zoē*. While the gynoids may not realize any *zoē* to speak of and are certainly not citizens, they significantly reveal (1) the reproduction of sovereignty within "objects" and (2) the forced complicity of machinic "objects" with modern sovereignty created through perverse relations. In sum, the gynoids operate in a relation of exception in which they are forced to counterbalance postmodern

sovereignty and thereby reflect the reality of the (post)modern citizen as bare life. Their hysterical expression is thus not only the expression of the perverse relationship that pivots on objectifying Othering, but also that of the aporias of humanist sovereignty. Despite the relative scarcity of peoples who purchase the gynoids, then, the foundation of the interaction established between the gynoids and the customers is representative of human's mode of interaction with the world at large.

The (Post)human Doll

When Batou and Togusa meet coroner Haraway, she is in a room where gynoids hang in rows, preserved within air-tight plastic packaging. Togusa makes a distinction between humans and machines, perhaps a reflection of his attachment to his own organic body, but Haraway questions his assumption: "Humans are different from robots. That's an article of faith, like black isn't white. It's no more helpful than the basic fact that humans aren't machines" (Oshii). While Haraway certainly understands the material difference between the two manifestations of being, she does not find any fundamental differences in their operations or, significantly, in the ways they realize interconnectivity. That is, humans and machines both take part in social (de)construction and, regardless of their (in)animate status, engage in machinic couplings that either reflect existing expressions (as in the case of the gynoids) or deactivate and establish new expressions. As previously mentioned, any relationship humans engage in, whether with an animate being or inanimate "object," is always already subjective, meaning that both human and nonhuman are ascribed meaning through the connection realized. In this way, the identities of both the human and nonhuman are actualized from a sea of possibility, and the consequences of these identities are never innocence as they always have political consequences. When machines, here conceptualized as Deleuze and Guattari's reference to "any connection of organs linking

together flows in networks of desiring-production,” whether gynoids or a doll, embody restrictive human ideologies, they only reproduce pre-established desires that inherently limit other potentiality. For example, a customer’s purchase of a gynoid and “use” of it reifies patriarchy if we may assume the customers are men, and further enables human-derived egoism where the gynoids’ only use is to serve human desire. We may imagine that Locus Solus could have produced automatons that somehow clean the city waste seen in *Ghost* or manufactured any other machine that would realize an ecologically beneficial existence. Returning to Batou’s comment that “What the body creates is as much an expression of DNA as the body itself,” it seems that the gynoids of *Innocence* are nothing less than a manifestation of humans’ indulgence of the propensity to be self-seeking. In reproducing this behavior, humans fail to realize their greatest potential to connect with their surrounding environment and the universe at large.

Identifying the gynoids as “pets” and thereby contrasting them to more utilitarian or practical machine models, coroner Haraway draws attention to the fact that the gynoids are subject to the perverse desires of their owners, who realize an “obsessional type of being-in-the-world.” Not only are the gynoids overcoded by technological organization in their very production but they are interacted with in much the same way. The gynoids are forced into the mold of a particular type of Other, one that unwillingly indulges the rigid organization of their owners’ desires and allows for the perpetuation of those desires. The structure of the Other is thus established through the gynoids, a mirror that is not simply reflective but also (involuntarily) productive of perverse relations. As Monnet notes, “For these men [who purchase gynoids]...gynoids are living fetishes, docile accomplices of and projection screens for their desire, that is, bodies-victims” (162). Yet as coroner Haraway suggests, far from the perverse

model actualized by the gynoids and their owners being a discrete reality, it is, in fact, the underlying structure of perhaps the most ubiquitous relationship, that between parent and child.

The implied connection between these two relationships is crucial to understanding the ontological concerns of *Innocence* as it emphasizes the perversity of any relationship created through the projection of the self onto another (non)human subject/object. It is not, then, as Daniel Hourigan contends in “Technicity and the Subject” that technicity, or technological discourse, in *Innocence* promises for the human subject “a fabrication that will deliver them from their illusory subjective mind,” but rather that humans’ *use* of technology (not technology as such) (re)produces that very illusion (59). If anything, the gynoids of *Innocence* exemplify humans’ desire to use technology as a means to indulge in and perpetuate that illusion, not escape it. Oshii’s *Innocence* is thus a critique of humans’ resistance to new modes of being more than a paradoxical elevation of technology that finally fails.

