

Utrecht University  
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Investigating Subjectivity in 'the Cyborg': Posthumanism Offered in Mamoru  
Oshii's Ghost in the Shell

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the Degree of

GEMMA

Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies

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2013

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## **Abstract**

In an effort to expand the field of realization for the feminist potentials laden in understanding 'identity' and 'subjectivity' through Haraway's metaphoric construct of 'the cyborg', this thesis offers cyberpunk imagination as another field of production of this figure. In order to do so, it offers new materialism as a way of reading and criticizing practice which helps recognize the elements in Japanese cyberpunk as that which helps form a posthumanist approach on notions of 'identity', 'subjectivity', and 'agency'. In this regard, the female cyborg figure of the movie *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) by Mamoru Oshii will be analyzed with a keen eye on her performances which subvert the static attributions on the notions of 'human', 'technology' and 'femininity'.

To my Likko and Pusula

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## Introduction

The data produced, collected, and/or maintained in information age has a relative abundance with the use of new technologies in different fields of knowledge production. State-of-the-art technologies not only offer more and more convenient tools for the pristine scientific ways of measurement and analysis of nature, but also allow the generation of different knowledges from specific standpoints which in their diffusion onto the net of information build a new understanding on nature altogether. The extent of the immense data gathered so far and its great range of diversity are available to all who gets to utilize from the medium of living in the age of Internet; and needless to say, does of us who can, do it quite often. Technologies of communication (as in cell phones, the Internet, and etc.) and control (as in fields of surveillance and warfare) as well as what is literally termed as life support (in medical research and treatment) are hardly less phenomenologically lived experiences of the human body than are the practices of thinking, talking, reading, writing, exchanging, touching and etc. Accordingly, it is evidently getting easier each day to realize subjectivity as a process always in formation through the proliferated ways of self expression made way by technologies of our age. As Arjun Apparadui (1996) solidly puts it, the digital technologies which the modern human would be impossible to imagine without, are resources for “experiments with self-making in all sorts of societies, for all sorts of persons” (p. 3) The sheer accuracy in conveying and retrieving data through technological mediums as well as our own technological fluency in using and utilizing these resources in itself signals the multiplicity of subjectivities we easily form, participate in and are subjected to in our everyday lives. To make the matters more complicated, this thesis elaborates on a futuristic fiction where individuals’ use of technology, and hence the means for self-making, have reached its utmost limit; here, the technologies of communication and control have been absorbed fully into internal bodily modalities. In other terms, in the year 2027 of future Japan, as the cyberpunk text of my analysis predicts, an average individual will be a greatly modified/cyborgized version of her human antecedent. In this narrative, the brain implants as common as cell phones enables the *jacking into* ‘the Net’, the all-comprehensive information network cohesive to all living and nonliving beings, in which individuals also construct and exchange the data they are a part of. As I want to illustrate through this text of the movie, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) by Mamoru Oshii, Japanese cyberpunk is a field suited for

posthumanist elaborations on the notion of ‘the subject.’ In doing so, I shall hope I can maintain a smooth transition between the *ordinary* as what is already around us and the *over the top* as what is mere speculation. As much as it sounds trivial to the unfamiliar ear, the members of this imagined society of future Hong Kong are justified in doubting or fearing from the loss of their identities, since even getting brain-hacked is a possibility once the digitally organized societal structure is embodied in all beings (such as through cyber-implants) that together materialize the structure itself. Due to their iteratively reproduced congregate bodies, and their hybrid anatomy (mechanical and organic) which enables a far greater utilization of the means of communication technologies than the modern human has, the individuals in *GitS* neither start nor end in the boundaries of their synthetic skin. The potency of the cyberpunk genre, in terms of giving way to posthumanist elaborations on the concepts of ‘the body’ and ‘the subject’ as in the *GitS* narrative, lies with its interest on this issue of *embodiment* for the individual with regard to what future looks like to the modern/ist human’s eyes.

Mainstream science fiction, being dominantly Western, tend to be “particular even as it claims universality. Its view remains based on ideas of the future as forward time.” (Milojevic & Inayatullah, 2003, p.493) In imagination of a linear progression into the future, technology looks as powerful and dynamic as it is scary for human beings for whom the concept of ‘the human’ constructs an exclusive category that antagonizes all other phenomena. The anxiety over how the human body will endure the overwhelming penetration of technology into its modernist aura, or more precisely, how ‘the human’ or ‘the mind’ of post/modernism will endure this abashment has been the fuel of cyberpunk popularity world wide. Having critiqued it so much so early, this thesis essentially is about taking a new look at the cyberpunk narrative in a way which will affirm the threat offered under the concept of technology, but work with it in analysing other significant and/or seemingly insignificant elements of the situation problematized in *Ghost in The Shell* narrative. In doing so, I aim to explore the idea that although the peculiar elements of cyberpunk such as technology and human are widely contextualized to be, respectively, threatening/alien and naive; they may pose/materialize in other cyberpunk narratives where the effect they generate or the identifications they are involved in will be deferred. Following Haraway, I argue for the need to “subvert the central myths of origin of western Culture with their longing for fulfillment in apocalypse” through utilizing the technoscientific opportunities in

the production of science fiction narratives for a reconfiguration of future in our imagination. (Haraway, 1991 p. 175). In this sense, I offer Japanese cyberpunk and the text of Mamori Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell (GitS)* as a fitted field for both the analysis and the performance of 'new materialism'<sup>1</sup> in my reading of the text as such a reconfiguration of future in imagination. New materialism, in urging for differentiated ways of understanding the materialisation as a process, challenges the "presumptions about agency and causation implicit in prevailing paradigms [which] have structured our modern sense of the domains and dimensions of the ethical and the political." (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 6) As Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn (2012) offer it in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, new materialism also corresponds to reading and re-reading of narratives, in order to recognize their specific motifs along with the paths in which these motifs differ categorically only in reorienting ourselves "profoundly in relation to the world, to one another, and to ourselves." (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 6) Cyberpunk, when offered as the field of imagination about technology, I assert, carries in itself not only the possibilities brought about by technology in the formation of human subjectivity, but also the potency in *reimagining* technology itself in proliferating the representations of a posthuman subjectivity that will not promote the human to the subject over nonhuman beings. In order to dwell upon this potency, I will employ a multitude of theories as well as various cultural insights to perceive the most of what Japanese cyberpunk and particularly the story of *GitS* may convey to the spectator through the elements that are always already familiar to us but still specific to its very narrative. In this respect, I employ what Karen Barad (2007) calls a "diffractive methodology" in my efforts to understand these elements via "diffractively reading insights through one another, building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details" (Barad in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 50)

As I will be working with the figure of 'the cyborg', I will try to reveal the interdependence of its potentiality in breaking down the Cartesian heritage of binary oppositions such as subject-object, and its representation that is always already figured as a subject or an object not only depending on the narrative but also on the very *way of reading* the narrative. In other words, I argue for understanding the cyborg as specifically potent in representing the specificities of the site of its

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<sup>1</sup> New materialism regards materialization as an active process of which "embodied humans are an integral part, rather than the monotonous repetitions of dead matter from which human subjects are apart" (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 8).

production in which these specificities require multiple perspectives for an elaborate evaluation. In this sense, I propose the analysis of Japanese cyberpunk as the site of production for the figure of cyborg in popular culture; subsequently arguing that its imagination, representation, and appreciation should be analyzed diffractively to foster different understandings on the notion of subjectivity. This way, subjectivity will reveal to be always situation-specific, and hence, signal the liberatory potential in reconfiguring its production site in accordance with the feminist motives of avoiding binary oppositions in efforts of an impartial analysis. The diffractive strategy of new materialism, in this sense, will be employed as a way of reading practice for a non-hierarchized affirmative approach on the significant features of Japanese cyberpunk.

The search for a meaning of being a human and/or a cyborg, it seems, lie deep in the prevalent discourse of humanism which determines both what counts as material existence and its relative value in the age of information and high technology in fields of ethics and politics as such. Major Motoko Kusanagi, the protagonist cyborg of *GitS*, will help me elaborate not only on these predetermined meanings of materiality as well as subjectivity and agency in the Western context, but also present the performance of these notions in future Hong Kong, thereby documenting the limits of their validity in identity formation in the unique field of her bodily production. The *new* meaning stemming out of the unique constellation of Japanese cyberpunk should be consistent with *the matter* at hand, that is, Major Motoko Kusanagi, whose possible identification, though, exceeds the terms of materiality, subjectivity and agency offered in the account of humanism. It is in posthumanism where her meaning and hence the terms of her offered identity will be possible to assess with regard to the oppositions, contradictions and resemblances Major performs to the identities we recognize within our own situated knowledges. In being a female cyborg, Major does not simply deconstruct the notion of identity in being a misfit to the identities of woman and/or human, but rather reaffirm their facticity in her distinctive performance of a constellation of attributes for many identities at once. Most significantly, it is through this hybrid identity which inevitably includes much less attributes than what it excludes, Major's *so-called* identity offers insights on the terms of collapse for certain identities in favor of others in prevailing social, political, economic, and even scientific discourse. My aim in adding another analysis to the treasury of critique on *Ghost in the Shell* is actually to try and perform a new materialist reading on the notion of subjectivity as this narrative enables the (visual)

materialization of various seemingly contradictory and/or irrelevant elements/entities that assumingly belong to mutually exclusive practices of different “disciplines”, “cultures”, “races”, “genders”, “sex”, and the discourses of “religions”, “philosophies”, “traditions” and “sciences” that are assumed to conduct them. Some of these elements are more distinctive than others, but their unique constellation as a hybrid frame renders it more *mattering* and hence visible to the boundaries of representation. In contrast to the common representation of the confused and melancholic human/cyborg, I suggest a reading that enables a female posthuman subject who is not only able to cope with the collapsing boundaries of human-nonhuman, but also enables a radical re/formulation of the apparatuses<sup>2</sup> of its production through attributes that are freed from the limits of ‘humanness’ as well as the burden of transcending it. Such a reading, though, is only possible through the practice of re-reading the narrative from varying, situated perspectives with regard to different schools of thoughts, as well as cultural contexts in effect on the particular cyborg representation. In this sense, the diffractive methodology will help me build up a new understanding, one in which I can rework the concepts that traditionally “structure these insights or appear in the traditions of thought from which they stem” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 27) Different and even contradictory approaches on the issue will be useful not only in “breaking through a politics of negation” but also in avoiding “spatializing act of representation or reflection, which lures us into reduction as well as reaffirming the phallogocentric order.” (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 26) In light of this new materialist reading practice, I will try to build a nomadic perspective on the depiction of cyborg in *GitS* narrative, hoping to build a journey that flows through various theories on cyberpunk and the notion of cyborg as well as on the process of identity formation and the construction of identity. In this sense, my journey will start with various feminist perspectives on the notion of technology and Japanese cyberpunk and will continue with the examples of Japanese philosophy and Western psychoanalytic theory in highlighting different takes on the notion of subjectivity which is considered crucial in the building of the posthuman subject.

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<sup>2</sup> Apparatuses, according to Barad, are the measurement settings of phenomena which does not only include the observing instruments but also the boundary-drawing practices work to identify the phenomena. In other words, apparatuses not only measure a thing but also form it in accordance to their specific configurations. “Apparatuses are specific material reconfigurings of the world that do not merely emerge in time but iteratively reconfigure space-timematter as part of the ongoing dynamism of becoming.” (Barad, 2007, p. 142)

The core of my work being the instability of identities and the unfixed nature of subjectivity, I will dwell upon Karen Barad's (2003) theory of 'agential realism' throughout the thesis to emphasize how and why the realization/materialization of these notions are always heterogenous, but nevertheless consistent with the overall apparatus, that is the nature which, as will be elaborated in the following chapters, is undifferentiated from culture. In this regard, I will first dwell on the vast progress and use of digital technologies in filmic production to assess the possibilities inherent in imagination, production and appreciation of cyberpunk in a posthumanist vision. In presenting how new materialism works in incorporating different standpoints into one reading, I will offer different understandings on technology and its representation in Japanese cyberpunk to later contextualize their insights in my reading of the movie. In this sense, various theories on how "the Japanese" came to be "the Other" in the Western tradition of thought, and whether or not cyberpunk production represents the binary opposition of "the West" and "the Rest" will help dwell on the need for affirming the peculiarities of different discourses in understanding the *mattering* of these representations. Utilizing the insights Donna Haraway offers on the potential of the cyborg figure as well, I will be building the ground for an analysis on the text of *Ghost in The Shell* in the second chapter via also elaborating on various feminist critique on this figure with regard to validity of the cyborg theory in Japanese cyberpunk.

In the second and third chapters, I will be dwelling upon the particularities of Japanese cyberpunk via analysing certain features of the movie, and present the possibility of an intra-activity of different theories in analysis of these features. Also in the last chapter, the analysis of the project *Anlee: No Ghost Just A Shell* (1999) by Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe will help me connect Karen Barad's theory of agential realism and what it offers in terms of understanding the notions of 'identity' and 'agency' as dynamic processes in relation with Kristeva's take on 'the abject' as what initiates these processes. In order to do that, I shall briefly introduce the *GitS* narrative here also to ease contextualizing of the terms of Japanese cyberpunk that will be offered in the first chapter.

## The Narrative in *GitS*

*Ghost in the Shell* by Mamori Oshii (1995) is specifically chosen as a greatly influential example of the genre which deal with futuristic imaginations of society and world order. Starting with its manga series in 1989, *GitS*'s antagonist Major Motoko Kusanagi has been a famous cyborg continuing on her adventures in anime series, books and movies among which the third production is being made at the moment. Also considering the great amount of scholarly studies on the text of *GitS*, I take Major Kusanagi as the closest depiction of a cyborg which allows for an exploration of the hybrid, monstrous and gender bending nature of the cyborg "from a sympathetic, interior point of view rarely found in North American cultural products." (Orbaugh, 2002, p.440)

Being the most competent individual/officer in counter-fighting the cyber-crimes in the department of defense against cyber-terrorism in future Japan; Major Kusanagi leads the team Section 9 which is ordered to capture The Puppet Master, the ruthless hacker of cyber-brains and hence the puppeteer of some unfortunate individuals in the story. Throughout the movie, Major experiences conflicts regarding her identity in a way that she laments for her loss of it as the story couples 'humanness' with melancholia and thus secures the sympathy of the audience for the cyborg antagonist. As none of the male human and cyborg characters in the story are going through such a phase, they do not doubt their humanness even though some of them are 100% cybernetic bodies; they continue to buy body building tools or eat human food even though it is completely unnecessary for their survival as cyborgs. What is most significant about the main character, the female cyborg, is that she differs from her male companions in identifying with her body in such a way. Traditionally in cyberpunk genre, female bodies of the cyborgs are depicted as tools for seduction accompanying the ruthless and sinister plans of the 'mind' behind the cyborg body. Although *Ghost in the Shell's* protagonist, Major, departs from such a depiction for her use of a female body (which is a conscious choice) is not about acquiring 'femininity' but is rather a preference in all bodies (both in human and nonhuman shapes). She seems to be in full control of her cyborg body, is in charge of her overwhelming bodily abilities but it is in her *mind* that she looks for her essence. Consequently, when The Puppet Master turns out to be a computer program created by the government for a diplomatic use in hacking minds which, in the process,

became aware of its own existence as a result of travelling through a plethora of consciousnesses, Major suffers deeply from the confusion on what counts as a *life-form*, a *subject* and, of course, a *human*.

Throughout the thesis, I will work with this confusion in analyzing the elements that is thought to form a subject as well as the notions of 'identity', 'agency', and 'the human' in various social, cultural and philosophical contexts.. Major's degree of fitting within these categories will expose not the nature of her being but what 'the nature' really stands for in explaining the categories themselves.

