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## **The Entanglement of Body and Mind in the Posthumanist Film *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)**

Animation is the perfect medium for creating art in relation to science fiction and posthumanist films. Before modern visual effects technology was developed, it was the only way to create abstract and vivid moving images, far beyond the limitations of physics and science. Compared to the 1950s science-fiction films, which normally represented the fear of technology's power (Ornella 331), contemporary science-fiction films are more "open-minded" and aim to explore more possibilities between humans and technology. Moreover, contemporary science-fiction films tend to focus on philosophical and social problems by exploring the relationship between humans, bodies, and cyborgs.

With the rapid development of science and technology in modern society, the distance between humans and machines has become closer, and the boundaries have become increasingly blurred. According to Ornella,

Anxiety and fear of technology also pervades SF films in the 1950s, in particular fear over nuclear power, conflicts and weapons. Aesthetically, this anxiety is screened through mutations caused by radiation, weapons of mass destruction, or aliens worried about or attacked by nuclear weapons. (331)

On the one hand, humans depend on machines to make themselves and their lives stronger and more convenient. On the other hand, the overreliance on machines has caused human beings to lose themselves and fall into panic and doubt about machines. According to Ornella's study, "during the Machine Age and the postwar-era, machines were often represented as machines (with exceptions) and the body served as one of the markers to set us apart from our machinic other" (332). While the body can be seen as the standard requirement of being a human during the Machine Age, cyborgs, on the other hand, "brought about the end of the body as this dividing line, requiring new aesthetics and new ways of thinking about what it means to be

human and how we relate ourselves to our machines” (Ornella 332). More and more human technologies are beginning to transform humans and make them more mechanized, such as robotic bodies, prosthetics, and even chips that were designed for the human brain. When the boundary between humans and cyborgs can no longer be easily distinguished, this raises many philosophical questions. Will the rapid development of technology cause turbulent changes in humans and their identities? Can one’s identity change as a result of transforming one’s physical form or even changing one’s mind? With the frequent appearance of posthumanism in many animated films, the concept of posthumanity has become more familiar. In terms of technology, humans have gradually developed AI and robots. Will people in reality eventually fall into self-doubt about their own identity because of this? And if so, what will be changed, and how should humans react to it?

The 1995 posthumanist science-fiction film *Ghost in the Shell* addressed such questions and concerns about our technological future. These worries are primarily expressed in relation to the film’s protagonist, Kusanagi. Even though *Ghost in the Shell* was released in 1995 and cannot be considered contemporary anymore today, the film’s predictions about the future world (that is, the present time) and its problems and relationships between humans and cyborgs are accurate. In this thesis, a visual analysis of *Ghost in the Shell* will explore the relationship between body and mind. As I dive into my further research, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: how do different ways of treating Kusanagi’s body and the function of shifting memory affect Kusanagi’s identity in the film *Ghost in the Shell*? To answer the research question, this thesis will mainly focus on exploring how Kusanagi’s body is treated differently by herself and her colleague Bato, and how the function of shifting memory shapes and affects Kusanagi’s thoughts on her own identity in the film.

Directed by Japanese director Mamoru Oshii, *Ghost in the Shell* is a story about the cyborg agent Motoko Kusanagi, who works in Public Security Section 9. Even though

Kusanagi's only organic parts are her brain and spinal cord, she is constantly curious and confused about her own identity as the line between human and cyborg begins to blur. As having a human soul can be seen as the standard of being human, after discovering that even a ghost (the soul of a living human implanted in a cyborg body) can be hacked and thus manipulated by others, Kusanagi's belief and self-awareness have been challenged. The physical changes of the protagonist, Kusanagi, and the moment when she discovered that even people's memories can be tampered with by technology made me wonder: will such things happen in our real world one day? In the film, Kusanagi begins to question her identity in the world and eventually merges with another type of cyber ghost (The Puppet Master) to become a newer form of cyborg that can fully exist in the internet and the sea of information. According to Penicka-Smith,

Oshii illustrates this world in all its complexity by giving us a heroine who questions her own identity without the comfortable guarantee most of us believe we have: the guarantee that whatever the results of our questioning, we are at core human, in a world that accepts us as such. (262)

By taking away the security of Kusanagi's identity and pointing out the complicated environment that Kusanagi is living in, *Ghost in the Shell* takes the audience beyond their common sense and leads them into a deep reflection about the world. The difference in how Kusanagi and the others treat her body in the film *Ghost of the Shell* also shows how identity can be shaped by other people's recognition.

The first hypothesis, regarding the research question, is that, by treating her own body as a machine, the human characteristics of Kusanagi's body are decreasing. However, by treating Kusanagi's body respectfully as a female body, Bato shapes Kusanagi's female human

identity. In doing so, it gives meaning to the shell of Kusanagi, indicating that she is more than just a cyborg.