Throughout her entire discourse Haraway implicates humanism as the ideology underpinning the perverse relations actualized by the gynoids—“Why are humans so obsessed with recreating themselves?” she asks (Oshii). While the “sexroids” are undoubtedly subject to their owners’ desires, they are transitively subject to the humanism that overcodes their *owner’s* being in the world. Significantly, Brown has read Haraway’s philosophical musings as bringing attention to the “human” as “not simply a natural phenomenon but a complex sociocultural and philosophical construction” (49). He goes on to note that Oshii shows “the schismatic intertwinement between the human and the machinic—the machinic *in* the human and the human *in* the machine” (49). For Brown, the result is a “circuit of relations—that is, a machine—connecting humans and artificial figures made to look human in a relationship of coexistence that modifies each other in unforeseen ways” (49). While the reciprocal nature of the human-machine

interface—and specifically the girl-doll interface invoked by Haraway—could certainly be understood as such, I interpret the conflation of child-rearing and girls playing with dolls as a commentary on processes of humanist overcoding that predetermine these relationships, which further reflect those between the gynoids and their owners.

Coroner Haraway suggests children are fundamentally different from adults because, according to her, they are not human: “Children have always been excluded from the customary standards of human behavior, if you define humans as beings who possess a conventional identity and act out of free will. Then what are children who endure in the chaos preceding maturity? They differ profoundly from ‘humans,’ but they obviously have human form” (Oshii). For coroner Haraway, children take human form but lack human content and thus humanist organization is not so much inherent as constructed. From the beginning, coroner Haraway points to humanism as a *reproductive* ideology, and, as she continues to theorize, one that perpetuates itself through subject-object relations, not least of all that between the parental subject and child object, normalized such that the child acts out this objectification onto dolls.

Having expressed her belief that children are not quite human, Haraway goes on to posit how, exactly, they are conditioned to pre-established human interaction through their perverse relationship with dolls. “The dolls that little girls mother,” Haraway says, “are not surrogates for real babies. Little girls aren’t so much imitating child rearing, as they are experiencing something deeply akin to child rearing” (Oshii). While Hourigan contends that Haraway’s philosophical discourse is paradoxical, arguing that the doll “metaphorically stands in for another meaning: that is, caring for children” and consequently implicates the girl’s future as a mother before it is even actualized, the reality is that Haraway does not so much suggest a metaphoric association as much as blatantly proposes the two operate *in the same way* (54). Furthermore, what Hourigan

sees as a discourse on “technicity” and the ways in which the subject is implicated into technology through its supplementarity is here interpreted as a discourse on the ways (technological) objects are in fact appropriated by humanist ideologies. Haraway’s philosophy is thus less about technology as such than humanism. If the doll is a supplement to the girl, it is by the same token that children are supplements to parents. The supplement of the doll to the girl is then decidedly independent of the latter’s future motherhood for the relationship she carries on with the doll is sufficient to experience the same perverse subject-object structure that child-rearing also represents—a relationship that is not inherently “perverse,” but only so because of the doll’s perception as *human-object* much similar to the gynoids. More specifically, Haraway suggests that girls who play with dolls use those dolls to construct their identity precisely by controlling the doll’s behavior and forcing them to fit a particular mold. Through coroner Haraway, Oshii thus critiques Bellmer’s presumption that toys are at their best when they are “poetic simulators....far removed from the lofty pedestal of some predetermined, unchanging function, but instead [are] as rich in chance and possibilities as the lowliest rag doll,” namely by questioning the existence of such an idealistic toy (Bellmer 59). It seems that, for Oshii, Bellmer takes for granted the omnipresence of social models children are exposed to, especially that described by the relationship between parent and child, choosing instead to naively conceptualize, like the hacker Kim, a relation completely detached from pre-established models of being. Such a belief makes one even more vulnerable to ideological appropriation. In contrast, Oshii reveals how every interaction is potentially invested in predetermined models of behavior and points to human individual’s willing perpetuation of them.

Innocence thus imagines dolls not as poetic simulators as much as reproductions of a ready-made subjective-objective reality in which the othered doll is *limitedly* subjective, if at all.

The girl undoubtedly speaks for it, *subjectifies* it, in much the same way as parents do their children. In his cultural critique of French toys, Roland Barthes comments on precisely this reproduction of social relations, suggesting that toys condition children to accept a pre-made world:

French toys: one could not find a better illustration of the fact that the adult Frenchman sees the child as another self. All the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world; they are all reduced copies of human objects, as if in the eyes of the public the child was, all told, nothing but a smaller man, a homunculus to whom must be supplied objects of his own size. (53)

Barthes goes on to note, “The fact that French toys *literally* prefigure the world of adult functions obviously cannot but prepare the child to accept them all, by constituting for him, even before he can think about it, the alibi of Nature which has at all times created soldiers, postmen and Vespas” (53). While children may very well lack an expression of content at first, as Bellmer contends, they are thus quickly inaugurated to established humanist paradigms pivoting on acts of othering. The relationship described by the girl and the doll is suggested to be sterile and contained, a reproduction of the same restrictive relationships pervading society writ large, including that of the patriarch of the *oikos*. Moreover, that parents condescendingly encourage children to reenact the established adult world, to aspire to the pigeonholes provided, exemplifies their enabling the reproduction of pre-established human behavior. Where the anagrammatic games Bellmer plays with his dolls are predictably seen by the artist as creating “equilibrium,” the relations realized therein are reimaged in *Innocence* at yet another inscription of the relations of (anthropocentric) sovereignty. To understand the girl-doll interface is thus to understand the operational origins of the perverse structure described by the human subject and the nonhuman object.