## CHAPTER 1 - Japanese Cyberpunk and Its Relation to Technology

The contemporary features of science and technology make it harder to imagine static and fixed identities for us humans living in high-tech societies. As the cybernetic technologies are inspiring transhumanist<sup>3</sup> positivism in their proliferation in ways of easing our lives, we are more and more aware of our connectivity not only to other human beings, but to nonhuman materials and organisms as well. Today, the attributions of material entities as ‘natural’ and/or ‘essential’, on the humanist’s<sup>4</sup> side, are devalued in the idea of ‘subjectivity’, since the efforts of its formation in which we find ourselves in our daily practices are almost strictly digital<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, the concurrent significance of technology in our lived experiences, it seems, is not enough to break the prevailing tradition of thought that regards ‘subjectivity’ as an essential human characteristic. As long as technology is imagined as exterior to the *assumed* natural state of human beings, subjectivity is bound to maintain a notion narrowly built as only reproducible and/or improvable via technology upon which ‘the Human’ of modern thought reigns. Science-fiction readers, on the other hand, are much more familiar to the understanding of subjectivity as a process of action that would include both labels of ‘natural’ and ‘artifact’ in analysis of the elements involved in this process. The science-fiction tradition of speculatively exploring extraterrestrial features of the universe, I believe, has helped shifting the centered position of human being as the subject of scientific and technological inquiry in the world. Authors like Mary Shelley, Isaac Asimov, Ursula K. LeGuin along with others have familiarized us with different subjectivities that are of ‘monsters’, ‘aliens’, ‘robots’ and even ‘whole worlds’. However, as this chapter aims to prove; cyberpunk, the young subgenre of science fiction, elaborates more on the effects of what science-fiction imagination predicts in terms of grave enhancement in technology upon today’s humanity in the near future. What defines this effect, I aim to explain, is a clash of subjectivities which differ in their entanglement with the varying definitions of ‘technology’ as the object of

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<sup>3</sup> Transhumanism refers to the emergent philosophical movement which says that “humans can and should become more than human through technological enhancements.” (James J. Hughes in *Politics of Transhumanism* 2002)

<sup>4</sup> The term humanist here refers to the standpoint of humanism which regards the human being to be the measure of all ideologies.

<sup>5</sup> Not only through the social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and so on which are now the primary platforms of self-making and self-representation, individuals in information age sustain their integration into the society through the means of smart phones, online banking systems, internet shopping, or occupations such as digital nomads (traveller bloggers, distance code writers and etc.) Considering that a non-credit card holder can not even book rooms in hotels anymore, we can say that our subjective positioning within the social, economic, and political systems are now almost strictly digital.

imagination, and the way of employing technology in the production of different narratives. As the subject is inseparable from this effect, the protagonist of cyberpunk displays many elements that features how differently technology have always been imagined, defined and experienced in different natural *and* cultural contexts. As I find it crucial to work with a Harawayan continuum with regard to naturecultures<sup>6</sup>, this approach will help me overcome the either-or logic of approaching nature and culture whilst explaining the effects of different attributes with regard to Western and Japanese discourses on the figure of cyborg in Japanese cyberpunk. This notion of continuum elaborated in the term “naturecultures” by Donna Haraway (2003), has been founded in various post-structuralist theories such as those by Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, and is followed up by Karen Barad’s (2003) theory of “agential realism” which I will be making use of in analysis of the representation of *the cyborg* in the context of Japanese cyberpunk.

Karen Barad, a theoretical physicist and feminist theorist, continues this project of continuum by warning that in the reaction towards essentialism, as we find in feminist science criticism, one might reduce matter merely to discourse. In other words, ‘objectivity’ and ‘reason’, the troubled notions of Western scientific discourse, appear as the deceptive guards of patriarchy in proposing materiality as the sole reference to truth. The distrust against the rhetoric of Western scientific knowledge which operated on the binary coding of elements such as subject/object, natural/cultural and etc., and which endorsed the reducing of woman to nature (see Kristeva) now appear as the questioning of materiality itself, and the denial of the scientific truth claims on behalf of a social reality. As she suggests the concept of “relation” as a way for avoiding this problem, Barad explains that relation not only has an epistemological function but also an ontological pre-existence before any *relata* (Barad, 2007). In other words, entities do not precede but rather are formed only in and through this relation which she defines as an *intra*-action rather than *inter*-action. As will be discussed throughout the chapter, Japanese cyberpunk narratives are hybrid constellations which, in a linear cause and effect analysis, appears to have employed Western concepts such as ‘the body’, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘the human’, and which seem to convert these notions within the long *othered* and *unique* Japanese culture. In light with Barad’s *agential realism* explained above, this chapter is about looking for the elements of significance in the

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<sup>6</sup> The term “natureculture” is coined by Donna Haraway (2003) in her *Companion Species Manifesto* to signify the ontological inseparability of the modernist categories of ‘the natural’ and ‘the cultural’ in analysis of any phenomenon in the world.

employing and imagining of technology in the context of Japanese cyberpunk in order to emphasize the non-hierarchical, *intra-active* play among the notions of human, nonhuman, culture, nature, mind and body with regard to their philosophical attributes within Western and Japanese contexts in the making of the posthuman subject. In other words, the concepts will be shown in their intra-active becoming within the apparatus in which the categories of ‘Western’ and ‘Japanese’ are simultaneously engendered.

In such a manner of analysis, the workings/tendencies of particular material-discursive practices, in this case the contemporary techno-scientific practices, will be shown to have a relational manifestation with the material disposition of the artwork. These practices, in light of Barad’s agential realism, will be tried to be understood in their becoming of what they are in an intra-active relationship with all other categories/entities we define specific to Japanese cyberpunk. The boundary-drawing practices, in Baradian terms, are the influence of discursive traditions and material conditions (the two are also intra-actively engendered in constant iteration) in limiting/determining of the production/visibility of certain elements in the movie. The representation of any particular concept with these elements, though, as will be further explained in the thesis, always precludes certain other elements that are just as immanent to the setting, only in which, the concept is meaningful. In the context of my analysis on Japanese cyberpunk, the boundary-drawing practices refer to the terms of configuration of the cyborg figure along with the terms of understanding nature, technology, human and other elements that stand out in the process of meaning generation out of the narrative. In this chapter, I will be presenting various perspectives on Japanese cyberpunk not only to understand the nature of the boundary-drawing practices that form ‘the cyborg’, but also to gain insights and collect the hints on what is left out in its representation throughout the thesis. Elaborating on the entities specific to Japanese cyberpunk, then, will help me elaborate also on the significant features of the cyborg, that is, the rough contours of Major Motoko Kusanagi, the protagonist of the movie *Ghost in the Shell (GitS)*.

## The Genre of Cyberpunk and Its Indispensable Hero, 'Technology'

“Cyberpunk as a combination of science fictions (cyber) and noir narratives (punk), is where low life meets high tech. The protagonist often comes from lowers origins and ventures to the chaotic world where the truth he seeks is often manipulated by technology. In other words, cyberpunk inherits the old distrust an individual holds against the society from the 1950s film noir and reflects the new anxiety of the 80s toward technology and Japan.” (Hongwen, 1997, p. 30)

As Xu Hongwen explains in the above quote, cyberpunk messes with technology. It depicts technology in near future through dystopian features of its imagined sovereignty over masses. Concerning the corporate domination over states and people, a major issue in cyberpunk pertains to the need for elevated individualism against the structurally ameliorated agency for human beings. In other words, the depiction of oppressive governing powers in the future renders a vertical collectivism that is based on cultural conformity and hence centralization and hierarchy in the imagined society. It is this constitution of cyberpunk narrative, I want to assert, that reveals cyberpunk imagination to be a fitted field for posthumanist elaborations on the notions of ‘the body’ and ‘subjectivity’ by the very means that structure the genre with a postmodernist view on humanity. With the oppressive hegemony of corporate governance concretized in the notion of ‘technology’ as *the* threat of the future, humanity appears as a holist category that renders individualism invisible. In this sense, it won’t be too bold to say that *the* protagonist of the cyberpunk narratives is actually *humanity*, thereby posing technology as another identity to fulfill the role of the antagonist. It is this very despair of *humanity as a whole* against/within the bigger technological structure ruling upon society (antagonism inevitably presents itself in a Cartesian habit of dual thinking), preserved as a defining characteristic of cyberpunk that makes ‘*a human*’ a notion too immersed into enemy’s soil to be retrieved in one bounded piece of only flesh and bones. The enchanting heros of cyberpunk are bound to be *more than human*, a hybrid of human and machine, in order to arouse individual agency in an oppressive structure prevailing upon the homogenous category of *humanity* as a whole. Hence, cyberpunk stands as the playground of ‘the mind’ whereby it finally settles in beings that are not necessarily human but

not merely its antagonist technology either; it is now ‘the cyborg’ that is conscious and even mindful of the human beings.

### **The effect of Technology on the Formation of Subjectivity**

Not only in terms of their intense collaboration with and/or dependence on technology in pursue of their mission, but also because of their twisted attitude towards technology and their overall misfit role in valorizing humanity, the protagonists of this narrative appear as the “ironic political myth” Haraway ascribes onto the figure of the cyborg (Haraway, 1991, p. 149) As the Frankfurt School theoreticians have taught us, technology is not a pre-given category that can be analyzed separately from its field of production which also defines its character and disposition within the realm of capitalism. As Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1972) offer it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the inevitable monopolizing of culture in capitalist order which manipulates and forms the needs of its subject individuals, is enforced by means of technology that enables the mass production of entertainment goods. In being a means of capitalist production, technology works to reify culture and motivate individuals to desire for goods for which the individuals’ needs are manipulated/formed in accordance with their status in society that is rationalized through their consumption patterns (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972) Through the workings of this “culture industry” as Adorno and Horkheimer offer it, individuals internalize the system of their governance along with their designated position in society, just as it is offered through the dystopic vision on technology in cyberpunk texts. In her acknowledgement also of the perils of technological advancement, Haraway recognizes the validity of cyberpunk subject matter regarding the threat of enhanced social control and the amplified praxis of capitalist world system in the near future; nevertheless, she refuses its demonization,

“opting instead to hold two contradictory attitudes concerning cyborgs in tension. Though the cyborg ... may represent the final imposition of information technology as a means of social control, it may also be potentially recoded and appropriated by feminism as a means of dismantling the binarisms and categorical ways of thinking that have characterized the history of Western culture.” (Silvio, 1999, p. 54)

The cyborg, in being both the technology and its subject, that is, being both the means of capitalist production and the consumer of its entertainment goods, incorporates the very ironic political potency Haraway assigns to the figure of cyborg. The irony lies in the cyborg's embodying the capacity of technology not only to seize her desires, but to subvert the disposition of these desires that are bound to be ambiguous as her status in the society inevitably is. In terms of being both the human that can be manipulated for her needs and the technology that creates these needs, the cyborg occupies a unique position that is not already a designated status in terms of her consumption habits, and which can help erase the symbolic categories such as gender and race on which these habits are built, and which hold *the* category of humanity intact.

As the culture industry encompasses the production of films in the capitalist age, animation, being the sole genre in which technology is the sole medium of production, stands as a great example to understand how technology can be appropriated in accordance with our feminist motives. Appropriating the liberatory potential Haraway grants to information technologies, media studies scholar Gulay Er (2009) argues for full incorporation of digital technology into filmic imagination. In her work on the visual representation of 'the body' in cyberculture, Er (2009) explains that technological developments, "alongside effecting social life, makes the problematic of individuals reality perception and the way of self-presentation in the cyberspace a current issue, ...[nevertheless] as digital technology is in the use of imagination in films, *animation* is the most convenient film genre for getting over these scantiness." (p. 71, *my emphasis*) As Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (2010) explain in insisting for a new materialist way of understanding the world, today, everywhere we look, "we are witnessing scattered but insistent demands for more materialist modes of analysis and for new ways of thinking about matter and processes of materialization." (p.2) In terms of cyberpunk popularity world-wide along with the possibilities laden with its ability for perceptual try-outs, Er emphasizes the feminist opportunities the field of audio-visual arts may offer in understanding the process of materialization through artistic production in the age of information technologies. In line with the new materialist framework I want to employ in contextualizing digital technologies of filmmaking and the representation of technology in films produced by them, I share Er's affirmative view on the use of advance technological means in filmic production, and I hope to

extend this view to the field of imagination by means of analyzing cyberpunk as *imagination about technology*.

Apart from the ability to transpass the technical limitations on creativity, digital technology and animation has the potential to realize alternative worlds for which the stereotypical characters and/or utopian plots in traditional cinematic production simply can not create the necessary atmosphere. It is this very ability of animation that paves the way for depictions of ‘the body’, ‘the mind’ and even ‘the spiritual’ in their conceptual becoming and vanishing. In enabling the visual representation of varying definitions on ‘the body’, animation stands as *the* film genre in Japan, where the issues of *representation*, *subjectivity* and *individuality* are delved into at most ease and efficiency (Er, 2009) This assertion, as I argued above, is further enhanced by the fact that animation, through the in/voluntary meaning generation carried out by technology in production, conveyance and appreciation processes of the artwork, also enables varying definitions on any representation of the body on behalf of the spectator. These advanced visualization technologies in use of animation transforms ‘the body’ into “the very medium of cultural expression itself, manipulated, digitalized, and technologically constructed in virtual environments” and the mere popularity of the genre taken into consideration, it burdens perception itself to try “to continue to think about the material body as a bounded entity, or to continue to distinguish its inside from its outside, its surface from its depth, its aura from its projection” also on the receiver’s end. (Balsamo, 1996, p. 131) In this sense, Japanese animated films, commonly called ‘anime’, bolster the dismantling of perception which pertains to ‘the body’ which we are familiar from the history of Western philosophy. In her work, *Japanese Popular Culture Experiments in Subjectivity*, Sharalyn Orbaugh (2002) documents that many of the mainstream cyberpunk productions in Japan are either unimaginative or derivative with regard to the issues of subjectivity laden with the cyborg philosophy of the West; nevertheless, she further argues, there are also many examples that are “complex and thoughtful, and their sheer quantity means that the various issues at the heart of the new cyborg paradigm are explored in Japanese popular culture perhaps more thoroughly than anywhere else. (And, given the extraordinary popularity of manga and anime outside Japan, this exploration is shared by increasing numbers of international viewers.)” (p. 437) Given also the nature of its feedback generating constitution of abundantly active fan groups make Japanese cyberpunk almost an

open source narrative in its long term development. Overall, its specific success in such endeavours with animation, and its role as the *model* for the rest of the world in the field, as will be explained further on in the chapter, makes Japan a particular case in the foci of animation.

### Japanese (Western) Cyberpunk

The ground of science fiction endorsed by technological means of filmic production, it seems, does indeed enable what Darko Suvin (1979) famously called “the cognitive estrangement” which, briefly explaining, is the assertion that in imagining strange worlds, we learn to gain new perspectives on our own. Representational figures such as Haraway’s cyborg, and/or the figures of the monstrous or the grotesque used in feminist epistemologies work in a similar way. They work in filling the blanks for ontologies needed in the habitual thinking on formation processes with a starting point or reference as the primary cause of phenomena. We may not be identifying ourselves as cyborgs just yet, but we are definitely familiar to the concept if not through Donna Haraway then through at least one of the vastly popular Hollywood movies such as *The Matrix*, *Terminator*, *Blade Runner*, and etc. An imagination of subjectivity that extends not only to other humans, but also to nonhuman elements in being produced calls for this practice of cognitive estrangement, I suggest, that is also possible through the imaginary plots of future in cyberpunk narratives. Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will try to disclose several different elements involved in the processes of subjectivity formation so far as they can be detected in their intra-active becoming by the analyses and the critiques of Japanese cyberpunk narratives. In explaining the differences between what is called ‘Western’ and ‘Japanese’ cyberpunk, I aim to emphasize on the role of philosophical traditions as well as other hegemonic discourses in forming two different cultural contexts for cyberpunk production that so far defines the nature of cyberpunk in its international critique as well. Cyberpunk imagination, along with its field of critique, I aim to infer, serves as the setting for the intra-actions whereby the two cultures of the West and Japan are *redefined* in the making of the nature of future.

Karen Barad’s (2007) theoretical framework of “agential realism”, I believe, is a great tool to elaborate on the role of ontology in elaborations on different concepts, and in its relation with

politics which Haraway (1991) consolidates through the figure of cyborg in her famous essay *Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*. In appreciation of different views and representations on the cyborg narrative in the Japanese context, the agential realist account by Karen Barad will help create the necessary methodology that will recognize but not essentialize any of the attributions and descriptions different scholars assign to the genre and/or its influences. The significant features elaborated upon in varying views will be shown in diffracted patterns, hence assuring an appreciative attitude towards different feminist views on the cyborg, and producing an affirmative view on the reading of the contours, or the phenomena, of Major Motoko Kusanagi later on in the thesis. By the same token, I argue for diffracting<sup>7</sup> the patterns of understanding not only the contemporary advance technology but also the ways of imagination about an ‘even more advanced technology’ within the ‘specific terms’ of Japanese cyberpunk. Throughout the rest of the chapter, I will try to address these ‘specific terms’ through their diffraction patterns to explore the extent of possibility for the realization/materialization of feminist possibilities I, following Haraway, Barad, Er and many others, claim inherent to techno-scientific discourse and practices and their recognition in a non-hierarchizing, non-essentializing and affirmative posthumanist vision.