The second hypothesis is that, by finding out that even memory and the ghost can be hacked and thus manipulated by others, Kusanagi loses her last standard of being human. While the “human mind” is no longer reliable, Kusanagi gives up on the entanglement and exploration of her selfhood and human identity and becomes a spiritual consciousness that does not require a physical carrier and exists in the network. After finding out the “human mind” cannot be trusted, Kusanagi turns to the pursuit of the deeper meaning of being human, which is being able to sacrifice and create new life.

This thesis examines a selection of scenes from the film *Ghost in the Shell*, in relation to the theories from academic articles written by Alexander Darius Ornella, Teodora Manea, Howard Robinson, and others. The secondary sources I will be using in this essay will mainly focus on exploring the relationship between humans and cyborgs, how Kusanagi’s body can be treated and seen differently (how bodies represent identity), dualism, and the entanglements between body and mind of cyborgs. Combining Ornella’s theory from the article *Uncanny Intimacies: Humans and Machines in Film*, that having the ability to feel emotion is the new standard of being human (332), Manea’s idea of the body and its power of shaping identity from the article *Our Posthuman Skin Condition*, and Robinson’s theory on dualism, claiming the difference and independence between body and mind, supporting the “immortality of the soul” (5), all these theories led me into the exploration of the film *Ghost in the Shell* and my research question.

In this thesis, I will first present the theoretical framework, and then combine the theories mentioned above to create and find new possible understandings and concepts. Following the theoretical framework, the first thematic chapter will contain a visual analysis

of Kusanagi and the different ways of treating and using her body, as well as a visual analysis of Kusanagi's diving scene. Combining the theories mentioned above, the first thematic chapter explores how the body affects the shaping of identity and how the body can be seen completely separately from the mind. The second thematic chapter contains several visual analyses of the scenes where Kusanagi finds out that even her own mind and memory are not reliable and can be easily manipulated by others, and realizing how dependent she is on human technology. This chapter analyses how Kusanagi is behaving and thinking differently when the authority and reliability of the mind, Kusanagi's standard of being human, are challenged, and how she eventually adapts to the crisis of her identity and finally devotes herself to pursuing the deeper meaning of being a human. Lastly, in the conclusion chapter, my research question will be answered. A conclusion about the entanglement of body and mind in relation to Kusanagi and the film *Ghost in the Shell* will finally be addressed. Combined with all the theories and concepts about body, mind, and identity, this chapter will summarize the entire journey of visually and philosophically exploring the blurry line of identity between cyborgs and humans in film *Ghost in the Shell*.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the article *Uncanny Intimacies: Humans and Machines in Film* written by Alexander Darius Ornella, Ornella stressed that, "A growing anxiety over the technological reproduction of human beings, leading to the loss of our uniqueness, contributed to this emphasis on emotions as a feature that sets humans apart from machines in SF films from the 1980s and 1990s" (332). In other words, with human bodies being made and replicated easily, humans aim to focus on the point of having emotion and use it to differentiate themselves from cyborgs (Ornella 332). According to Ornella, "emotions, in particular love, humour and compassion, replaced the body

as a marker for being human” (332). When a human body is no longer hard to replicate, and an intelligent cyborg can look exactly the same as a human, the technology has “blurred the lines between the human and non-human, and problematized uncontrolled scientific research” (Ornella 331). In other words, instead of the body, whether to have emotions becomes the standard of being human (Ornella 332). However, as cyborgs have the ability to contain their own thoughts and even spirits, the blurred line between humans and cyborgs raises questions about identification and existence.

Even though, as per Ornella’s concept, whether or not a cyborg has emotions has become the criterion for judging whether a cyborg can be seen as a human, cyborgs are created by humans, and are mostly attached to the products of human technology. According to the article *Sharing Social Context: Is Community with the Posthuman Possible*, written by Meeler and Hill, they state, “The struggle between humanity and posthumanity is the dominant model in motion pictures. Posthumans might be intentional creations of governments or corporations seeking to create and control a ‘perfect soldier’” (279). Meeler and Hill also state that, the relationship between humans and cyborgs indicates the relationship between “us and them” (279). In most science-fiction films, cyborgs are made by humans, and they often rely on and are attached to human-dominated environments in order to survive and work. It is human institutions that enable most cyborgs to survive. It is humans and human technology that make cyborgs who they are. Therefore, once the two are separated, the identity or self of a cyborg will change. From many perspectives, cyborgs are dependent on human technology, therefore, when cyborgs are completely separate from humans and human technology, their identity will also change to a large extent.

If it is said that most cyborgs still have a certain degree of initiative and control over their memories, experiences, and consciousness, then their bodies, even their gender, are clearly attached to their external appearances when they are produced and designed by humans.