As Barthes notes, “[French toys] are meant to produce children who are users, not creators” (54). Similarly, the doll does not create new forms of expression, but rather reestablishes a relation that operates through the user-used dichotomy or, more specific to this analysis, the relation of the subject and object. If, as Bellmer suggests, representation is a virtual expression of the inner self, it seems that the object does not merely stand in for the subject, but decisively reflects the actual conditions the subject experiences. In a world in which the citizen is both the sovereign and bare life, sadomasochism may very well be the primary modality of perversion operating in (post)modernity. As Monnet notes, “the film assures that perversion is the primary structure, not a supplement to some normal framework that would operate without self-mutilation or other-mutilation” (“Desire II,” Monnet 162). Indeed coroner Haraway’s musings seem to suggest that, through the doll, the girl learns to prescribe behavior onto others which, in turn, reflects the reality that she herself is prescribed behavior through the doll (and others).

In this scenario, the girl does not find any poetic stimulation in the socially overcoded object. *Innocence* thus points to the failure of Bellmer’s anagrammatic doll to reveal the hyperreality of the subjecthood manipulating it. As Brown has it, “It is not only that dolls or gynoids are modeled after humans, but also, it is that humans model themselves after the ideals embodied by artificial dolls such as gynoids” (48-9). What the girl is experiencing that is so akin to child-rearing is then precisely the (re)production of a perverse relationship in which established human behavior sets the stage for the creation of bare (nonhuman) life, such as the gynoids. As coroner Haraway definitively states, “Raising children is the simplest way to achieve the ancient dream of artificial life” (Oshii). As seen in the gynoids, automata, ningyo, and other human-like dolls throughout the film, artificial life is not so much the means to create

something new, but a desire to reproduce the self. And this very desire to create a simulacrum betrays the fact that the subject is itself a simulacrum—the desire to reproduce exact copies derives from one's own inability to realize life outside autopoietic models.

Thus, in a reverse gesture characteristic of sadomasochism, the appropriation of the dolls or any (non)human other signifies the aporias within the human subject, as the latter projects the ontological crisis onto the external object not unlike Bellmer's meshing of the subject and object. As Monnet notes, quoting from Bellmer's *The Doll*,

[Bellmer's] account of perversion presents an almost literal description of the violence involved in the transgressive act, which forces two "dissimilar, or even extremely different" (read "opposite") notions to coalesce, and which projects onto the outside world or its representative the pervert's hatred or ressentiment, or an external Other, this Other being the one that "does the contorting...in (my)/ his stead," or "hates on (my)/his behalf." (299-300)

The difference between Bellmer's conceptualization and *Innocence*'s reworking of it is that the former presupposes a harmonious relationship is established through the indistinguishability of subject and object whereas the latter underscores the fact that the subject actively projects a constructed reality onto the object. What allows Bellmer to establish the homogenization between subject and object critiqued by *Innocence* is his deterministic outlook concerning desire, which seems to suggest human's lack of agency: "Since the seeds of longing precede being, hunger precedes the self, and the self precedes the YOU—narcissism clearly determines the birth of images of the YOU" (Bellmer 119). Yet *Innocence* decidedly resists such fatalism.

The Living Dead Man

Kim, the hacker gone rogue, seems to characterize Bellmer's fatalistic impulse as well as his belief in a complete escape from "predetermined, unchanging function" and, as such, is crucial to further understanding Oshii's dissension. When Batou and Togusa fly north, where

both Locus Solus and Kim's mansion are, Batou describes the region as a "lawless zone," and notes that "its dubious sovereignty has made it the ideal haven for multi-nationals and the criminal elements that feed off their spoils" (Oshii). For a military scout/hacker gone rogue, such a region seems the perfect place to get beyond the reach of the law, though Batou and Togusa's arrival comes as an ominous reminder that no place is beyond the law or, rather, that every place can be appropriated by the law in a relation of exception.