The particular cyborg figure of my research being regarded as *the effect* of what Barad calls ‘boundary-drawing practices’, that is, the effect/influence of discursive traditions such as cultural values and/or prevalent philosophical discourses, the genre of cyberpunk appears as a crucial site of analysis to explore the mechanisms at work in figuring her significant features. I am interested here not in her distinctive features which, in being each and every brush stroke in their entanglement to an incomprehensible apparatus as her field of bodily production, would expand my field of analysis to eternity; but, in the significant ones that are materially entangled with the specific terms of Japanese cyberpunk I mentioned earlier. The significant features of hers, in this sense, refer to *the effect* in its most explicit poses of the boundary-drawing practices of Japanese cyberpunk; and hence, as my analysis aims to prove, just as significantly display the *nature* of these practices inherent to the apparatus of her bodily production. The effects, as Gilles Deleuze

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<sup>7</sup> As Karen Barad (2003) explains in her *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*, Haraway proposes the notion of diffraction as “a metaphor for rethinking the geometry and optics of relationality.”(p. 3) According to Haraway, “(d)iffraction does not produce ‘the same’ displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of differences appear” (Haraway, 1992, p. 300)

(1988) explains, “are indeed things, that is, real beings which have an essence and existence of their own, but do not exist and have no being apart from the attributes in which they are produced.” (p. 91) The boundary-drawing practices, then, are the attributes of Japanese cyberpunk production which, in being responsible for the significant features of my cyborg, are the very realization/materialization of ‘the specific terms of Japanese cyberpunk’ which I am so keen to analyze throughout thesis.

### **Cyberpunk or Japanism?**

Another, a bit more cynical reading than that of Er’s on Japanese cyberpunk regards the political potency of the genre not in the posthumanist affirmative way, but in terms of serving the grounds for misguided representations of feminist motives in Japan and retaining obscured Japanism worldwide (see Orbaugh, 2002; Sato, 2004) Its observations on the difference between ‘the Western’ and ‘the Japanese’ cyberpunk depictions emphasize on the reflexive development of these two cultures as separate in their histories of relating with technology, and dealing with subjectivity on a philosophical level. Explaining that in contemporary popular cyberpunk texts (Japanese and American), the Harrawayan model of cyborg appears to have found soil in Japan; the argument claims that the current situation is actually a reflection of a history of conflicts regarding the Japanese identity *within* Japan, which has characterized the country’s modernization process ever since the WWII. (Sato, 2004)

In this critique against the Western rhetoric of change that presupposes a universal advancement brought about by information technologies, Kumiko Sato (2004) warns feminists not to simply assess the power of cyborg from its technological competence, as that is what misleadingly informs Japan’s identity politics (p. 335) Japanese science fiction, Sato (2004) explains, developed only in appropriation and emulation of mostly American and some British science fiction, “thereby expressing in the locus of science fiction the interactive relationship of the genre and Japan.” (p. 345) In the early 1960s’, Japan witnessed a vast growth in science fiction production especially in the form of Manga; however, the work produced, Sato infers, was the engenderment of the “emergent sci-fi culture of postwar Japan [that] equated advanced technology, which is a key factor of the [cyberpunk] genre..., with the principle of hardcore

science fiction” (p.344) Evidently, then, the boost in cyberpunk production in Japan had a strong motive of technological progress which, in unfolding of its a priori rhetoric, necessitated the implementation of the Western discourse of modernity onto Japanese society. In this sense, the science fiction inquiry on Japan’s behalf which “had been a ritualistic transformation of Japaneseness into American enlightenment and modern technologization,” is materially entangled with definitions “heavily dependent on mutual interpretations of “the other culture” from multiple perspectives” (p. 336)

In her close reading of Japanese philosophy of mid-twentieth century, Sato demands attention to the historically progressive efforts of building ‘the modern Japanese subject’ in the context of Japanese culture itself to infer the meaning of ‘the cyborg’ configured in Japanese cyberpunk as ‘the hybrid’. She explains that although it has been affected by the West, Japan nevertheless embraced and further developed the concepts of ‘otherness’, ‘hybridity,’ and ‘monstrosity’ so far as to form itself a national identity that is able to cope with the discourse on technology which the country now allegedly leads. As she presents snapshots of Japan’s modernization process, she hints that the Japanese philosophical movement from mid twentieth century which is called “*nihonjinron*” (literally the theories/discussions about the Japanese), was the start of Japan’s opening out for a “modern subject” which would persist on pursuing Japanese uniqueness against the West’s universality in attempts to “reconceptualize a non-European form of modernity”(Sato, 2004, p.341). It was the famous Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida’s efforts of utilization of the Western notions of modernity and technology, and the self-affirmed regard of Japanese as culturally unique (as developed in the notion of *nihonjinron*) who developed the idea that “Japan should realize the harmony of Japanese culture (as spiritual uniqueness) and Western technology (as the source of modernity and its advantages)”(p. 342). As Sato puts it in the context of cyberpunk production;

“...cyberpunk serves as a new locus of the old Japanism with the pretentious look of advanced technology. The epistemological innovativeness that American cyberpunk carried in itself easily merged with this old mission of Japan’s modernization, which created the discourse of *historical coincidence* that retroactively produces the history of the prosthetic Japanese identity. This

identity politics, that is, the newness of the West re-contextualized into Japanese tradition, produces the illusion that modern Japan has outpaced the West by reclaiming its past.” (p. 353, *my emphasis*)

As Sato elaborates in the above quote, the Western rhetoric of *development* and *modernity* has been employed to serve a historicism that claims itself universal; and, analysis of the technological development as well as the effects of Western cyborg philosophy simply gave way to a misled reading of Japan’s position in the furthest point of the West’s linear progression scale. The *appearance* of future in terms of Japanization in sci-fi narratives enforced Japan “to imagine Japanese as part of the whole entity called homo sapiens, and further, to imagine history at the planetary level” simply by means of adopting a universal rhetoric on humanity “supported by the scientific logic of time and space.” (p. 346) In this line of thinking, then, when American sci-fi imagination eventually needed a distinct place on which to project the distance and yet the familiarity of the future, and especially to signify the alienation of the human where the relationship with technology will be altercated, it remembered *the Orient* and turned to Japan for its plot of futuristic projections. The movement of ‘nihonjinron’, in this sense, only makes it easier “to examine the dynamically fluid and interactive nature of culture being formed by the sense of “how they see us” rather than “what is our culture”” (p.336)

Sato’s concerns rightfully regard what is at stake in blindly embracing the Western discourse especially for a culture which has for so long been forced to recognize itself as ‘the Other’, and which she claims to have become the very sign produced by the West in order to take part and excel in its discourse on modernity and advancement. In a systematic practice of mimicry, then, Japanese science fiction developed around the task of ‘Westernizing the Japanese culture’ through reclaiming its own *otherness* within a discourse of modernity that had, and hence perhaps should, always have belonged to the West. The American discovery of Japan in cyberpunk, in this sense, is actually a *recognition* of what the West was feeding Japan all along for its ambiguous, hybrid and monstrous character which now proves advance for the Western discourse whose modern subject can use some border blurring for its own notion of ‘identity.’

Various explanations are developed to resolve the tension around this ‘historical coincidence’ within the context of cyberpunk, which, being more than an issue of who is more advanced, hints on whose practical interests the representation of ‘the cyborg’ and production of Japanese cyberpunk serve in general. Feminist scholars like Kumiko Sato and Sharalyn Orbaugh emphasize on the development of modernity in terms of the cultural practices which, in such an analysis, emerge from the discursive traditions of Western philosophy. They list the discursive hegemonies which although born and raised in the West, nevertheless have reigned, and still continue to reign even over their breaking down, over ‘the Rest.’ Lacan’s “split subject” in which it is the “present absence” of ‘the Other’, or Latour’s “process of purification” whereby it is the great divide between ‘the human’ and ‘non-human’, Sato (2004) and Orbaugh (2002) respectively claim, are lacking elements of Japan’s history and culture to finally have reached the stage of disavowing the identity of ‘the human’ as a whole. In this sense, it is Japan’s *own* history that is inevitably separate from but also incontestably affected by that of the West’s, especially in its way of making itself through the modernist self, reason, agency and progress; that makes Japan only *appear* to have outpaced the West in search for the feminist cyborg subjectivity at hand.

In affirming the discursive hegemony of Western modernism over Japanese society, Sharylyn Orbaugh (2002) scrutinizes the historical development of the cyberpunk genre within Japan to assess the validity of Haraway’s (1991) assertion on the cyborg figure being “a creature in a post-gender world” in the context of Japanese cyberpunk (p. 150) In her article, *Sex and the Single Cyborg: Japanese Popular Culture Experiments in Subjectivity*, Orbaugh (2002) infers that contemporary Japanese cyberpunk is “still very much concerned with the binary oppositions of sex and gender, and the sexuality presumed to accompany them” (p. 448). As her analysis assumes a time-bound causality between the formation of the Western modern subject and the involuntary efforts on Japan’s behalf to survive being othered by this very discourse, she claims “particular historical-cultural moment(s)” to be effective in “fears and desires projected in popular cyborg narratives” produced in Japan (p. 436) Orbaugh’s analysis offers ‘the particular historical-cultural moments’ of Japan to be the key points of influence on popular Japanese cyborg narratives. Among these historical-cultural moments are the loss of WWII, ban on investing to weaponry, United Nations refusal to recognize basic racial equality among its

members which, the author explains, strike as definitive explanations for Japan's aggressive ventures on science and technology, and philosophical moves in hedging its new *modern subject* in the cultural context. The wave of cyborg philosophy along with other influential/hegemonic elements of the high-tech culture arousing in the United States in 1980s, Orbaugh claims, have reached *the Orient* almost simultaneously to be picked up by a freshly formulated discourse on modernization and advancement in the country. By then, in Japanese depictions, the nature of the cyborg as antithetical to humans was already lost and replaced with a concern for the subjectivity of monstrosity and hybridity; whereby "in Hollywood, the cyborg continued to be conceptualized along the same lines as it had been for a century, "male" and violently dominant, through characters such as Darth Vader, the Terminator, Robocop,.... these cyborgs continued to be posited as ab-human, and the desirability of rejecting cyborgization was routinely brought to the forefront." (Corbett, 2009, p. 45)

Such a reading of histories, though, run the risk of posing the West as a static discourse that had been as solid and clear as the Japanese culture had been indisputably alien to it. In a rather different attitude towards the Japanese culture, English literature scholar Matthew J. Packer (2006) explains the *situation* of "historical coincidence" as an arousal of "mimetic rivalry" between the sci-fi narratives of Japan and the West during when Japan was *modernizing* "following the Western example—with Western encouragement" after its defeat in WWII (p. 66) Whereas, he continues, it is the postmodern "nothing-new-under-the-sun" approaches on culture out of which "the Japanese have been stereotyped as cultural copycats, when transpacific imitating actually has been mutual: as East Asians have looked to the West for models of development and the imagination, so have Americans looked to the Far East."(p.ii) The idea of 'mimetic rivalry' offers an assessment of any artistic representation within the very time and space bound setting of its production. The elements of influence are only valued for their participation in the making of a *new* meaning/representation for all cognitive attributes at work in producing a new whole. In this sense, the understanding of the field of artistic production to be a whole in itself (Packer, 2006) helps us understand the blending of all cultural elements to reveal a different but yet a comprehensive figure like 'the cyborg', who poses for the constructedness, but yet the validity of all identities. It is at this point that I find it crucial to take a look at the philosophical movement by Kitaro Nishida which Sato and Orbaugh refer to as what developed

the idea of a modern Japanese subject, in order to understand the extent of influence the movement may have on the representation of ‘the cyborg.’

Kitaro Nishida believed that the problem of Japanese culture (its contradictory attributes with regard to the dominant Western discourse) would not be resolved through “rejecting European modernity and revaluing Japanese tradition (which usually happens with nationalist movements of the non-West)”, but through systematically theorizing a “universal oneness” in which particularities regarding different cultures would not be lost, but would form a balance within what would be an ideal condition in what Nishida calls a “Historical World (*rekishi-teki sakai*).” (Sato, 2004, p. 342)

“When we say that manyness becomes oneness, however, it means the negation of plurality, the extinction of opposition, the termination of mutual action. ...the mutual action of things means complete opposition and thus mutual negation: A transforming B and B transforming A. But as already stated the establishment of a relationship between things must presuppose something common to both. So when we say A negates B, or transforms it, it can only mean that A has made a field common to B its own, that is, A has made itself into a universal field and by doing so A makes B its own; A itself becomes the world.” (Nishida, 1958, p. 864)

To put it bluntly, as Nishida appeals for in the above quote, the ideal plan for Japan’s modernization was one that enforced the model, “the subject as absolute paradox,” whereby the mutual negation of the symbolic categories of ‘East’ and ‘West’ would help build an identity that exclusively subsumes all identities in an equal recognition towards all their particularities (Sato, 2004, p. 342) The extent of reciprocal influence being impossible to fully realize, the efforts to pinpoint the elements of dominance in this relationship may put at risk the apprehension of the current situation of the Japanese cyberpunk. In this regard, I argue for the recognition of significant elements from both cultural narratives (West and Japan), in a rather similar view to that of Nishida’s, not in a compare and contrast based analysis, but in terms of their realization in *the effect* being ‘the cyborg’ of Japanese cyberpunk. The discursive practices work to enact the

boundaries that structure the phenomenon in terms of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ and/or ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in founding the explanatory attributions of the elements that form the whole apparatus, that is, the Japanese cyberpunk; hence, discursive practices work as the boundary-drawing practices which determine the attributes of the matter “in the ongoing dynamics of agential intra-activity.”(Barad, 2007, p. 821) In this sense, I will try to further assess the specific terms of Japanese cyberpunk in the next chapter, by relying only on their materialization in the apparatus of cyberpunk imagination. Apathy for any elements/features, which can for many standpoint references be understood as direct implementation of Western discourse on modernity, may cause us to overlook the very significance of such attributes in giving Major Motoko Kusanagi its political potency for teasing and inessentializing all static identities possible.

### **The Japanese Cyborg through Agential Realism**

A *non-human*, standing up *for* humanity *against* technology *via* technology, inevitably enjoys the confusion of such categories through embodying, and hence, inessentializing the elements inherent to ‘the material-discursive intra-actions’ through which ‘humanism’ and its ossified identities/attributes are iteratively produced (Barad, 2007). Remembering my earlier assertion being that the cyborg is ‘the effect’ of boundary-drawing practices, material-discursive intra-actions refer to the entanglement of matter and meaning in the effect, the cyborg. Barad’s purposive term ‘intra-action’ works to conceptualize the causality at work in the entanglement of matter and meaning in the production of phenomena itself. “*A phenomenon is a specific intra-action of an “object” and the “measuring agencies”*”; the object and the measuring agencies emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-action that produces them (Barad, 2007, p. 128) The causality implied in intra-action does not entail a time-bound linearity as commonly and detrimentally assumed in cause and effect relationships, but refers to the production of phenomena whereby ontologically inseparable entities emerge as separate and determinate only in accordance to the discursive practices “that make some identities or attributes intelligible (determinate) to the exclusion of others.”(Barad, 2007, p. 197) In this sense, intra-action, Barad explains, “is not just a neologism, which gets us to shift from interaction, where we start with separate entities and they interact, to intra-action, where there are interactions through which subject and object emerge as a new understanding of causality itself” (as cited in Dolphijn and

Van der Tuin, 2012, p. 55) In such an understanding of causality, we can confidently regard the significant features of the Japanese cyborg to be effectual elements of both the Western and the Japanese discourses on subjectivity since, as will be shown in the next chapter, the two narratives are intra-actively formed in the making of ‘the cyborg,’ that is, the crucial component of any cyberpunk text. Nevertheless, we also have to admit that due to the nature of causality in intra-action itself, these significant features also equally signify the areas of exclusion in the construction of identities.