While Kim is bare life to the extent that he has no political use-value outside of his appropriation as such, he is also bare life to the extent that he seems like a comatose person (see Figure 3). As Agamben notes, "The hospital room in which the neomort, the overcomatose person, and the *faux vivant* waver between life and death delimits a space of exception in which a purely bare life, entirely controlled by man and his technology, appears for the first time" (164). Kim is entirely controlled by man and his technology as he is a *complete* cyborg. However, as Batou notes, Kim *chose* such an existence, and the following analysis suggests that he did so precisely to "play out" an existence as purely bare life,⁴³ supported by his decision to occupy a liminal space between life and death. As Agamben notes, "life and death are not properly scientific concepts but rather political concepts, which as such acquire a political meaning precisely only through a decision" (164). Consequently, Kim's existence comes as a subversion of the primary principle and law founding sovereignty: the dichotomy of life and death and the state's power over the decision not only of the distinction between the two, but also of one's right to live. Furthermore, as a comatose person, who "has been defined as an intermediary being between man and an animal," Kim exists *within* the space traditionally separating man and animal (Agamben 165). He collapses any distinction between the animate and inanimate, which

⁴³ Kim's desire to play out bare life seems to function similarly to disaster tourism and the pretension of cosmopolitanism.



Figure 3. Kim's occupation of an automaton suggests a state of comatose.

Source: Oshii, Mamoru, director. *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. Production I.G. and Studio Ghibli. 2004.

finds subjectivity in the object and objectivity within the subject, revealing the inability to distinguish between the two in Bellmerian fashion. Yet, however subversive his existence might seem to anthropocentrism and postmodern sovereignty, Kim's indulgence in bare life, his commodification of it, is ultimately a failure--he willingly forgoes all political intervention. In fact, Kim's playing out of bare life signals one of the failures of Bellmer's would-be subversive fusion of subject and object within the pictures of his anagrammatic dolls: specifically the failure to understand that the projects' precondition, the unification of the subject, is problematic.

When Kim is first introduced, he is lying in a reclined chair and his charred head misleads Togusa to believe that he is, in fact, dead. Yet, even when he begins to talk, Kim's puppet-like mouth moves jerkily, making what state he is in, living or dead, unclear. Kim thus calls into question distinctions between life and death through his very existence.

If death has, in fact, become “an epiphenomenon of transplant technology,” then life seems able to be reduced to a discrete number of functions sufficient to establish what living means (Agamben 163). But because the distinction is ultimately subjective, “living” has no meaning outside of its political function, and Kim understands such a reality: “The notion that nature is calculable inevitably leads to the conclusion that humans too, are reducible to basic, mechanical parts” (Oshii). This reduction of life by science is what leads to the biopolitics of modern sovereignty.

Kim not only breaks down the barrier between life and death, but also those between subject and object, human and nonhuman, citizen and bare life by revealing the self-reflexive structure that reifies such politically mobilized meanings. As Monnet notes, “For Kim, the gynoid dolls are not real others who can organize the world, make it meaningful, or sustain its possibilities” (163). Kim does not allow *any* organization contingent on subject and object to be imposed upon the world. In this way he resists any distinction between the subject and object. Like Bellmer’s use of the anagrammatic doll which is at once subjective and objective and allows one to simultaneously be an individual and the universe at large, Kim does not content himself with the artificial structure of the Other that would allow him to exist definitively as Subject. Yet, like Bellmer’s doll, Kim fails to realize his own egocentric rendering of the universe at large.

For Kim the self is escapable. But such an understanding of the self immediately suggests transcendence from those cognitive capacities that make humans less than perfect. Ironically, even as Kim seeks to realize a doll-like existence and thereby become perfect by rejecting human beings’ incessant search for knowledge, he contradicts himself, since his search for perfection decisively pivots on *understanding* death. However Kim is blind to his paradoxical

existence and his self-satisfaction leads to his demise. Having planted a false “loop” of reality into Batou and Togusa’s brains, whereby they virtually experience their arrival at Kim’s mansion three times over, Kim is surprised when Batou is able to withdraw from the simulation. Batou’s ability to “trick the trickster,” even if with Kusanagi’s help, epitomizes the blindness of the self-satisfied hacker. After they escape from the virtual simulations Kim plants in Batou and Togusa’s brains, Batou explicitly acknowledges Kim’s failure: “There are as many paths to proving your existence as there are ghosts.... I thought Kim knew other paths too, back when he and I were in the jungle together” (Oshii). But Kim disappoints, not only because he doesn’t prove his existence, but also because he seems to desire effacing his existence altogether.

Kim’s failure is complete when he is shown to have been taken from his mansion only to be used as a scapegoat for Batou and Togusa’s hacking of Locus Solus. Though he desired to operate outside of modern forms of sovereignty, Kim ultimately failed to do so and, what’s more, failed to realize his failure, and his dying message (see above) comes as a commentary on his own recently deceased existence. While Kim certainly planned for this message to appear upon his death, it is worth considering *how* he wanted to die, since his fake death(s) point to some desire to take his own life. Like the gynoids, however, Kim is disallowed such a display of agency—ultimately Kim is re-appropriated to be given a “suitable death” as Batou describes it (Oshii).

Even in that brief span of time in which Kim did succeed in operating outside of the law, his cynicism led to a rejection of the world—a world without Others, as Monnet has noted. This notion of a world without Others fails to offer any political intervention, including that of *active involuntarism* that Orbaugh sees in Kusanagi. In Kim, Oshii seems to play out the dangers of complete political detachment. Kim’s failure to expose the crux of modern sovereignty derives

from his failure to exercise power over death. As a *homo sacer*, Kim is rather “a living pledge to his subjection to a power *of death*” (Agamben 99). Kim’s faux death is not absolute, but rather is a kind of political death despite his desire to lead an apolitical existence. That is, when Kim detaches himself, however incompletely, from the postmodern sovereignty of dominant institutions and (inter)national regimes, he simultaneously forecloses any political agency he once had. Monnet argues that Kim does not only “circumvent the material body and its desires...but he also disavows sexual difference by channeling his desires into fantasies of ideal dolls and machine-humans” (163). Ironically, Kim uses his cyborg body to *give up* “machinic desire” and so loses any ability to enter into affective machinic couplings. It comes as no surprise then, that Kim fails to realize Haraway’s (politically) transgressive cyborg.

Elephant(s) in the Forest

While Kim seems to be able to move in and out of the net with ease, essentially tapping into a virtual plane of consistency like Kusanagi, he does so to realize an existence of pure potential (and thereby disavow his own subjectivity). Kim does not desire *any* organization.⁴⁴ However, such an existence is almost entirely ineffective as it presupposes the ability to detach oneself from the system (a dangerous illusion). It also seeks such a reality only to stay detached, to preclude entering into assemblages and, potentially, to perceive the world cynically. While territorial assemblages, or *organized* multiplicities, can create systems producing mass behavior, realize the conditions for structures of power, and reproduce perverse modalities of being within everyday life, territorialization is not negative as such. Indeed without organization, there would

⁴⁴ In this way, Kim may be understood as realizing an existence as an empty body without organs as opposed to a full BwO. A *full* BwO is a BwO that is continuously “filled” and developed, so to speak, such that (inter)action remains a possibility. In this way, a full BwO remains a part of the plane of consistency. In contrast, an *empty* BwO is not a part of the plane of consistency precisely because it is “a black hole for subjectivity, where nothing happens” (Bonta and Protevi 62).

be no structures; this is precisely Kim's failure as an empty BwO.⁴⁵ As will be addressed in more detail in the concluding chapter, it is resistance to emergent joyous affects and to reterritorializations with greater potential to reduce unnecessary suffering that should be opposed. While Kim desires a completely detached reality, Kusanagi seeks to use her ability to move fluidly through organization to produce new emergent affects, effectively deploying Haraway's cyborg politics. While Kim is all but dead, realizing little affect, that trait that "is the evidence that [one] has lived" (Orbaugh notes according to Oshii), Batou notes of Kusanagi, "She's definitely alive" (Oshii).

Kusanagi exemplifies her vitality just moments later when she downloads herself into a gynoid in order to help Batou fend off the other killer gynoids. However, Kusanagi's appearance provokes questions concerning the former Major's own ethics: Is she merely redeploying the same processes of overcoding she resisted in the first film? That is, does she seize the innocence of the gynoids in the same manner of Locus Solus? In the context of the film, the answer seems to be no. Specifically, Kusanagi *temporarily* overcodes a gynoid and only to save Batou. Furthermore, that the gynoids she kills are themselves being appropriated suggests that Kusanagi is in fact saving the gynoids from their unfortunate fates. At the end of the film, she does not overstay her welcome within the shell, but leaves after she has used it to accomplish the liberation(s)—her sympathy towards the gynoids suggests she was, in fact, *consciously* saving the gynoids as much as the girls. Kusanagi is then an example of an effective political intervention, defined by active resistance to dominant systems of oppression.

Monnet has read Kusanagi quite contrarily, noting "Kusanagi is a perverse political thinker in the sense that she is at once critical of and complicit with male crimes and fantasies"

⁴⁵ As Bonta and Protevi note, "A territorial assemblage is a consistent 'material-semiotic' system that preserves the heterogeneity of its components even while *enabling emergent systemic affects*" (54).