Both the works of Orbaugh and Sato emphasize that Japanese people have been actively producing the philosophical, political, and artistic grounds for a hybrid subject that is able to negotiate between the discourses of Western universality and the Japanese uniqueness whose amalgam only is what enables for a recognized modern Japanese subject. Sharalyn Orbaugh links this to a “Frankenstein Syndrome” relating to Marry Shelley’s (1818) groundbreaking novel, *Frankenstein*, in which the monster of Frankenstein learns to assess his beauty and value through the discourse and language of others and mainly by ‘the Other’ being his creator. Japan, like the monster of Frankenstein, Orbaugh claims, is forced to recognize its own “monstrosity” through the rife of the West. (Orbaugh, 2002, p. 438) The Japanese, she further explains, are completely knowledgeable about Western science fiction and cyborg theory, and hence, “they consider themselves as participating fully in an international conversation on the topic.” (p. 440) On an agential realist account, Barad (2003) explains, discursive practices are “specific material (re)configurings of the world through which local determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted. That is, discursive practices are ongoing agential intra-actions of the world through which local determinacy is enacted within the phenomena produced.” (Barad, 2003, p. 821) As we see in the critiques by Sato and Orbaugh, one comes across notions that are confusing in terms of their roots and means of production in analysing the Japanese cyberpunk. The phenomena produced being the text itself, the local determinacy seems to be enacted through the interplay of concepts which are the products of discursive traditions by Western philosophy and what this tradition attributed to Japanese culture in terms of the discursive category it created as ‘the Other.’ What is crucial to keep in mind, though, is that the cyberpunk observation of ‘modern Japanese subject’, its relational assessment with the Western model, and representations of bodies and subjectivities in accordance to this model as many

critiques offer it, are indeed *significant features* of Japanese cyberpunk today. Their significance, though, arouses specifically through their inessential nature in being identifiable with ‘the cyborg’ as the politically charged protagonist/subject of cyberpunk narrative. As Haraway (1991) explains, “the cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence.” (p. 152) Cyborg “the ironic political myth” (Haraway, 1991, p. 149), then, is potent precisely through her burdens of inessential, irrelevant, and hence, inevitably significant features of her bodily production. In the sense that cyberpunk imagination is structured with dystopian projections of today in near future, I see these features/properties of contemporary cyborg of Japanese cyberpunk as the necessary “practical knowledge” which, in a diffractive approach, helps analyse “the complex and ever-shifting ways in which the technologies of control of the embodied self ... intersect with the macro-instances that govern the production of discourses socially recognized as “true” and scientifically “valid .”” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 41) The irony, in this sense, lies not with the cyborg’s embodiment of these discourses, but with the very materialization of them that manifests itself only so significantly through the cyborg, through her rough contours blatantly showing the borders of exclusion in the forming of identities, in the forming of ‘the true’ and ‘the valid.’

In sum, in this chapter, I tried to present an overview of Japanese cyberpunk via explaining the modes of significance granted to Western cyberpunk narratives as well as Western philosophy in influencing Japanese cyberpunk and its elaborations on the notions of ‘human’ and ‘subjectivity’. Doing so, I aim to establish firmly that the cyborg does not represent the emancipated subject, but rather represents the emancipation itself through undermining subjectivity that relies on a *fixed* category of modernity, its nationality and culture notwithstanding. Throughout the thesis, I will try to show that only in realization of the conditions of subjectivity within the environment, that is, the immediate apparatus within which both ‘the effect’ *and* ‘the cause’ is produced, we can recognize *the reality* and the terms of reality regarding these categories. This is the way to appreciate cyborg as our ontology without disavowing what, in terms of race, sex, gender, age and so on, helps make us “us”; in other terms, what materializes as the phenomena of us. As Manuel DeLanda (1993) explains within the context of cyberpunk, the use of ‘traditional’ modes of thinking that only regards the central domain assumptions of classical social theory will inhibit the necessary re/designing of the

modes of contemporary reasoning in cyberpunk imagination. The employment of the same ideal types of categorizing, ways of analysis and habit of abstraction would obstruct coming to terms not only with the future, but also with the contemporary day. In this regard, this chapter works to show that it would not be a valid analysis to assume that explorations in literature narratives stem from philosophical ontologies to portray reality. Rather, analysis of contemporary literature should provide insights on philosophical traditions in terms of their validity in and feasibility for understanding the always *new* account of contemporary condition.

## CHAPTER 2 - Significant Features of Cyberpunk and Ghost in the Shell

The posthumanist vision of Japanese cyberpunk enables us to see the measure of impact technological advancement has, not only on human beings, but on the overall environment that also defines the individual with regard to the boundary-drawing practices I mentioned in the previous chapter. The promise of this vision in Japanese cyberpunk narrative lies in its particular way of assessment of the technological advancement into the future. This chapter is about highlighting those elements that make Japanese cyberpunk a fitted field for elaborations on a posthumanist subjectivity in imagining the future not through the pre-given Western anxiety over technology's unstoppable progression and its subsequent hegemony over humanity, but through the efforts of configuring the suitable environment whereby the possibility for a more comprehensive meaning on notions of 'individuality' and 'self' will be sustained in the future. Accordingly, I will be analysing several features of the movie *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) by Mamoru Oshii and certain characteristics of the movie's cyborg protagonist Major Motoko Kusanagi in relation with the common characteristics of the genre of cyberpunk as well as with various philosophies on top of posthumanism to show how the boundary-drawing practices work in creating 'the familiar' out of the new and the alien settings. Posthumanism, as Karen Barad (2007) puts it "does not presume that man is the measure of all things. It is not held captive to the distance scale of the human but rather is attentive to the practices by which scale is produced." (p. 136) Western cyberpunk, as will be elaborated on in this chapter, commonly tends to assess technology and its impact on society through a humanist vision which accounts for the well-being of 'the self' identified only with human beings. As Barad clarifies in the above quote, the posthumanist vision, unlike the common Western cyberpunk elaborations on the near-future, would not presuppose a subjective position on behalf of human, or better put, what is attributed 'a human' in analysing future technologies. Rather, an analysis on the condition of a phenomenon, in this case technology, would be an analysis of the 'specific intra-actions' which, in constituting the phenomenon, concurrently defines 'the effect' and 'the cause' of it with regard to the specific environment in which they engender. In this sense, posthumanist explorations on future technologies necessitate first and foremost the imagination of an environment whereby technology and subjectivity are not predefined, but rather looked for with regard to their differential appearances. It is these appearances that I will try to contextualize in

various philosophical discourses in order to understand their terms of manifestation within Japanese cyberpunk, and particularly to assess the possibility to reconfigure these terms for the production of a new scale in which the posthuman subject replaces ‘man the measure of all things.’ The particular setting of Japanese cyberpunk is a plot where we can observe the intra-actions of different elements of Western philosophy, as explained in the previous chapter, with the idea of ‘the Ghost’, that is dominant in Eastern thought, in forming ‘the posthuman’ of futuristic imagination. I believe that imagination about technology, in particular, differentially reflects the ways of imagining ‘the human’ and hence involuntarily exaggerates the very notions we regard peculiar to certain cultural contexts as well as the figurations of the categories of sex and gender in subsequently mocking the symbolic attributes of all identities. As will be shown throughout the chapter, Major Motoko Kusanagi is a decent example for many identities in her own way of performing them in an allegorical manner, that is, without essentializing their attributes but still actualizing them in accordance with the very configuration of the environment which concurrently conditions the terms of Major’s performance.

In a habit of dual thinking, most Western cyberpunk productions, along with their common critique, tend to imagine ‘the posthuman’ as the new form of individual of the future which simply others the notion of *human* and its attributes as a whole in being itself, that is, a new human. The depiction of what will follow the contemporary day, it seems, is more referable to symbolism within Western philosophy, be it through *representations* of its signifiers regarding identities and attributes or the total disavowal of them in efforts of beginning anew, than to the day at hand. When the future societies are imagined to have lost their ‘humanness,’ the protagonists of these stories are usually from the lowest social and economic classes which inevitably makes them the retrogressive reactionaries of humanism. As will be elaborated on in the example of the movie *The Matrix* in this chapter, heroes of Western cyberpunk are often depicted in mourning over and fighting for their lost *culture*, now dominated by technology. As these individuals are, of course, more organic and fleshed in their resemblance to modern human beings in their less advanced position in the future society, the notion of *culture* is securely coupled with the notion of *human* in a symbolic antagonism with what *technology* gets to represent in being strictly *nonhuman*.

Throughout the chapter, I will try to highlight the modes of significance for the elements that consist the idea of ‘the Ghost’ in relation with this idea of ‘the human’ in Western cyberpunk in order to dwell on the diffraction patterns on which the notion of subjectivity travels in different cultural contexts. The significance of these notions will help analyse Japanese cyberpunk, as a field of imagination, in reshaping the world for the posthuman subject. I will specifically be looking for the significant features of influence the prevailing traditions of thought, such as the prerequisite of the notions of ‘self’, ‘human’, and ‘virtual reality’ have on a narrative on subjectivity; and in carefully reading the patterns of their influence and manifestation in different settings I aim to show their simultaneous re/formation within the narrative of *Ghost in the Shell (GitS)*.

### **Constructing the Future**

Major Motoko Kusanagi is the main protagonist of *GitS*, a story that scrutinizes the ambiguity regarding the notions of self, identity, and consciousness in a world where transhumanist technologies define both the ally and the enemy of individuality. The year is 2027 in future Japan whereby the average individual is equipped at least with cyber-brain implants to enable her participation/communication in ‘the Net’ (the information network digitally safekeeping and utilizing all activity and data generated in the society.) Technology is no longer *a thing* that, in a Marxist sense, enforces upon us an external force of alienation through mechanization of labor and/or communication. It can no longer be considered as a means of production by itself when what it produces is not simply alienation from self, but rather, in the dystopic vision of cyberpunk, ‘the alienated self’ itself. Individuals have already embodied the cybernetic capacities of the Net in all physical and cognitive exercises at the expense of recording of all their data/experiences in everyday life through the very same faculty/technology of control of all data, the Net.

The new order in society is maintained through the surveilling of all cyber-net activity by governmental, now inextricable from corporate, means and regulations. Major is a high-ranked cyborg officer in Japanese Police Force, leading the field operations of the unit specialized in fighting against cyber terrorism nationwide. She is distinguishably capable in her job and is the

second in command in her departmental unit, Section 9, for which most of the staff members' bodies are re/produced by the cyborg shell manufacturing company MegaTech. Although it is led by a human commander, Aramaki, Section 9 consists mostly of fully-cyborgized officers all maintained by the same company.

As the common individual is equipped with vast means of technology, and hence may act upon any of the tremendous possibilities of agency set out through the vast information and its possible configurations in the Net; the dystopian futuristic projection of capitalism in *GitS* narrative poses in an even more powerful hence more distressing features of the control society of contemporary age. Thus; corporate government is posed, as a common characteristic for the cyberpunk genre in general, at its utmost oppressive stage available through the linear imagination of historical progress into the future. The conceptual hegemony of 'culture' over 'nature' we inhabited from modernism is extended to the imaginary context of the near future whereby the penetration of communication and control technologies, literally, into human bodies now renders all bodies (human and nonhuman) as *natural* as opposed to the imaginary virtues of humanity upheld in regulatory practices that make the *cultural* limited to 'the Net' only. In the traditional binary thinking corresponding to 'mind the cultural' and 'body the natural' as the regulatory duality of modernity; it stands to Western reason that if so many bodies are so powerful and liberated with transhumanist technologies in the society, better technologies and resources will be reserved for the dominant powers which maintain the values that make *the mind* universally applicable. The narrative of *GitS*, on the other hand, is a setting where the dystopic image of the future not only displays but also overwhelms this duality in depicting its posthuman subject, Major Motoko Kusanagi.

Technologically enhanced robots in the service of corporate governments, sentient androids and AI computers that outpace human beings in all capacities, the mean cyborgs who are jealous of human beings for their delicate and vulnerable mode of existence in life; mainstream cyberpunk products have already introduced us to such dangers of the shift occurring in the position of 'the human' as the sole reference to reason.

“Maybe all full-replacement cyborgs like me start wondering this. That perhaps the real me died a long time ago and I am a replicant made with a cyborg body and computer brain. Or maybe there never was a real "me" to begin with. There's no person who's ever seen their own brain. I believe I exist based only on what my environment tells me. And what if a computer brain could generate a ghost and harbor a soul? On what basis then do I believe in myself?” (Major Motoko Kusanagi in *GitS*)

As we see in the above quote, director Oshii's heroine is a hybrid of the common representations of the protagonist and the antagonist of most Western cyberpunk narratives. She is a figure both of the situational power imagined on behalf of the corporate government, and the values held with regard to the position of 'the human' as an essential reference to 'the self.' The ambiguity she experiences with regard to her identity, though, is more about her self-regard than her confusion of the categories of *human* and *nonhuman*. Her physical form of being, as will be discussed later on in the chapter, is less of an issue than her belief in her autonomous self, termed in the narrative as 'the Ghost'.

### **Who/What is Major Motoko Kusanagi?**

We start the movie with a computerized voice informing a system about the security updates. Visually what we see is a picture which looks rather like an inside of a computer, a green interface of the security network signaling the changes in accompany of this voice. Gradually other voices of individuals and helicopter sounds intervene to make a fuzz of too much noise as we visually focus on a spot on the interface and slowly zoom in. The little spot on the interface eventually becomes the city skyline as we see the future Hong Kong.

Major Kusanagi is comfortably sitting on top of the roof of a high building, listening to all the sounds that, to us, have already become meaningless out of complexity. Major seems to be able to focus on whichever voice she wants to listen to, and join in on a conversation without a blink in the eye, let alone a lip movement. We seem to be being told that the complex, map-like interface we just saw is what Major sees looking down on the city, and since the nodule the

picture zoomed in on is Major herself, she is a part of what she sees. As she starts responding to the radio, which we now know is in her mind, we understand that the beautiful woman sitting on a roof in Hong Kong is actually a means of the control mechanism reigning on in the city. The government listens to each and every apartment in the city and intervenes in situations it determines to be 'unlawful.' (Section 9 is often in conflict in deciding whether or not the situation at hand is a crime in the jurisdiction of the division since the multitude of possibilities in 'the Net' makes it hard to determine which actions actually prompt crime.)

As Major silently sits, listens, and observes in a much more enhanced level of digital communication and computation technologies as well as body mechanics than that of an average human being, the spectator is more and more curious to find out what she is up to on that roof much less than who or what she really is. Surprisingly enough, the first lines addressed to her in the radio, which is the first attempt to start introducing Major to the spectator, begin with "There is a lot of static in your brain today." to which she responds in saying "It's that time of the month!". Following the provocative lines directly referring to female menstrual cycle, Major stands up and unties her rope which was covering her elaborately figured naked body underneath. Now standing up, she appears in a pose revealing all the features of her frontal body, wearing only her white long boots and a pair of matching gloves that reach above her elbows. She stands there in her solid pose for a while, enough to evoke many different thoughts in different situated perspectives. The braying wheater and Major's blowing hair tell us that the wind is very strong on the roof where Major manages to stand up firm in a pose which, at least for me, provokes jealousy rather than pruriency as offered in many critiques against the scene. As the feeling of the breeze on naked skin whilst gazing upon the city skyline from on top of a high-rise building at night time, as well as her balance and calmness in such an experience are the elements that incites my jealousy towards Major's position, this scene has been stigmatized as another female body reifying picture in many feminist critique against the depiction of Japanese cyberpunk heroines and female Manga characters due to their highly sexualized figurations (see Stockins, Levi, McHarry and Pagliassotti). As Sarah Huerta (2011) explains, the gender/sex displays in Japanese manga and anime series is in many ways similar to that of popular Western productions. However, she further puts, it is with "important culturally contextual differences (that) tend to be rooted in social, political and religious historical

foundations” which have survived the westernization process in Japan (Huerta, 2011, p. 10). In terming the sexuality offered in Japanese anime and manga series as “sex positivity”, Huerta emphasizes that unlike the American female sexuality which “tends to be secret, stigmatized and heavily associated with disease contraction and unwanted pregnancy”, the Japanese depictions are of an affirmative nature towards sex and sexuality (p. 9). The Japanese culture, Huerta claims, is not built on abstinence from sex being virtuous, but is rather more open towards it since sex is much more integrated into everyday life in Japan where condoms are offered out of vending machines in every corner. It is, then, not to be forgotten that the cultural specificity, in not being divorced from what it comes to exclude as the other, is a crucial insight in meaning generation out of body representations specific to each culture. Also worth mentioning is that the meaning, as is clear from different critiques towards the same representation, continues to be generated on the spectator’s end as it can be argued that it is my Turkish background that conditions me to envy being almost naked in a metropol city at night time; something that can be observed in many festivals in big Western cities, but is completely out of the question on any occasion in Istanbul.

In many ways, as in the referral to menstruation and the scene of nudity that follows, the sequence does speak for the Major in saying; “Yes, I’m a woman; at least so far as it takes for the mood swings in monthly periods and the *feminine* looks from which the ideal woman is transcribed!” Nevertheless, her actions rather subvert than affirm the prescriptions of patriarchy onto the female body not in disavowing its attributes but in performance of a new agency that stems out of the unique configuration of the world of *GitS* and hence, the figuration of the body of Major. After the silent statement in her solid feature that lasts for a few seconds, she jumps down the building to shoot down a diplomat through a window in one of the floors below. As she glides down smoothly in the air, she hits and runs easily thanks to her built-in-the-body invisibility cloak. Her body, obviously, does not go through menstruation each month in the way many other women do, but the configuration of her body intra-actively formed within the apparatus, being the setting of *GitS*, engenders such an agency whereby she experiences a diffracted form of menstruation not so much different than the multitude of ways many other individuals experience it. So much as the opening sequence suggests, then, the movie is certainly about a woman; and the narrative’s take on the question that follows is what makes *GitS* a fitted

field for elaborations on the posthuman subject; what kind of a woman is Major Motoko Kusanagi?