(“II,” 166). Monnet goes on to note that Kusanagi “best fits Valentin’s and Zourabichvili’s reading of the Deleuzian thinker’s perverse politics of active involuntarism and ‘becoming-democratic,’” suggesting that Kusanagi operates as a sadist—“her interventions have pushed [Batou] into the path of danger”—and masochist—“Kusanagi adheres scrupulously to the letter of the law” and “fights against the killer dolls alongside Batou and brings Locus Solus’s computer network to a standstill at the peril of her own life”—which leads her to suggest that Kusanagi is actually quite similar to Kim. While Monnet’s reading is compelling, it is unclear how Kusanagi pushes Batou into danger and uncertain that she is law-abiding. I would agree with Monnet that “Like Deleuze’s perverse thinker, Kusanagi is a cruising shape-shifter who constantly displaces her position with respect to the police and the state authorities, seemingly intent on evading ‘ascriptions of the self’” (“II,” 165). However, I see Kusanagi’s existence not so much as a “detached commitment” as much as a very much engaged existence, per her *assistance* in Batou and Togusa’s mission (166).

Kusanagi differs from Kim in two significant ways. First, Kusanagi realizes a fluid existence that allows her to move through organized structures, which is decidedly different from rejecting organization altogether. While Kusanagi is certainly “An experienced practitioner of ‘becoming-liquid,’” she is not so much “Deleuze’s perverse thinker” as Deleuze and Guattari’s full BwO. While Kim seems to desire a perfect existence within a communicatively/politically unorganized body, Kusanagi rejects Kim’s elevation of dolls as such by *interacting* with preexisting organized bodies to realize their potential to produce joyous affect. Further, Orbaugh (2008) notes, that “Kusanagi in a sense *stands for* the inauthenticity of the body/shell, and it is therefore not surprising that she exhibits no affective connection with it or through it” (162). That Kusanagi subverts the body’s importance immediately strikes at the “heart” of sovereignty

and further underscores the failure of Kim, who implicitly emphasizes the body as he seeks the *corpus* par excellence: the doll. As Agamben notes,

If it is true that law needs a body in order to be in force, and if one can speak, in this sense, of “law’s desire to have a body,” democracy responds to this desire by compelling law to assume the care of this body....*Corpus is a two-faced being, the bearer both of subjection to sovereign power and of individual liberties.* (124-5; original emphasis)

In short, Kim ultimately preserves a body for the State’s use, while Kusanagi’s resistance to organization makes her elusive to State overcoding. Kusanagi resists the perverse structure of modernity founded on reproducing models of behavior that only reify structures of oppression and indeed this was precisely the reality she sought to escape in the first film.

The second differentiation between Kim and Kusanagi is that, far from using her newfound agency to sever herself from such structures altogether and indulge in detached philosophical pondering (as Kim does), Kusanagi effectuates political intervention. That Kusanagi sought to liberate others from systems of oppression alone attests to her ethical existence, one that is characterized by coupling with organized bodies to realize joyous affects that lead to actualities outside of sovereignty and, thereby, greater potential. As previously noted, Kusanagi’s existence dramatizes the realization of an ontology founded on potentiality rather than actuality. That she is also ethical to the extent that she seeks to liberate others from prescriptive models of identity anticipates her action in *Innocence*. While Kusanagi has gone rogue, she has not done so for her own desires as has Kim.

When Kusanagi and Batou sympathize with the gynoids after discovering the girl within the ghost-dubbing machine, it comes as no surprise and certainly does not picture either of them as necessarily unsympathetic to the girl. Rather, Oshii tries to shift attention away from the

human (for once) to address the often neglected “objects” humans take for granted. As Chu notes,

Unlike a more common plot in which a person, usually a man, but sometimes a too-tough career woman, must access the true centre of human experience by becoming open to wanting or at least liking children, this is not necessary to Batou’s “humanity” [or Kusanagi’s]. True humanity is not linked to reproducing or privileging the capacity to reproduce biologically. (5)

Although Chu problematically believes there is a “true humanity,” she emphasizes a departure from anthropocentricity and implicitly underscores the importance of understanding beings’ interconnectivity or “emotional infectivity,” as Orbaugh has it, rather than degrading their existence through their failure to uphold human characteristics.

If anything, Kusanagi and Batou’s sympathy with the gynoids illustrates the need to conceptualize an ontology that decisively departs from humanism—for the better. Humans’ perverse obsession with themselves inherently reproduces the entire world through a very limited lens and falls into the trap Kusanagi and the Puppet Master were so eager to avoid in the first film, namely the seemingly endless production of simulacra that reproduce relations of exception. In the context of coroner Haraway’s philosophical pondering concerning childrearing, it is worth wondering to what extent the overcoding of the gynoids by the appropriation of young girls mirror parents’ overcoding of their children, who are themselves taught overcoding at a young age as they are given innocent toys with human faces. *Innocence* does not stigmatize parenting as such, but more accurately critiques parents who obsessively project their own ideologies of life onto their children to the exclusion of (exposure to) others. In the same vein, *Innocence* does not oppose humanity as such, but rather ideologies anthropocentric in nature, such as humanism, which finds truth in the rationality of the human mind.