As though in further elaboration on this question, this scene is followed by Major's re/creation sequence in which we can plainly see that she is a complete human and machine hybrid carefully built into an adult female body. As she is shown in her assembling by machines, what grabs attention is that as the body is formed in the neat mechanic assembly, it is shown constantly to be submerged in pools of dense liquids, being transferred from one pool to another throughout the whole process. As we get to the final pool, we see that the body has formed itself into the fetus position, now slowly rising itself up as the liquid matter drains away from her body. The fluid keeps coating her in her initial moments of encounter with oxygen, eventually to congeal enough on the skin to crumble away in the air. Although this hygienic scenery of Major's re/creation is nothing close to the kinetic intimacy familiar from an organic birth of a human baby; still, the emphasis on the texture, density and cohesiveness of liquids throughout the sequence manages to deliver the feeling that is described, at best, as of a sensuous experience.

### **The Birth of a Hybrid**

Major's apparatus of bodily production, so far as it is measurable for the viewer, seems to be re/designed specifically for the *birth* of a being that, in being assembled solely by machines, lacked any tactile sense in the process. Nevertheless; the liquidity, the bloody and organic look of body parts, and especially the intensely dramatic music accompanying the detailed and slow assembly of Major are the elements of the apparatus which express that what is being produced is a creature that is somehow sentient, or so we assume, since the *familiar* material-discursive feeling of being born out of a fraught pool is there. Some properties specific to human birth as well as to the fabrication of machines are purposefully picked up in exclusion to others, reminding us that what is being created here is neither something totally like us (humans), nor unlike us. Many feminist critiques have been offered on the portrayal of Major Motoko Kusanagi in these scenes. As they emphasized on the exaggeration of *feminine* figures on the cyborg, they mostly relate these footage with the story's ending in criticizing Major's desire to merge with The Puppet Master (her move of self-liberation through amalgamating with a computer program)

in turning into something that is different than both Major and The Puppet Master. Sharalyn Orbaugh (2002), in her analysis on the movie, argues that the ending of the story inevitably hints on the discursive coupling of woman with procreation. Also, the reference to menstrual cycle in the very beginning of the movie followed by an elaborate visual documentation of her re/creation process, Orbaugh explains, “immediately underscores the fact that this film’s theme is the problematic of reproductive sexuality in a posthuman subject” (p. 445) As I also believe that the beginning sequence discloses a lot about the main points in the narrative of *GitS*, I think Orbaugh’s analysis on the very first scenes of the movie is already saying too much with respect to what the narrative aims to convey. The sequence is designed to tell us who Major Kusanagi is, and what kind of a being she is with regard to the spectator’s subjective position. For all we know, Major is a fully-replaced cyborg with only some brain tissue and a segment of her spinal cord remaining organic. The nomadism offered in the new materialist reading practice work to understand more of a narrative than what is possible through what symbolism proclaims within the terms of representational modes of knowledge production (Barad, 2007) As these modes diffract in representing the various cultural contexts as well as the material settings in which phenomena are produced, it asks for a broader employment of concepts and theories in a transdisciplinary and a transcultural understanding of the narrative when we try to infer the meaning of Major’s sexuality as it is represented in these scenes. In the non-dualist account of new-materialism, the monist perspective on the universe emphasizes on the inseparability of matter and meaning. As Barad explains within the terms of agential realism,

“[m]atter is a dynamic expression/articulation of the world in its intra-active becoming. All bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity, its performativity. Boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted through the intra-activity of mattering. Differentiating is not about radical exteriorities (...) but rather what I call agential separability. That is, differentiating is not about Othering, separating, but on the contrary, about making connections and commitments. So the very nature of materiality itself is an entanglement. Hence, what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us.” (Barad, as cited in van der Tuin, 2012)

In terms of agential realism, then, the matter of Major's body and the matter *with* Major's body are the diffracted expressions of Major's field of bodily production configured by the intra-actions of a multitude of apparatuses. The material configuration of the field of *GitS*'s production is already influenced by the economic, social and political discourses, cultural and philosophical traditions, and their terms of materialization within the contemporary techno-scientific practices by which the visual documentation of Major's story was possible to imagine and produce. The intra-active work of these different apparatuses in forming the one in which Major's figure was formed works to refigure 'the body' in a way that is not extraneous to but is differing from any other 'body' possible. The representation of the cyborg body and the terms by which this body matters to us are at once inseparable from each other since they are intra-actively formed within an apparatus to which their means of production are also invariably entangled. Through the possibilities immanent to the imagination of technology and human in the context of Japanese cyberpunk, I argue, the narrative of *GitS* serve as the apparatus in which Major's body, beginning with this scene of nudity, writes her own identity before our eyes throughout the story. The limits to this writing, as will be explained more in the following chapter, is, in a Baradian sense, intra-dependent with the boundary-drawing practices which condition the rearrangement of the world of imagination and its terms of identification always, although partly, in accordance with the traditions and discourses that are mentioned above. Nevertheless, an analysis on the figure at hand should not be limited only within the attributes of these discourses on similar figures and identities, but should be read in accordance to the very performance the figure engenders in the narrative.

The previous parts of the series of *GitS* tell us that her bodily form is a choice of her own; she chooses her own model of shell and does so that the sex of the bodies are almost always female. It is only through reading the manga that preceded the movies, we know that she once were a male body whose occupational title 'Major' is what she uses as her nickname in the rest of her adventures. Therefore, it cannot be argued that director Oshii might not have a rather different take on Major's sexuality and its attributes than the original manga series did. Nevertheless, it should also be considered that the cyborg figure is particularly potent in demolishing static identities including the fixed attribute of an athletic naked body as 'the Woman' of patriarchal discourse. (It should also be regarded that Major only undresses when she is about to activate her

in-skin invisibility cloak in order not to get shot whilst floating down the air.) Major casually reveals her body very often in pursue of her missions. Considering the irrelevance of clothes to her health as well, I argue that Major sheerly utilizes the elements she likes in various identities and so underscore their ontologies in performing them all in her own way of being. As communication studies scholar Glenda Shaw-Garlock (2008) explains,

“in addition to transgressing of the border between human and machine, the female cyborg also ruptures the boundary between male/female and public/private and many such artificial binary constructions. The transgressive woman is profane as she displays her sexuality and makes a spectacle of herself by transgressing the traditional notions of femininity and morality.”(p. 6-7)

The emphasis on the sexuality of Major, then, may merely be out of the traditional coupling of identity with gender in a daily discourse of introducing a person, or it may be a conscious choice of director's to subvert this coupling since Major's picture in both scenes is more scary than sexy. As the sequence concerns who and what she is, the mix of symbolic referents that make the effect of Major Kusanagi is plainly offered. The very ambiguity regarding her identity thrives in the fact that she is simultaneously a female and a ruthless killing machine in every sense of the word. In terms of cyborg epistemology, this very ambiguity is her political potency for all identities. Nevertheless, the emphasis on menstruation, referred to in the narrative as a monthly experience of too much static in the cyber-brain, is another symbolic referent to disclose the ambiguity regarding Major's sexuality in the very beginning of the story. The prevalent discourse, being the intra-actively formed apparatus of a multitude of influences such as the cultural, social and political discourses at work in the production of *GitS*, seems to associate womanhood with menstruation as it is the first attempt to introduce a female cyborg to the spectator. It is this very apparatus in which her diffracted way of menstruation is also only indirectly offered, and as Major's response makes it clear, it is *unmentionable*. As Major only says “It's that time of the month!” in evading the comment on the too much static in her brain, she does not term her experience as neither does the narrative in any point later in the movie. As Julia Kristeva (1982) explains in terms of ‘the societal confrontation with the feminine’, menstrual blood is another element that is jettisoned in the patriarchal discourse. Even in an

apparatus whereby a cyborg woman who is, so far as it is clear from the very first scenes, open and comfortable with her sexuality and who gets to experience a form of menstruation whilst on a highly dangerous mission, the cyborg cannot name her experience of merely nestling more static than usual in her cyber-brain. The fact that Major the killing machine can be diffident about an experience that is reserved for the female sex only, is an element of "the way in which societies code themselves in order to accompany as far as possible the speaking subject on that journey" (Kristeva, 1982b, p. 250) As will be elaborated further in the next chapter, Kristeva's theory of abjection proposes that the subject's experience of abjection, that is, the formation of the self as "the proper and clean" in expanse of the defilement of certain 'intolerable' elements of being, such as the leaking or defecating features of the body, "...is coextensive with social and symbolic order, on the individual as well as on the collective level." (Kristeva, 1982a, p. 68) The level of the collective offered in *GitS* narrative, then, presents its take on femininity in the very beginning of the movie. Nevertheless, as Kristeva further explains, "abjection assumes specific shapes and different codings according to the various 'symbolic system'". In this sense, the unique configuration of the *GitS* narrative will offer us more in terms of what gets *abjected* in the formation of its posthuman subject, as Major's body will continue to write itself in entanglement with its apparatus. Their significance with regard to the boundary-drawing practices will reveal the prevalent discursive traditions in Japanese cyberpunk throughout the movie.

### **The Mind-Body Duality in Cyberpunk**

The traditional coupling of subjectivity with mind has been displayed in many Western fiction narratives whereby technology and virtual reality seize the faculty of human mind and hence dominate human beings through manipulating their will power and/or pleasure in a false reality. The mind-body duality, it seems, is inherited onto our deepest fears; and, no matter how hierarchically better valued the faculty of 'mind' is in humanism, the idea of being subjected to a unified mind is still terrifying. In order to rejoice in virtual existence, for the human salvation in the soon will be limitless possibilities of the faculty of mind, as is offered in many Western narratives, 'the human' needs to fight his deepest fear that he, himself, might no longer be the sole reference to mind, but a mere element of nature that can, just as well, be dominated.

Even in the efforts of phenomenology in adopting a non-dualist vision on ‘subjectivity,’ there has been a significant emphasis on being ‘fleshed subjects,’ a notion which can not fully grab the mode of existence of the characters in *GitS*. Precisely through the notion of ‘being-in-the-world’<sup>8</sup>, that is, the account of bodily experience in embodied existence, the emphasis on the body itself makes it hard to drop the value attributed to mind for so long. The fear of greater oppressive powers to accompany the technological advancements, which, in this sequence will bring about the alienation from the fleshed body through conformist features of virtual existence, corresponds directly to the emphasis on the body to be essential for subjectivity. If we submit our bodies to the technologies of communication and control, then, the linear thinking hints that we submit to being objects, or at least being diffused into elements that make ‘the subject’ a unified notion for all. Sara Cohen Shabot (2005) puts it;

“Being flesh ...is what allows us to be part of the world, to be materially and concretely part of it. Also, this is what in fact allows us to be subjects open to others and to the other’s concrete, specific situation; we share our carnality and, consequently, we are also able to share our condition of being alive and, at the same time, of being mortal. Had we been pure consciousness, with no body (a kind of Cartesian or Platonic ideal), we would be a totally different kind of being, a kind of god, who, among other things, would not have any need for ethics.”(p. 77)

As Shabot explains in the above quote, ‘the flesh’, or the body in the phenomenological account, is what coerces subjectivity onto individual only in relating with the material world. The life of the individuals of our imagined future Japan in the story, though, is a state where the concepts of being alive and/or mortal does not correspond to the carnality available for definition in such a discourse. The concept of living, as offered in *GitS* narrative, is extended out from the state of being conscious and/or being fleshed; and, it is rather a process in which individuals may be hosted in different bodies (human and nonhuman), or they may simply become the body itself and hence lose subjectivity which would still guarantee the state of living for the body that is

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<sup>8</sup> Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception*. London : Routledge & K. Paul ; New York : Humanities Press.

now an object. As the processes of being re/produced as a body, and being transformed between bodies as a consciousness will be discussed later on in the thesis, it is safe to say now that living as individuals in *GitS* narrative is a process that includes both. In this sense, we can say that their being-in-the-world certainly continues at all times of this ‘living,’ and hence, the question of pure consciousness Shabot poses still stands, along with the distrust against its sly in/corporeality. Shabot (2005) further argues that even imagining ourselves in such a state of “transcendent incorporeal beings” would run the risk of “giving legitimacy to the undertaking of a struggle to achieve perfect beings, a struggle that can so easily be associated with fascist or racist ideologies.” (p. 78) This fear, also, do in fact play out in *GitS* narrative as the opening lines read: “In the near future, electrons and light flow freely, and corporate computer networks eclipse the stars. Despite great advances in computerization, countries and races are not yet obsolete...”

The narrative starts with a pre-given conflict within the society as the opening lines are directly followed by sounds of sirens and the police radio, signaling the busy criminal activity in the city. Polarization and segregation among society takes place among various ways of digitally marking and categorizing of individuals as the regulatory relations favor certain groups in utilizing the benefits of living in an *advanced* society. In this sense, their immortal and in/carnal existence poses as a state of enslavement to bodilessness, if not to ‘the mind’ per se. They are, in this sense, far from being like a kind of God, but are more the objects of segregating practices Shabot explains as inevitable in such a setting of self-regard for individuals.

As I mentioned earlier, the fear of disembodiment from the human body with regard to advancing cybernetic technologies has been played with vastly in Western cyberpunk imagination. In many blockbuster Hollywood cyberpunk movies, such as *The Matrix*, we have seen stories elaborately weaved with the overt threat of alienation from *the self* via submitting to or being subjected to a ‘virtual existence.’ In his documentary called *The Pervert’s Guide to the Cinema-Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Film*, Slavoj Žižek (2006), although in a truly Lacanian context, remarks on the very concern Shabot hints with regard to the alienation from the corporeal body in the phenomenological account. He reminds us the scene in the movie *The Matrix* where Neo, the protagonist, wakes up from the virtual reality (the Matrix) for the first

time only to find himself penetrated with dozens of cables within a tube full of liquid. The tube, which clearly represents the womb through its shape and liquidity, is where Neo has been kept ever since he's been harvested as an infant. The scene reveals that Neo's tube along with a myriad of others is connected to the giant machines which absorb individuals life energy in sustaining not the bodies, but the minds in the tubes with a virtual reality for life. The bodies in the tubes are obviously not dead; but, as the narrative emphasizes in depicting the terrifying reality behind the virtual reality of the Matrix, they are not really living either since the energy they produce for this end is what keeps the machines alive instead. At this point, Zizek claims that it is actually not the Matrix that needs the energy of human beings, but it is the energy of human beings that needs the Matrix to play itself out. The virtual reality, in Zizek's account, serves as the field of illusionary which works to rationalize the dominant ideology over society through teaching us, the void subjects of Lacan, how to desire. The Matrix, in this sense, "is a machine for fictions, but these are fictions which already structure our reality." (as phrased in the documentary, Zizek, 2006) Zizek further explains that, our libido (faculty for pleasure) is what necessitates the virtual universe of fantasies, the Matrix, in order for us to organize our sense of reality. Individuals, in this sense, always need the virtual supplement of reality in order to legitimize their otherwise perverted inner drives within the level of symbolic which the dominant ideology of society discursively forms. The void bodies in the tubes, then, only rationalize their mostly sexual desires laden with being human through the 'phantasmatic organization' of ideology which provides the necessary *fictional* plot for the enunciation of subjectivity (Zizek, 1997)

As it will be needed later on, it is necessary to briefly explain what 'ideology' means for Zizek in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Simply put; ideology is what discursively forms "a phantasmatic space that blurs the true horror of (our) situation" within the level of "the Real" in which "instead of a true description of the antagonisms that cross our society, we allow ourselves a perception of society as an organic whole which remains unified due the forces of solidarity and cooperation" (Zizek, 1997, p. 15) Therefore, as fantasy is what maintains a cognition of reality, reality itself would vanish if it weren't for the symbolic fictions that regulate it. In this sense, Zizek proposes that there is another reality to the reality of our desires without which the reality of subjectivity would not be possible in the first place. As is clear from his take on the

notion 'the Reality', Žižek's reading of the *The Matrix* reflects the Western fear against the assumed *natural* state of human beings. Without the workings of ideology, then, we would have to confront *the reality* of our existence, that is, the state in which human beings would lack the organization of their inner drives into a 'reasonable' and hence 'tolerable' needs and actions configured within the symbolic order. In terms of Kristeva's theory of abjection whereby the abject corresponds to the "forces, practices and things which are opposed to and unsettle the conscious ego, the *\_I*" (Tyler, 2009, p. 2); Neo, the protagonist of *The Matrix*, experiences his first abjection as he wakes up in horror in his tube. His terms of self-regard are shaken as he confronts the reality of his existence, and hence, "the border of (his) condition as a living being." (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3) As the tube full of liquid is a referent to the womb, what Žižek terms as 'the Real', that is, the safe ground of ideology for the human being, is where the subject finds itself through the repression of his preliminary state of being. This state, according to Kristeva, is of being neither a subject nor an object, but of abject which is "prior to the springing forth of the ego, of its objects and representations." (p. 10) It is through abjecting this state, in Kristeva's terms, the subject is safeguarded against the downfall of ideology, the horror of his *real* situation. In this sense, *The Matrix* presents us with a reality beyond what Žižek calls 'the Real', and hence proposes a duality of self in the formation of subjectivity. Although in the same body, there are two Neos, one residing in the mind and hence in the virtual reality of the Matrix, and one that is his bodily being who still resides in the womb. There is, then, an Other to Neo who is not exterior to him, but a stranger with whom he can not stand to be identified. As Kristeva puts it, "I experience abjection only if an 'Other' has settled in place and instead of what will be "me." Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and\_ through such possession causes me to be." (p. 10) As Neo confronts his *real* state of being, then, he realizes that what he really is, in the Matrix, is an illusion, but it is an illusion that is made real through his abjected reality in the tube. When the tube, or more precisely, the womb is presented as the horrifying reality that one must repress or abject in order to establish himself as a subject, we are left with disconnected, segregated apparatuses that may only work to initiate or affect each other, but do not come to form a monistic perspective in cognition of all things as a comprehensive whole. Such a presentation of reality, as divided into virtual and actual, only work to dissect perception into what we receive of the universe as human subjects, and what we miss out on for the sake of subjectivity. What is at

stake here is that the account of dualism on reality, as Zizek proposes it, always carries in itself the danger of losing track of the ideology, and hence our sense of reality which is always already dissected from that of everything else. The return of the *real* reality, then, is experienced “in a phobic, obsessional, psychotic guise, or more generally and in more imaginary fashion in the shape of abjection” whereby an individual is terrified to confront “the limits of the human universe.” (Kristeva, 1984, p. 10-11)

### **‘The Ghost’ in Eastern Thought**

“While memories may as well be the same as fantasy it is by these memories that mankind exists.” (Major in *GitS*)

Unlike *The Matrix*, and despite the fact that the movie was deeply influenced by the story of *Ghost in the Shell*, director Mamoru Oshii does not propose the future to bring forth different realities to coexist in one world.<sup>9</sup> The common characteristic of Western cyberpunk to narrate contradicting realities, whereby individuals defer to one or the other (the physical or the virtual) realities to maintain one of the again binary properties of being a human subject (the embodied existence through the body, or the perceptive existence through the mind) is lost in the text of *GitS*. Instead, Oshii poses the collapsing of these binary categories onto each other in forming a whole new setting whereby it is not the ambiguity around the Western notion of ‘the human’ per se, but more the notion of ‘Chi’(氣) in Eastern thought, which roughly corresponds to the spirit or the ghost (depends on translation) in the West, that causes anxiety when not visible in the imaginary setting of the near future. I will come back to the notion of ‘Chi’ in explaining the discourse around ‘the Ghost’ later on, but it is crucial at this point to clarify that the Japanese tradition of thought regarding the experience as the only reference to ‘truth’ may prevent the imagination of an untrue and/or virtual experience that will refer to a different reality than what is already known. In his work on Eastern philosophies, Charles Alexander Moore (1967) collects the selected works of philosophers from Japan, China and India to establish the peculiarities of

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<sup>9</sup> Apart from various scholarly articles on the elements peculiar to *Ghost in The Shell* found in the movie, the directors, Wachowski Brothers, explain their inspiration by *GitS* narrative in the making of *The Matrix* in an interview with fans published on Matrix Virtual Theater. It can be found on the website, <http://www.warnervideo.com/matrixevents/wachowski.html>

Eastern tradition of thought in his three volumed collection of essays. In *The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture* of the three editions, Kishimoto Hideo explains that Japan, unlike its neighboring cultures, nestles the elements of Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism within the Japanese culture in a non-hierarchized way through the performance of the peculiar practices of all three belief systems without necessarily identifying with any of them. It is, Hideo further claims, a direct correspondence of the Japanese culture that pays a higher regard to empirical knowledge and practice than to idealism (p. 110-118)

As Hideo (1967) explains:

“Immediate experience plays a very important role in Japanese life. The Japanese people introspectively ponder and explore the domain of immediate experience. This is a very concrete domain for a Japanese. If conceptual speculation goes too far into abstract thinking, a Japanese quickly loses interest. And he wants to be less abstract and more concrete and realistic. But to be realistic does not necessarily mean, for a Japanese, to go back to factual realism, but to be realistic to the reality of *immediate experience*.” (p. 112, *my emphasis*)

As clarified in the above quote, the cultural context of Japan is, perhaps, more familiar to regard first hand experience more truthful than the inferences of abstract categories such as ‘the mind’ or ‘reason.’ It is noteworthy to mention that I do not mean to essentialize any attributes on Japanese people, as it is also completely contradictory to the argument I am trying to make via this thesis, nor I suggest that ‘the Japanese’ is a homogenous category. Rather, in terms of a new materialist reading on different standpoint assertions on the issue, I find it crucial to present various perspectives to enrich the possibilities of a meaning on the representation of the cyborg in *GitS* narrative. In this sense, Hideo’s perspective on Japanese thought help me understand that *GitS* narrative offers only one reality, but it is one to which there are many surprises since subjectivities are the Ghosts that are nomadic around the universe. Also, in being contextualized as the autonomy and hence the difference of beings in the narrative, the understanding on the notion of the Ghost is further enhanced when considered within the framework of individual experience.

The Western model of subjectivity is clearly influential on the depiction of Major Motoko Kusanagi since her adjunct characteristics of being ‘organic’ and ‘mechanic’ is successively emphasized in building her identity in conflict. Accordingly, Major’s subjectivity seems to be in split, since the discourse around ‘the Ghost’ is always at work in associating the cuts that traps her identity with attributions regarding the ability to mourn, to feel for, and to question the existence and the relative value of the few ‘natural’ biological neuron cells she might or might not still have in her brain. Her highly intelligent cybernetic mind and her robust body with sharpened features of attributed ‘femininity’ seem to contradict each other as she forces her body to do things that she *knows* its cybernetic nature will not allow. (Scenes include her diving into deep water only to push her bodily abilities to feel the threat of its disassembling which she terms as ‘feeling almost free’) This is her self-regard in terms of ‘the Ghost’. The body’s disassembling does not correspond to a person’s death, but to a pure existence in which the self-sustained Ghost helps define the person all over again. In this sense, there are no conflicting realities whose cohesive narrative is sustained through the workings of a phantasmatic organization in the level of the *virtual*. Nevertheless, we can still observe the link Lacan claims between the notions of ‘ideology’ and ‘identity’ in the representation of the cyborg figure here in search of a meaning for her existence. The notion of unconscious in Western philosophy provides a comprehensive account on the ‘psychic economy’ that Lacan claimed to reside at the deepest level of human reality (Huang 2003) Regardless of his specific take on what this ‘human reality’ is, his analysis on the supplementary elements in forming the attributes of the very notion of ‘identity’ in psychoanalytic discourse is evidently displayed in the symbolic attribute of the Ghost in the narrative. The Ghost, in this sense, serves in signification of the intra-actions of discursive practices in the materialization of the effect, that is, the individual’s identity. Individuals hold on not to the virtual phantasy in the Net, but to an again ideological notion, the Ghost, to endorse their subjectivities within the symbolic order imagined for the future now in an *Eastern* context.

The Ghosts are initially assumed to belong with humans as an essential attribute of being a natural creation. Individuals can self-acquit themselves from being automatons only by the mere *feeling* of having a Ghost as there is no other solid proof available to common citizens that will

expose them their records of cyborgization, hence their degree of humanness. As Major explains in one of the scenes in the movie, there is not one who's seen the inside of their own brain. In this sense, the boundary between the ghost and the shell is displayed, in effect, in both its mightiness and ambiguousness in the effect, which is sheerly the self-regard of individuals.

If a cyberpunk imagination of society refers to the modernist understanding of the human in elaborating on its individuals; we will subsequently have 'pure' human beings at one end, and a fully simulated disembodied post-human beings on the other to be reflexive in explaining the possibility of existing in virtual reality as individuals (Featherstone & Burrows, 1995) As we see through the two different epistemologies employed by Shabot and Zizek in efforts of explaining the gap between what we know to be human and what we will assumingly have in the future, both theories emphasize on one or the other of the fields, 'the body' and 'the mind', to be deployed as a prerequisite for the maintenance of subjectivity into the future. In both theories, the concept of virtual reality merely represents the threat of exploitation of the very condition of being human, its different implications in each theories notwithstanding. The depiction of individuals in the setting of *GitS*, though, presents a rather different enactment of the conceptual gap between 'the human' and 'the posthuman' than what Shabot or Zizek offers with regard to existence in virtual reality. The fear of disembodiment from the fleshed body is a significant concern for *GitS* narrative as well, and its conceptual relation to the Western thought is portrayed in various figurations in the story. The direct representation of a God like life-form, for instance, is formed in the figure of The Puppet Master who, in being a self-claimed individual, is the supreme consciousness without 'the body' and, hence, does "not have any need for ethics" (Shabot, 2005, p. 77) He is a computer program (referred to as 'he' in the narrative) who had been generated for political ends by the government, but is now a life-form since he became conscious of his existence in the midst of his voyages from one brain to another. The Puppet Master is a fugitive without a body whom Major is assigned to capture and if not kill since he now represents a threat to government in not obeying any rules. It is worth mentioning here that The Puppet Master only became a life-form once he stopped obeying the rules, as he started performing out of the program he was designed to be.

In elaborating on the idea of the Ghost in the context of *GitS*, Hyewon Shin (2011) explains that the Eastern idea of Chi refers to the Shintoist notion of kami (神, spirits) which is considered to

be an excessive energy of life that is “uncontainable within the boundaries of the organic and inorganic, subject and object” (p. 19) Chi, in this sense, is depicted as a spirit that animates life in its travels among both the organic and the inorganic matter around the universe; and hence helps contemplate on life as an “assemblage with no fundamental organizational principles.” (Shin, 2011, p. 19) The narrative of *GitS*, I assert, works as the apparatus within which elements of Western ideology on subjectivity along with those of Eastern idea of Chi intra-actively form the notion of ‘the Ghost’ as that which refers to individual difference. As Ueno Toshiya explains; a ghost is “something like water in a cup, premised upon the existence of some kind of shape (such as a metal suit or a shell)” (Ueno quoted in Shin, 2011, p. 19). Different bodies contextualized in the narrative as the shells, I assert, work as the cups in which different memories, experiences and hence thoughts, habits and behaviors are collected to form a subject. An imagination of a setting whereby these Ghosts, or to put it bluntly, the subjectivities of individuals can be stolen, manipulated, or changed by a force that is exterior to the body, that is, when they are *hacked*, is an apparatus intra-actively formed through other apparatuses within which ‘the body’, ‘the mind’, ‘the self’, ‘Chi’, ‘kami’ and other concepts are iteratively re/configured.

Although it is still treated as a terrifying experience to lose track of social reality, the discourse on ‘the Ghost’ offers a rather different take on human subjectivity than does *The Matrix* narrative. The character ‘The Puppet Master’, in mind-hacking individuals through uploading virtual/unreal memories onto their cyber-brains, works to express the idea that subjectivity is neither a pre-given nor a static entity that is assigned to human beings by birth. The individuals’ ways of thinking and behaviors change intra-actively with the memories they hold with regard to identity they are assigned by The Puppet Master. What is noteworthy is that, when captured, these individuals testify to know very little about their identities, such as their birthplaces or the names of their mothers, but still fully embody their new attributes. The few details these individuals are uploaded suffice to regulate them within the social environment in which The Puppet Master needs them to enact agency which is already more or less defined by the environment and the attributes of their new identities. These characters are also referred to as “ghost-hacked”, and are pitied by others for being mere puppets. The configuration of Major Motoko Kusanagi as the posthuman, though, works to dismantle the idea of the ghost simultaneously with the fixed attributes of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘human’ also in the Western

context. As Major's close friend Batou puts it in the scene of interrogation of a brain-hacked individual in the movie, "Virtual experiences, dreams. All data that exists is both reality and fantasy. Whichever it is, the data a person collects in a lifetime is a tiny bit compared to the whole." The significance of *GitS* narrative lies in its addressment of the tiny bit of data of individuals which it confirms to engender the consciousness and hence subjectivity in the social reality it is put to process. The tiny bit of data, be it actual or virtual, is appreciated as real since it intra-actively works to form the social reality or the 'ideology' as in Zizek's account; and since the ideology is a lived reality, it can not be considered separate than the account of 'being-in-the-world' as Shabot offers it. In other words, subjectivity of individuals are always already limited within the terms of their self-regard which is sustained through memories, and the environment in which this regard is meaningful. In a similar understanding with Kristeva, then, *GitS* narrates the story of *human* subjectivity as a journey of fitting into the social order whereby the elements such as that of incarnation or bodily responses to the world are excluded in the formation of the subject. In terms of the conflicting realities, that is, conflicting identities and different set of memories for one brain-hacked individual, it is offered that different and even seemingly conflicting knowledges form the *whole* of reality in being situated in the apparatus. In terms of its *posthuman* configuration of subjectivity, though, the significance of the narrative lies in its working as an apparatus in which different theories and discourses can be worked together in the meaning generation for different elements, and in enacting the boundary-drawing practices of my analysis in the movie. As I will try to explain this through Kristeva's theory of abjection and Barad's agential realism in the next chapter, I should first illustrate how elements that seem to be identified with different apparatuses, such as the elements that are thought to form "the human" or "the posthuman", can work to present a monistic perspective on reality in being resituated, that is, intra-actively reformed and hence reidentified within a brand new narrative. The emphasis on Major's re/creation process in *GitS*, I believe, is an element that can be read in such a new materialist way whereby the meaning generated will be consistent with its materiality in affirmingly recognizing its entanglement to social, political, cultural, and economically entangled terms of production. Different theories and discourses work to present insights about these terms that cannot be identified with, but still be illuminating on the nature of inclusion and exclusion practices laden in the processes of identification. The new materialist reading practice helps to remember that "what is on the other side of the agential cut is never separate from us."

(Barad as cited in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 69) Major's re/creation process that is open and affirming of the abject characteristics of being born, such as the long and soothing presentation of her body being transferred from one vast pool to another, does not suggest that abjection is not present in the posthuman subject. Rather, it is the narration of a reconfigured apparatus whereby previously excluded elements to the *mattering* of subjectivity is now rendered visible. Here, the terrifying perspective on the confrontation with the state of 'real', that is, as Kristeva puts it after Plato, the chora which represents the receptacle of the womb is lost. Unlike *The Matrix*, the leaking and liquid characteristics of being born, which Kristeva offers to be abjected on the threshold of subjectivity, is integrated into the formation of Major's subjectivity as that which helps define her identity as a cyborg.

In this chapter, I tried to show that the posthuman subject, as Haraway's figuration of 'the cyborg', recognizes her terms of production which already defies her being as 'the human' that is constructed upon various *virtues* in different settings such as being made out of mud and returning to dust (Haraway, 1991). Such explanations work to form 'the ideology' in ignoring but nevertheless being bordered with the abject such as in rendering the womb as the disturbing and the threatening receptacle of reality in simultaneously bordering subjectivity to "the clean and proper", "the fleshed", or "the phantasmatic" (Kristeva, Shabot, Zizek) The *reality* of the brain-hacked individuals 'new' identities, confirm the *reality* of abjection in the formation of subjectivity in the apparatus in which this identity is figured. It is, though, in the same apparatus where the hierarchy with regard to their values is inherent only in the terms, that is, the boundary-drawing practices that inevitably cut off or devalue some situated realities in highlighting only some of them. As these 'realities' non hierarchically form the whole/the Real, the problem only arises when one reality, configured in a unique apparatus, is put to test in another. In other terms, if the elements that configure the form of one reality are identified with the only apparatus in which they were engendered; essentializing is inevitable as is the disavowal of their reality in any other apparatus. These different attributes or elements, such as 'Japanese', 'Western', 'actual', or 'virtual', then, should be appreciated with regard to each other and their patterns of differing, in reflecting upon what we call 'real' or in efforts of understanding its configuration.