It is because Batou and Kusanagi reject humanism as the universal standard by which everything else should be compared that they realize Haraway's subversive cyborg, a standard that paves the way for relations of exception so characteristic of sovereignty. While Oshii certainly admires Bellmer's work, it seems that no reading of *Innocence* could ignore the ways in which it critiques the surrealist artist's use of human-like dolls as his focal point. While it may be expected that a deconstruction of the human unconscious would reveal anthropocentrism, to believe the latter as inevitable to humans is a fatalistic projection of humans' future. Though the ending of *Innocence* does represent the reproduction of the cycle, it nevertheless preserves hope in Batou's character.

An Unsettling but Hopeful Conclusion

Batou and Kusanagi's response to the practice of ghost dubbing is a clear refusal to differentiate between the overcoding of objects and subjects, both of which create a mirror of perversion such as that the gynoids represent, which itself creates perversion as much as it reflects it—"the mirror does not reflect evil as much as creates it" (Oshii). However, such processes of projecting the self which embody the operations of sovereign power can be more subtle, such that one's complicity in the process may not even be recognized. As Togusa rejects coroner Haraway's reasoning it may be expected that he himself is one such complicit person. Though the intertwinement of machines and humans underscores the need to deactivate anthropocentric ontology as coroner Haraway maintains, Togusa, who has accompanied Batou on the case decidedly fails to divest himself of such an ontology as he gives his child a doll, a "choice of souvenir...bizarrely inappropriate," as Chu has pointed out (6). Such an action points to the fact that Togusa is caught in the perverse cycle of self-reproduction, having been a product of it himself. Togusa betrays his own lack of understanding, the girl's excitement for it betraying

hers as well, and the gaze of the doll at the end of the film comes as an ominous marker of the reproduction of ideologies represented in the three figures.

Batou, however, rejects the nuclear family, choosing instead to exist with his basset hound, through whom he “find[s] his body” (Chu 6). Significantly, unlike Kim, Batou (and Kusanagi) do not seek their origins, but move on from them. An organic human who seems to treasure his lack of augmentation for its own sake, Togusa inherently elevates the human and his return to the family marks this reality. However, as Chu notes,

The traditional nuclear family home is not a “natural” refuge from the postmodern networked city, but clings ignorantly to obsolete fetishizations of “humanity” that allowed Locus Solus to profit from “ghost dubbing.” Batou’s (cloned) dog has the last frame and “word,” whining expressively and incredulously after the shot of the doll to mark the film’s acceptance of the postmodern urban artificial replicated body as having as authentic a ghost as the head of a nuclear family generated by traditional organic heterosexual reproduction. (6)

Supporting Chu’s contention, Orbaugh, in “Frankenstein and the Cyborg Metropolis,” notes,

This last scene contrasts the modernist model of embodiment— organic, embedded in familial relationships—with the postmodern/posthuman model, represented by Batō, the cyborg, and his dog, produced through some kind of artificial reproduction. It is no coincidence that the old model is located in the suburbs, while the cyborg body is associated with the city. The two men, each holding a beloved creature, present a reassuring, homey image, but the long focus on the doll’s face between the two shots reminds us of the uncanny nature of reproduction/replication. (102).

Emphasizing the anachronism of the nuclear family in a postmodern world, both Chu and Orbaugh turn to Batou’s existence as a model means of operation in a hypermediated world. Where Togusa returns to the preconceived nuclear family, Batou finds an alternative way to interact with the world, namely by understanding others’ potential and entering into harmonious relations with them. Though Togusa’s parenting should not be stigmatized as such, his gift marks

the unsettling reality that humanism continues to reproduce itself even in the face of its own obsolescence.

Conclusion

As of now, hopefully it is clear that Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence* reveal humanism's problematic reproduction within individuals who take the culture industry and society writ large at face value. Both anime works effectively narrativize the short-sightedness of humanism and begin to establish a new ontology through the figure of the cyborg, at once a hybrid creature that embraces difference by troubling arbitrary distinctions created through such ideologies as humanism. Because the nature of this new ontology has not been sufficiently fleshed out, it is necessary to posit some idea as to how it is represented, if indeed it is, and detail how it describes the world differently than humanism or, more importantly, how it describes the world such that sovereignty in all its modalities would be precluded should it be mobilized.

It seems self-evident that The Puppetmaster, who disrupts the current anthropocentric order and offers a new existence to Kusanagi in *Ghost in the Shell*, holds great significance in understanding the new ontology laid out by Oshii. As mentioned in the analysis of *Ghost in the Shell*, The Puppetmaster's development of sentience provides the audience a decisive answer to Kusanagi's question of human uniqueness; in short, there is no importance in being human as such. The reasoning lies in the implications of The Puppetmaster's sentience: for a program to have developed sentience presupposes that "ghosts," or (human) subjectivity, are nothing but scientifically explainable phenomena, albeit overwhelmingly complex phenomena. That Section 6 does not understand or accept The Puppetmaster's sentience does not undermine the fact that it has developed sentience.