### CHAPTER 3 - The Workings of ‘the Subject’ and ‘the Boundary-Drawing Practices’

The feminist interventions on the canon of conventional scientific knowledge, such as the essentializing attributions on nature along with the homogenizing hence inevitably othering properties assigned to human beings, have already clarified that the monopoly of information and its hierarchized evaluation are pivotal characteristics of patriarchy coupled with capitalism in the age of technology. As black feminists have taught us as early as in the 70s, a feminist liberation move needs not uphold a particular information over others to support the liberation of certain identities, but emphasize that in being differentially situated, as Donna Haraway (1997) explains, all knowledge claims hold unique insights on their fields of production that, only in their variance, similarity or contradiction, present the *reality* of nature. In her aspiration for a feminist subjectivity that will equally value the different *facts* engendered through different histories that is the *natural* outcomes of different *cultural* constructs, Haraway built the model of the cyborg as “a metaphoric feminist construct” to embody the varying manifestations of one solid reality in different subjectivities. In this regard, Haraway presents us a tool to understand that the fabric of *Reality* is weaved through the reiterative actualizations of socially constructed assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth. Through reading Barad, we learn that these assumptions help us read nature, identify the elements which become what they are also in intra-action with the way we read them. As she explains in terms of the field of theoretical physics, the means of measurement and evaluation gained through the enlightening insights of quantum mechanics help us understand that the apparatus, the measurement setting of any phenomena, includes both the object and the subject of observation which become what they are in relation with the very way of measurement and evaluation of the data gathered. In this chapter, I will continue to evaluate the depiction of ‘the cyborg’ in *GitS* narrative through an analysis in which various perspectives on the notion of ‘the human’ and ‘subjectivity’ will be used to create an intra-action with the elements offered in the narrative to form a posthumanist subjectivity for Major Motoko Kusanagi. By the same token, I will try to build an insightful analysis on the means of imagining the posthuman subject from different perspectives through offering the art project *Ann Lee: No Ghost Just A Shell* (1999) by Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe as an explanatory example of the posthumanist vision on identity construction, subjectivity, and agency. The issue of materiality and its relation to discursive practices in manifestation of these notions will be

highlighted in terms of their performative roles in the making of the effect in these narratives which I will analyze as the apparatus of the posthuman's bodily production.

As Barad clarifies in terms of her theory of agential realism, apparatuses are themselves phenomena (dynamically re/constituted as part of the ongoing intra-activity of the world), and hence they have no intrinsic boundaries but are open-ended boundary-drawing practices that are formative of the matter and the meaning alike.

“‘Fantasies’, of course, are never ideologically ‘innocent’ texts. But fantasies, including science fiction ones, can serve conservative ideologies that promote old divisions and interests of the dominant social/cultural/racial/gender group. Or they can serve ideologies, which would enable us all to move forward and create truly innovative future societies.” (Milojevic & Inayatullah 2003, p. 504)

When considered as such a fantasy to serve the creation of an innovative future society, GitS appears as an apparatus whereby the posthuman subject needed for a feminist ideology on ‘identity’ and ‘subjectivity’ can be formed. Apparatuses are not merely laboratory setups that embody human concepts and take measurements, nor they can be regarded as a neutral representation of a pre-given world. In this sense, apparatuses are not located in the world, but are actively involved in the material reconfiguration of the world whereby they re/configure spatiality and temporality as well. Hence, the GitS narrative can be considered as a setting for the future which is not directly bonded with a past nor the determined meanings which the past discourses had assigned on any phenomena. It is this quality of its setting that makes way for a non-essentializing analysis on the matters of ‘identity’, ‘subjectivity’, and ‘agency’ through using various theoretical insights on these terms without being limited to their time and space bound characteristics. As explained in the previous chapter, I aim to demonstrate how different theories and discourses can be worked together to present insights about these terms that can not be identified with, but still be illuminating on the nature of inclusion and exclusion practices that render certain elements more visible and certain elements more significant than others in the narrative. In this regard, this chapter is about understanding Barad’s theory of agential realism that sets forth the workings of apparatuses in the creation of meaning, in relation with Julia

Kristeva's theory of abjection which also explains the exclusionary nature of meaning creation this time in the realm of psychoanalysis. Briefly explaining, the theory of abjection emphasizes on the excluded elements of nature in the construction of the Lacanian symbolic order whereby 'the subject' as a discursive construct is cleansed off of the primordial characteristics of being a natural phenomenon as a human being (Kristeva, 1982) The excretory nature of the human body, Kristeva (1982) claims, is disavowed in the symbolic construction of 'the self' as the "clean and proper." (p. 75) She explains that in entering the *cultural* world of human beings, a child is driven to *abject* the semiotic relationship she holds with her mother. In other words, the growing child gradually begins to recognize herself as separate from the mother as well as from all other objects as she becomes aware of her own image, as in Lacan's mirror stage, and hence from then on, she is forced to participate in the representational world of the language. In this world of the language, persons and objects are reflected back to the child through representations, "through images or figures that depict or describe persons and things, but which are not identical with those persons or things." (Covino, 2004, p. 19) As Deborah Caslav Covino (2004) further puts it, "[t]his is the point at which encoded words become central" and where the child begins to systematically withdraw from anything that is not defined/signified within the world of representations, that is the world of the Father (p. 19) The psychoanalytic self-regard of individuals, then, excludes many properties of the human body such as its leaking and waste producing nature which violate the terms of the 'clean and proper' signifier of 'the human' in the symbolic order. In terms of analysing the discursive traditions that are at work in any apparatus (be it a laboratory setting for measurements or the imagination of a cyberpunk story), I find it crucial to understand their contextualizations in different theoretical frameworks in order to assess their validity also in the setting of *GitS*. It is not the exact overlapping of these concepts and their terms of understandings that are looked for here, but the occasion for an intra-active work of these elements to build up a new understanding on the concepts offered in the narrative at hand. In this sense, Kristeva's take on 'the abject' as a pivotal concept in making 'the self' will help me dwell on the discursive traditions that are vital to Barad's 'boundary-drawing practices' in the making of the notion of 'the human' and its influences on the imagination of 'the posthuman' in *GitS* narrative.

## Matter and Meaning

In her early work *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva (1984) proposes two categories inherent to the composition of 'signification'; semiotic and symbolic. The semiotic element, she explains, is associated with the maternal body as that which is the source of rhythms, tones, and movements which drive the signifying practices. The symbolic element being related to words and grammar, makes possible the world of references, and hence the structure of signification. What makes Kristeva's theory so insightful is that she combines these two elements in explaining the logic of signification as that which always accounts for the *materiality* of the body. It is through their semiotic content that the symbols have a meaning that is nonreferential, but are nevertheless explanatory since it is words that render life meaningful. (Oliver, 1993) The semiotic element, then, is the discharge of bodily drives into the signification in processes of identification and differentiation. These processes, Kristeva explains, are regulated primarily by the maternal body before birth, and then during pregnancy by the mother. In this sense, Kristeva pulls back the formation of subjectivity from when Freud and Lacan designated its starting point in the recognition of fear respectively through the oedipal situation or the mirror stage. She explains that there is an earlier foundation of subjectivity that takes place in the maternal regulation of the body which is never listed as such in Western discourses of religion or science. The scientific discourse had been systematically reducing the mother to nature, hence helped avoid the maternal function in explaining the development of both subjectivity and culture.

It is at this point that I find it crucial to incorporate Barad's theory of agential realism into my understanding on Kristeva's explanations on the maternal function in the formation of subjectivity, and through its abjected status, the formation of culture and the symbolic. Barad's scientific approach towards the notions of 'identity', 'subjectivity', and 'agency' does not deny the discursive practices at work in their formation, but rather explains them in accordance with their materialization hence building a nonlinear understanding on the cause and effect relationship between the matter and its meaning. In other words, Barad offers a performative approach in understanding the process of materialization in which the issue of representationalism, that is, the identification of certain elements and characteristics of a phenomenon with the matter itself, is resolved. The performative approach regards

materialization as a performance in which the object and the subject, along with the discursive practices such as those mentioned by Kristeva are intra-actively involved in making the apparatus that can be the sole reference to the matter that gets to be identified in this process. In terms of Kristeva's argument on the need for a discourse on maternity, Barad argues for the need to understand the process of materialization and its identification that already offers insights on the representation of the maternal body and its functions in the prevailing discourse.

An illustrative example Barad gives in terms of the effect of the apparatus/boundary drawing practices on the representation of the maternal body and the identifications it is involved in is in the field of ultrasonics for medical imaging of the fetus. In her *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*; Barad (2007) explains that ultrasound technology

“encourage(s) the patient and the practitioner to focus exclusively on the fetus, whose moving image fills the entire screen. Such material rearrangement both facilitate and are in part conditioned by political discourses insisting on the autonomy and subjectivity of the fetus. This has been accompanied by the objectification of the pregnant woman and the exclusion of her subjectivity. Material-discursive constraints and exclusions are inseparable - a fact that we cannot afford to ignore.” (p. 212)

As Barad annotates in the above quote, the medical imaging technology is a material-discursive construct whereby the *objectivity* of scientific measures cannot escape the discursive traditions of modernity and humanism which re/formulate the concepts of ‘the human’ and ‘individuality’ by way of iteratively performing them in the apparatus of medical imaging. The boundary-drawing practices perform the agential cuts which separate and hence define the fetus differentially from the only environment in which it is meaningful. In other words, the fetus is not a pre-given entity that is found in mother's womb, but is rather looked for in terms of the humanist assumptions on the boundaries of ‘the body’. Hence, the notion of the fetus is formed via the intra-actions between the biological elements of pregnancy, and the medical imaging technology that is designed to

highlight certain textures over others in the womb with regard to the prevailing understandings on what counts as the “autonomy and subjectivity of the fetus.”(Barad, 2007, p. 212) The boundary-drawing practices, then, identify the fetus with the effect of pregnancy through the enactment of the agential cuts which always already entail “constitutive exclusions and therefore requisite questions of accountability.” (Barad, 2003, p. 803)

Kristeva’s insights on how the maternal body and its function in subjectivity formation gets to be disregarded in the representative workings of the symbolic order, then, is explained through the understanding of material-discursive practices as what enact the agential cuts in identifying certain elements of the apparatus with the matter itself at the cost of excluding others. As explained in the previous chapter, the sequence of Major’s re/creation process in *GitS* performs the representation of the birth of a being again in accordance to what needs to be identified as an autonomous subject. The inclusion of the elements of a human birth in liquidity and the elements of mechanical assemblage used in building machinery presents the material reconfiguration of a birth that works to represent a hybrid subject of human and nonhuman, in other words ‘the cyborg’, in accordance with our familiarity to such material-discursive practices. The difference of this presentation than that of the scene of Neo’s waking up in *The Matrix* is the regard of subjectivity in accordance with the overall configuration of apparatus in which the notion of ‘the human’ is formed as its sole reference. In terms of making way for the creation of a posthuman subject, then, the apparatus of Major’s bodily production appears as a coherent reconfiguration of elements identified with the mechanic assembly of machines and the human birth with even some of its abjected elements incorporated into the process.

### **The (hi)Story of Annlee**

“The identities or attributes that are determinate do not represent inherent properties of subjects or objects. Subjects and objects do not preexist as such but are constituted through, within, and as part of particular practices. The objective

referents for identities or attributes are the phenomena constituted through the intra-action of multiple apparatuses. Phenomena are inseparable from their apparatuses of bodily production. Hence, according to agential realism, materialization needs to be understood in terms of the dynamics of intra-activity.” (Barad as cited in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 55)

Major’s bodily features tell us a lot about her identity in a rather different way than what the Lacanian symbolism offer in terms of sex since her female body is a signifier that does not have a signified in any other apparatus than to which it is entangled. Unlike a Baudrillardian understanding that predicts a rupture between the world of simulation and the reality that is no longer the referent to its signs, *GitS* tells a story where ‘the actual’ and ‘the virtual’ cohesively present a whole that is comprehensive of all phenomena, so long as we regard the phenomena to be entangled only to the apparatus of its production. Major’s reproducible body, even when it’s considered as a sign produced by the dominant power relations (Section 9 and Megatech), is not exterior to her identity since embodiment is treated rather different in *GitS* narrative than it is offered in many postmodern theories. In order to dwell upon this notion of embodiment in the setting of *GitS*, I will make use of the life story of the manga character Annlee whose creation was inspired by Mamoru Oshii’s version of *Ghost in the Shell* to further elaborate on the notion of ‘the Ghost’ as that which undermines essentialism with regard to identity formation.

Manga characters of Japanese cyberpunk are vital representations for my analysis in proving useful to see the reiterative, intra-active nature of identity formation, whereby the boundaries between the notions of image and real, body and soul, signifier and signified, and sex and gender are blurred. The figuration of the image and the characteristics assigned to it, such as the character’s super powers, are not so much the pre-givens in the case of identity formation of a manga heroine. Imagination, that which creates the manga, covers the plot of possibilities for a plethora of inspirations for which the pre-narrative and the image, which can be referred to as ‘the sign’, are merely the first points of abandonment in the reformation and/or the enrichment of the character throughout her story/life. Any attribution on the character functions in a cluster of effects that does not so much favor causes but the end result in representation. Nevertheless, it is again the elements of imagination that inevitably excludes certain characteristics from the

heroine's identity in accordance with the unique configuration of the narrative that inevitably limits her terms of identity and subjectivity as well as the occasions in which she will manifest agency. The story of Annlee helps recognize the nature of these occasions through the unique way of its narration in which it is rendered impossible to imagine her as a fixed and static identity, or as a *thing* without subjectivity.

*Annlee: No Ghost Just a Shell* is an art project by Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe who bought the copyright of a manga character called Annlee from the Japanese firm Kworks in 1999. Kworks is one among many firms in Japan that produces and sells characters for the busy market of Manga and Anime production worldwide. The importance of Annlee for Parreno and Huyghe lied in her pre-given attributions as a market product that destined Ann Lee to be an only 'one-episode-character'. The way Annlee was designed by the firm was simple; she had no particular qualities nor an elaborate figure. She was thought to be suitable only for single scenes in stories of other characters' in mangas and animes. In an attempt to reverse her destined presentation in narratives, the two artists developed a method of extending and enriching Annlee's life by means of offering Annlee to other artists free of charge, to help her incarnate different identities in different imaginations. Artists from a variety of fields have participated in the *making* of Annlee for two years by way of simply using her for different narratives and in different stories. As the idea was to gather stories in which Annlee would live a life not in being a sign but in ever becoming the sign, every single artistic production to incorporate Annlee's image, that is, the sign of Annlee, would be a new "chapter in the history of a sign", and thus form the life of her "in the context of the individual artists' activities and within the joint project." (Elias, 2011, p. 188) By the end of the two years when Annlee's life was finally exhibited in various museums and art galleries, Parreno and Huyghe decided to end her exploitation as a sign, and devolved of her life by means of transferring the copyright of the sign to what we now know as Annlee. In other words, Annlee was signed over to Annlee and hence she became a character with her very own life narrative. Her life story is now in permanent exhibition in its entirety in the Van Abbemuseum in the Netherlands.

My aim in presenting the story of Annlee here is to demonstrate the nature of identity formation in accordance with the apparatuses in which identity comes to be formed. The title, and since the

nature of the work offered under this title is its manifestation, the project of *Annlee: No Ghost Just A Shell* is a direct reference to the notion of ‘the Ghost’ in Mamoru Oshii’s *GitS* to undermine the representative identifications of persons with identities, images with stories, and virtual signs with their assumed referents in the actual world. Any phenomenon is the effect of the intra-actions taking place also in the making of the apparatus (Barad, 2007). In order for any specific intra-action to happen, according to agential realism, it needs a specific material configuration of the world, that is, an apparatus, which imposes agential cuts that work as exclusionary boundaries to enact “a local resolution within the phenomenon” (Barad, 2003, p. 815). In other words, any specific re/configuration of the world would re/define space, time and matter differently, or as Barad (2007) puts it, it reconfigures “spacetime-matter as part of [the] ongoing dynamism of becoming” (p. 142). In terms of agential realism, then, Annlee’s figure, and Major’s alike, only matters within the specific apparatus in which it is intra-actively configured with other elements of the narrative to perform and hence acquire a specific meaning.

The life of the sign Annlee reveals the process of identity formation for any subject in accordance to the plot of its narrative, that is, in its very entanglement with the apparatus of her bodily production. In exposing the joint work of Kworks and Parreno and Huyghe along with other artists who took part in the making of her identity, Annlee appears as a phenomenon whose existence proves the intra-activity of different apparatuses at work in its production. Her embodiment of the character she is attributed changes in accordance with the particularities of each apparatus which is a reconfiguration of the terms of her identity and hence the occasions whereby she will gain agency. In terms of analysing the visual figuration of Major in *GitS*, I suggest a similar understanding to that of the sign of Annlee where it is not specifically only her figure but the entanglement of the figure to the narrative that offers the meaning. The analysis should be consistent with her figuration but the figuration should not be limited to a meaning that precedes the narrative in which she materializes. The dynamics of intra-activity more than the brushstrokes of her drawing, then, should be analysed in efforts of understanding the figure of cyborg in the movie. My interest in Annlee, though, lies not only with her subjectivity that exposes dependence to boundary drawing practices and their intra-active reformation in each and every project, but also in the fact that the moment Annlee earns her freedom by owning her own sign, she is left mute and lifeless since no artist can now convince Annlee to *live a little more*. As

she is only animate in a narrative that functions as the plot to manifest her identity, a self-owning Annlee is destined to remain a sign devoid of subjectivity since she will never again be able to contract her own sign for another story. Analysed in terms of Barad's agential realist account, the very moment she is considered to own her identity, that is, when she is considered to have an identity apart from the narratives she was realized in, Annlee is left with no agency to realize herself within any apparatus. Likewise, criticizing Major merely for her appearance risks identifying her as a sign with a static meaning, and hence may cause the overlooking of her potential in performing different meanings. In this sense, I find Annlee to be a great reference to explain the concept of 'agency' I want to employ in my analysis on Major Motoko Kusanagi.

Agency, Barad (2003) explains, is not a property we can assign to identities which are themselves only attributes consistent with the boundary drawing practices; but is about "possibilities for re-configurings" regarding the apparatus itself (p. 818). When thought of as an enactment only, agency becomes a "response-ability" within the unique configuration of the apparatus, signaling "the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices." (Barad in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 55) In this sense, recognizing Annlee as an identity in itself results in her being forever irresponsible, that is, in her being dead in any narrative that knows her for *what she is*. Hence, as long as she is *what she is*, a given identity prior to the configuration of the apparatus, she will remain a construct, insensitive and inconsiderate to "the power imbalances of the complexity of a field of forces" on which only the intra-actions between those who are not with an identity can act. (Barad in Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 55) Likewise, when Major is considered in terms of a representative analysis, that is, if her terms of agency are understood in terms of her bodily figuration, we are left within a discourse that precedes the story in claiming Major a sexualized representation of woman. In contrast to an analysis which read Major as a sexy, female killing machine, I suggest we should focus on the performance of this image within the only story in which it is formed.

As Joost Van Loot (1996) cautions us in the context of cyborg philosophy, modalities configured in terms of gender and sex cannot be changed purely by individual will. If Major's performance

in her sexy figuration were to be in any other narrative, it could even stand as a confirmation of such modalities as it would risk offering female identity as a fixed entity. Nevertheless, when figured coherently with its narrative, a nomadic performance of identities manifests the multiple perspectives laden in each identity which come forward in accordance to each apparatus, and hence work to show their validity in simultaneously exhibiting their limits as well. As Van Loon (1996) puts it,

“The power set into work by discursive constructions, materializes reality – effects and engenders particular possibilities for anchoring identities which are thus simultaneously limits of transgression. In fact, notions of gender, sex and human being are saturated with discourses, whose very multiplicity might even actively pursue contradictions as the groundless grounding of ‘new identities.’”  
(p. 232)

The elaborately figured sexy body of Major, then, may work to show the patriarchal ideology at work in imagination of a female cyborg in the future. Nevertheless, it is this very figuration that, in its unique performance, subverts the representative ideology which codes such an image with virtues designated to human beings and/or technology in humanism. In this performance, I argue, the matter of Major’s body manages to acquire a new meaning through her embodiment of what gets to be abjected in the formation of human subjectivity. The following analysis on one of the scenes in the movie will help me explain the part abjection and its incorporation into Major’s representation play in the subversion of the idea of identity being fixed, and subjectivity being a human virtue.

### **Following ‘the Abject’**

A cyborg woman who happens to be the prime-minister’s translator in a formal meeting has just been brain hacked, which means that someone else has now have control over all her bodily activities from movement to thought production. Had they not captured her in time, it is assumed, she was going to be used for a mission of assassination onto the prime minister in this occasion. She is now tied onto a chair and is unconscious, as her open brain is inserted with

numerous cables by a group of white-coated men surrounding her body. The Chief, head of the Department of Defense Against Cyber-Crimes, and his right-hand officer and head of the unit section 9, Major Motoko Kusanagi, are in the room to get informed about her condition. After a brief moment of discussion on how little time the brain-hacked woman have until they have to *shut her down* not to risk contamination of the whole network she is connected to, a melodramatic sequence of long close-ups respectively on the faces of Major and the lying woman takes over. Kusanagi, among all, would be the person to realize a danger referring to being produced for and by the government (just as the translator woman) as she first handedly enjoys this fact in living. The expanse of the data-net Major's cyber-brain can access is immense, and hence very threatening once not in the hands of the unit section 9 itself. In this scene, Major is shown rather appalled and confused, supporting the idea that her thoughts tend for sadness and empathy towards the brain-hacked, and hence almost a corpse, body of the translator girl. This first instance of Major being introduced to a new dimension of what it means to be a government officer cyborg apparently signals the start of Major's journey in questioning her identity, and the questioning of the notion of 'identity' as a whole. The sadness is what disrupts Major's sense of self founded upon the identity she's been attributed as a cyborg officer. Throughout the movie, both Major and her buddy Batou appear the most surprised when they realize that Major is capable of sadness. It is a radical sense that she joys in, as that is what she follows throughout the story, but it is also something she is not comfortable with and wants to avoid and hide each time she is emotionally affected. Her odd habit of going to diving, which is offered as a very unusual and dangerous thing to do for a cyborg in the narrative, is another act on Major's behalf where she follows an improper feeling that is totally discordant with her identity as a cyborg officer. As she explains to Batou in one of the scenes, it is not the diving per se, but the coming to surface from depths of the water which she really likes. (It is noteworthy that her visual documentation in this experience is substantially similar to her re/creation sequence) The way she explains this experience is another element that hints Kristeva's formulation of the abject and how she explains it to be caused by jouissance (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). As Major puts it; "I feel fear. Anxiety. Loneliness. Darkness. And perhaps, even...hope. As I float up towards the surface...I almost feel as though I could change into something else." As it becomes clear later on in the movie, it is the feeling of almost disintegrating that she inexplicably likes. Kristeva's (1982) explanation on the abject as "(o)ne does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it [on

enjoit]. Violently and painfully. A passion.”, then, is most elucidating in terms of Major’s insensible obsession with sadness (p. 9). Her confrontation with the brain-hacked cyborg woman is the very first instance where she experiences this strange emotion which not only startles her, but also pushes her forward in her journey of looking for a meaning in her life. In *GitS* narrative, getting brain-hacked corresponds to the death of the Ghost, and since the body without a Ghost is only a lifeless puppet, the visual of the translator woman is the closest depiction we can get of a corpse in a narrative where individuals’ bodies are iteratively reproduced.

In Kristevan terms, a corpse is neither a subject nor an object, but abject, and hence “an infection of life, the deprivation of the world.” (Keltner, 2013, p. 45) Confrontation with death, Kristeva explains, is the utmost of abjection (Kristeva, 1982a) as it is the exact correspondence, with no exceptions, to one’s being without an ‘I’, that is, the limit to our being that is driven with a sense of self. In this sense, Kristeva explains, “corpses show (us) what (we) permanently thrust aside in order to live.” (p. 3) The confrontation with the abject, and here it is the utmost of it, is what drives Major to dismantle her identity as a cyborg officer in order to become anew. This is the last instance she receives orders from Section 9 as she then heads to find The Puppet Master eventually to merge with him in order to dissolve into the Net only even though it is only for a brief second. Even for a second, she wants to feel that she, in being a small part of it, is actually everything. As she is about to leave the room, Major turns around and takes a final look on the broken woman in accompany of the sad mechanical sound coming from the monitor she is attached to, and then Major heads to mission to try and save the woman and her own self from *identities*. The integrity of Major’s *self* is now lost as her clean and proper self as a cyborg officer is “no longer guaranteed when the abject shows up.” (Chromik-Krzykawska 2010, p. 80-81)

In this sequence whereby we watch Major encounter the brain-hacked cyborg woman who is the first to be hacked in her very advance model of shell, we are also offered the material-discursive meaning of the notion ‘the Ghost’ in the narrative. The fact that the translator woman would be *shut down* by the end of the two hours, explained in the narrative as the hacker finally reaching the Ghost, indicates that a Ghost secures one’s autonomous decision making and response ability. Once a Ghost is hacked, it is assumed, the shell becomes a puppet to the will of the

hacker. The Puppet Master utilizes these shells in forming a body for itself; and hence, acquires agency in the overall reconfiguration of the apparatus in accordance with the mobility of these Ghosts. Considered in terms of Major's will to merge with the Puppet Master, the meaning, or better put, the ideology of 'the Ghost' as that which grants subjectivity to individual is subverted by Major's actions. Even though she is a ghosted being, Major realizes that her autonomous being is not dependent on her sense of self which is built upon her memories, since the memories can easily be manipulated and her sense of autonomy may well be of another identity than that of her own. It is only when she finally realizes that it is only the actions that matter, she heads to start forming her own identity, one that is never going to be fulfilled. The only way for her to unleash from the sense of her 'cyborg officer self' is running from the only institution (Section 9) in which her body is always the same matter since she can never perform out of her duties in being tracked at any given moment. It is this very despair of Major, and not the inevitable urge to procreate as offered in many critiques, that leads Major to merge with The Puppet Master as he is someone who manages to escape such institutions.

The Puppet Master is internationally wanted for crimes of stock manipulation, spying, political engineering, terrorism, and violation of cyber-brain privacy. Mainly because they are not able to identify her/him in any other terms in nationality, sex, age or race, but also because s/he has, as Major puts it, "ghost-hacked so many people to carry out his crimes, he's earned the code name, "The Puppet Master"." As I explained before, The Puppet Master is a self-claimed life-form who acquires bodies through hacking minds. He acts in accordance to his will to be freed from the government and its use of him in collecting diplomatic secrets. Major's journey leads her to merge with The Puppet Master after a scene where she willingly fights a military tank to the point of losing her arm where we see that she is in great agony. Finally in merging with him, Major is laid down by her friend Batou side by side with the torso of another cyborg woman's body within who The Puppet Master then resides. Although they are raided by the Section 9 forces within minutes and their bodies go into pieces, they manage to merge right in time. Kristeva (1982) explains that the abject is experienced "at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than abject." (p. 5) From when Major confronted the brain-hacked woman, to the scene of

her merging with The Puppet Master, she follows the feeling of unease and even disgust which the puppet individuals kindle in the cyborgs. It is, then, the abject that she follows; and it is the abject that enforces upon her a whole new identity. In the next scene where the storm has gone, Major appears as a small girl, a body Batou bought in a hurry in the black market to install what was left of Major's data and hence The Puppet Master's since they now are one.

“We do have the right to resign if we choose. Provided we give the government back our cyborg shells and the memories they hold. Just as there are many parts needed to make a human a human there's a remarkable number of things needed to make an individual what they are. A face to distinguish yourself from others. A voice you aren't aware of yourself. The hand you see when you awaken. The memories of childhood, the feelings for the future. That's not all. There's the expanse of the data net my cyber-brain can access. All of that goes into making me what I am. Giving rise to a consciousness that I call 'me.' And simultaneously confining 'me' within set limits.” (Major in *GitS*)

In this chapter, I tried to show that the “set limits” Major mentions above is the sense of self which Kristeva imputes on the symbolic order, or the law of the Father, and Barad on the boundary-drawing practices which are the very enactments of these same discourses in the making of the apparatus. In this sense, my analysis on these significant features of the narrative and of Major aims to emphasize that in carefully reading insights of different theories through each other we can form a deeper understanding on any narrative. The multiplicity of insights on the same concepts, elements or situations will help form a keener vision which, in return, will help form not only a clearer understanding on them but, as I tried to explain throughout the thesis, possibilities to change the settings in which they are materialized. And, a reconfigured setting, I assert in footsteps of Barad, will certainly be bountiful in offering the occasions for new materializations, and hence new concepts, elements and situations.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I tried to emphasize the potentials in acquiring a posthumanist perspective, that is, shifting the egocentric vision of the individual and/or the ethnocentric vision of humanity towards an understanding that affirms the integral nature of all phenomena in understanding the world. In doing so, I did not formally introduce the notion, but tried to highlight its vision through analyzing its demonstration in Japanese cyberpunk and its cult production *Ghost in the Shell*. What is peculiar to this demonstration is that it presents us the concepts and symbols that are ossified representations of different social, political, and cultural discourses that are formulated within modernist, postmodernist and even religious contexts. In their simultaneous exhibition within the narrative, *GitS* manages to propose a reconfiguration of the setting in which these elements had been identified with fixed attributes. Through their differential recomposition in the setting, that is, their misfit place in the narrative, the fixed attributes of these elements are disconcerted in accordance with their reformed appearances.

Through an affirmative attitude towards the representative nature of these elements for certain cultures and discourses, my analysis aims to prove that what makes such disconcertment possible is the recognition of their validity in their own fields of production. In this sense, I tried to perform a new materialist reading on the significant elements of the narrative which corresponds to the realization of the conditions of their production and an understanding on to what extent they reflect these conditions. In order to do so, I employed a methodology inspired by Karen Barad's theory of agential realism and the feminist epistemology offered in Donna Haraway's *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* (1988) to build an analysis that affirmed the situated effects of various discourses to be representative of their apparatuses. Furthermore, this methodology helped me understand and work also with the limits of representation as that which excludes and/or renders invisible certain elements, identities, attributes and characteristics over others.

In the agential realist account, the proliferation of different understandings on life, or better put, the circumstances of visibility for varying subjectivities in life are immanent to the very condition that simultaneously produces the terms of objectivity as well. To disavow the validity

of the subjective knowledge, then, is to deny the truth claims with regard to science, and its technological inquiries along with its traditional rhetoric of absolutism and objectivity. In this regard, in my first chapter, I presented several feminist critiques with regard to the employment of Haraway's cyborg philosophy in analysis of Japanese cyberpunk, and the concept of technology within the cultural context of Japan. In the second chapter, I offered various philosophical perspectives on notions of 'the body' and 'subjectivity' in order to assess their validity in *GitS* narrative. Also in this chapter, I tried to present the differences and similarities between Western and Japanese cyberpunk through elaborating on the movies *The Matrix* and *GitS* and their differential critiques.

In this way, in light of the new materialist understanding on the inseparability of subject and object, and hence nature and culture, matter and meaning, and body and mind, I tried to demonstrate the liberatory potential laden in adopting the cyborg as our ontology, as offered by Donna Haraway as early as in 1985. Such a regard of ontology, I tried to show, helps escape linearity, holism, and binary oppositions in studying the circumstances of visibility for different subjectivities in imagination of the near future.

Although not touched upon in the thesis, it is a nomadic vision I borrowed from Rosi Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2011) which helped me build a journey that flows through different theories, discourses and cultural insights in understanding Japanese cyberpunk and *GitS* narrative. It is also this vision that elicited the need to work with theories from different philosophical traditions to combine their differing takes on the formation of subjectivity in my analysis of the features of Major Motoko Kusanagi and the field of her production. In this regard, in my last chapter, I tried to scrutinize the features of the Japanese cyborg through the joint working of the theoretical frameworks offered on the notions of 'self', 'identity', 'agency', and 'subjectivity' by Karen Barad and Julia Kristeva. Also in the last chapter, I tried to form a reading also on the art project *Ann Lee: No Ghost Just a Shell* by Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe in order to explain the process of identity formation and the understanding of agency in a posthumanist approach.

In terms of what I aim to offer through this analysis, I should be honest and accept that first of all I aim to rescue my favorite anime heroine from cruel criticism. Major Motoko Kusanagi is a

contentful depiction of a female heroine who stands against both the gender and the race based discrimination worldwide in being an internationally recognized cyborg woman with followers from all ages around the world. Then, I aim to share my vision in striving for an affirmative view on the efforts of configuring ‘the cyborg’ which, as Haraway offered it, stands for a posthumanist understanding on the universe in being a hybrid not only of human and technology, but also of the attributes from different social, cultural, political and economic contexts and even philosophical discourses on subjectivity.

My analysis on Japanese cyberpunk and the *GitS* narrative in a new materialist vision, I hope, will further enrich the ways of understanding the cyborg as a posthumanist ontology for a feminist subjectivity in multiplying the elements and occasions to be found in the process of its materialization. A thru understanding on this process will help the efforts of reconfiguration of the settings in which subjectivities are formed and reformed. As Milojevic & Inayatullah (2003) tell us, imagination of a new science fiction story is not so much far-out than reconfiguring the reality of tomorrow since “creating new science fictions is not just an issue of textual critique but of opening up possibilities for all our futures.” (p. 493). A reformed analysis on depictions of the cyborgs today should help the efforts of reconfiguring the settings in which subjectivities will continue to be iteratively reformed tomorrow. In this sense, I call for imaginations that will take part in intra-actions of forming posthuman subjectivities not only in constructing science fiction stories but also in criticizing them.

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