Kaku's aforementioned space-time theory of consciousness helps us understand such a reality, namely in its suggestion that subjectivity is a materially manifested phenomena made possible by beings' interconnectivity with the world through nerves, sensors, and fiber optic

cables alike. Because Oshii's anime works do not seem to question (nor seem to desire the audience to question) The Puppetmaster's sentience, it is important to understand such an element as an instance of cognition effect so that its plausibility is allowed full consideration. Combatting this aspect of the film seems to miss their overarching ontological point. "But is it life what we have reproduced? Or have we simply emptied the human organism and refilled it by algorythmic [sic] processes?" (Notaro 620) Such questions as these, though understandable concerns, are not the most pressing since they presuppose a separation between machines and humans; they force one to accept that humans are much more than algorithmic processes, which is "an article of faith" as coroner Haraway has it (Oshii). The way these questions are worded immediately precludes an understanding of humans outside of their self-prescribed importance, especially because the latter ironically assumes the very binary Oshii seeks to disrupt, namely that between neuronic organism and algorithmic machine. In fact, Notaro notes that,

Oshii's universe is still very much a Cartesian one where, the 'shell' refers to bodies both artificial and organic, and the 'ghost' refers to individual identity. In a similar universe, ghosts can move from organic to inorganic bodies, but an inorganic body cannot generate its own ghost (such a body can only be provided with a soul stolen from humans); identity remains a uniquely human trait. (616)

Though discussing *Innocence*, Notaro's contention that "an inorganic body cannot generate its own ghost" decisively separates the contiguous films as it ignores the fact that The Puppetmaster already established that an inorganic body *could* generate its own ghost.⁴⁶ Hourigan takes a similar route, noting,

But in this *fabula mundi* of self-wrought humanity *Innocence* does not entirely dispense with the idealist conception of subjectivity wherein an immaterial air or

⁴⁶ The Human Genome Project and Blue Brain Project are two of many current scientific endeavors that would prove such a possibility. Unless we are to assume divine creation, humans must have their origins in materiality and chemists have been seeking to understand precisely this phenomenon of spontaneous life that, at some point, must have happened. To ignore the implications of The Puppetmaster is to miss the richness of Oshii's films in exploring the implications of such a possibility on human ontology.

psyche animates the body. To draw a bare and minimal difference between humans and machines, Oshii's script carries forward the trope of a 'ghost' from the first film, which can loosely be defined as the intuitive subjective essence that grants a being human subjectivity. (53)

Not only does Hourigan maintain that subjectivity is immaterial, "essence," but retains a focus on the human that Oshii seeks to subvert. Yet in *Ghost* and *Innocence*, identity is not a uniquely human trait, but rather nothing more than a complex series of patterns that are fundamentally no different than any other living, thinking organism or even non-sentient organism that realizes feedback loops, such as plants.

In contrast to Notaro and Hourigan, Orbaugh mobilizes Oshii's questioning of human's self-importance, noting

Contemporary science and medicine recognize that the bodies we tend to think of as autonomous, clean, and purely *human* are, in fact, multiply invaded, radically hybrid. The "insides" we imagine as producing our *human* subjectivity and affect are, in fact, inhabited by millions of nonhuman creatures. (167-8; original emphasis)

To acknowledge that humanity is but one manifestation of consciousness and, furthermore, that humanism is an ideology with no greater support than the emergent effect of human-ness, illustrates the pretension behind any ontology that would place prime importance on humans. Alternatively, the space-time theory of consciousness could be said to describe all beings in a way that implicitly remarks on their potential rather than their correspondence to humanity. The theory's focus on feedback loops suggests that a being is not hierarchized in a moot comparison to humanity so much as understood through its abilities to interact with the world and to enter into machinic couplings.

The new ontology Oshii lays out through The Puppetmaster and the Kusanagi-Puppetmaster assemblage realized at the end of the first film thus challenges the audience to

understand reality through feedback loops, which seem to be a material correlative to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of affects. As feedback loops describe how a being or thing can interact with the world, such an ontology would foreground the potential of that being or thing to enter into a relation rather than predetermine its ability to interact (as human-focused ontologies do). In this way, all beings can be regarded through their greatest potential to realize joyous affects that do not simply cater to humans. Furthermore, as explicated in *Innocence*, objects too can be understood by way of their potential to be creative, rather than taken for granted and thereby enabled to reproduce restrictive ideologies. The ontology Oshii develops in *Ghost* and *Innocence* desires nothing less than to see the universe as an interconnected materiality wherein humans can extend the self and thereby realize greater (self-)perception rather than retract it and stay locked into a limited mindset.

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