According to Teodora Manea, the author of the article *Our Posthuman Skin Condition*, she states,

When we walk along the street our fellow humans appear to us as entities that we immediately determine or define by their skin: old or young, male or female, healthily tanned or sickly pale, scarred or with tattoos, with no, moderate or exaggerated make-up. The skin is the first and often the only part of a person that we see, and more or less acknowledge as a presence. A first filter of our social interaction starts with this 'skin deep', but somehow still relevant, triage. We may not know what is inside the head of someone, but the skin shows us their state of mind, emotions, gender, tiredness, age and lots of other details that allow us to do a quick and superficial categorization. (289)

Manea stresses that it is the skin and one's appearance that are the first to get noticed and evaluated by people, far before understanding one's inner cognition and spiritual world (289). In other words, one's physical appearance is completely reflected in the appearance of their skin and body, even if the self has other deeper feelings and cognitions about the body, for a gazer, the evaluation of body information may be different (Manea 289). Manea also states, "Skin is connected with the phenomenology of the gaze; it is the border where we start to objectify the other, and where the other appears to us like a part of the real world" (293). The gaze of the gazer can bring to an individual another identity that is not necessarily the same as what the individual feels about their own skin and body, if the gaze is focused only on the skin and body of the individual. A "meaning" can be added to a body by the way it has been treated and portrayed.

Based on Manea's concept as stated above, it is evident that meaning, and even gender, can be projected directly onto a body depending on how it has been treated and portrayed. However, there are still differences between how men and women focus on their bodies.

Franzoi argues in her article *The Body-As-Object Versus The Body-As-Process: Gender Differences and Gender Considerations*, that different genders focus on their bodies differently. According to Franzoi,

Females are more likely than males to focus attention on and identify with body aspects that are objectified by others and judged for their static beauty (e.g., legs, buttocks, face, chest, lips), whereas males are more likely than females to focus attention on and identify with physical aspects that are judged according to their instrumental function in the world (e.g., reflexes, muscular strength, coordination, health, agility). (418)

From the perspective of contemporary society, this 1995 paper on gender is narrow and backward. It superficially and roughly considers sex, gender, and even the body to be three concepts that can be understood in combination and can indicate each other. Moreover, the way that this article uses female and male to describe women and men ignores the difference between gender and sex. According to Diamond, “The term sex, since classical times, has been used to designate matters related to biology and medicine when male, female or bisexual were in context” (321). Diamond also stated, “The term gender has generally been used in social or cultural contexts, in distinction from biological ones” (321). Unlike Diamond’s theory of gender and sex being distinct aspects of identity, Franzoi’s theory ignores that distinction. However, it is suitable to use Franzoi’s article and some of its narrow concepts to analyze the film *Ghost in the Shell*, which was also released in 1995, using the stereotypes of gender and body to portray its characters. In *Ghost in the Shell*, the ways in which different genders focus on their bodies indicate the difference between feminine and masculine. “These differing conceptions of the physical self as object versus process reflect the larger passive-active cultural dichotomy of femininity and masculinity” (Franzoi 418). Therefore, when these typical differences are used to portray a character in film *Ghost in the Shell*, their gender becomes obvious due to their defining bodily characteristics. By doing so, it not only makes the gender

obvious for the character, but also emphasizes the strong bodily contrast between different genders.

Although many concepts emphasize the connection between the body and gender, dualism asserts that the body and mind are separate and independent of each other. In the article *Dualism* written by Howard Robinson, published in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Robinson states that, “In the philosophy of mind, dualism is the theory that the mental and the physical—or mind and body or mind and brain—are, in some sense, radically different kinds of thing” (1). Robinson emphasizes the difference between body and mind, and introduces that, “Dualist views (the subject of this entry) say that the mental and the physical are both real and neither can be assimilated to the other” (4). In other words, Robinson’s theory emphasizes the independence and difference of body and mind, stressing that “mind is contrasted with body” (Robinson 5). By concluding Plato’s *Phaedo*, Robinson states that, “the true substances are not physical bodies, which are ephemeral, but the eternal Forms of which bodies are imperfect copies. These Forms not only make the world possible, they also make it intelligible, because they perform the role of universals” (5). By stressing the independence of body and mind, the theory of dualism indicates that one’s body and mind can be separated into two independent parts, therefore supporting the “immortality of the soul” (Robinson 5).

Nevertheless, dualism emphasizes the independence of body and mind and draws the conclusion that the soul is eternal. However, the mind is not invulnerable. James DiGiovanna argues that mind and memory are fragile in his article *Identity: Difficulties, Discontinuities and Pluralities of Personhood*. In the article, DiGiovanna summarizes the criteria by which philosophers search for personal identity. He states, “The psychological, found in Locke, Descartes, Hume and Parfit, which holds that it is our thoughts, memories, personalities and, in general, dispositions and mental content, that make us who we are” (351). Similar to dualism as stated above, DiGiovanna introduces that, apart from the body, mind, memories, and one’s

experience are what shape the identity of a self (351). However, DiGiovanna also stresses that, “The importance of memory for our sense of self cannot be doubted, but its metaphysical role in guaranteeing identity is fragile, at best” (353). DiGiovanna uses multiple science fiction films as examples to emphasize how fragile and unstable memory is as a point of identity support.

This theoretical framework combines the theories of the relationship between humans and cyborgs, the new “standard” of what makes a cyborg human, gender and body, and dualism. The combination and comparison of these theories will be applied to the analysis of the film *Ghost in the Shell*.

#### DIFFERENT WAYS OF TREATING KUSANAGI’S BODY AND THE IDENTITY DIFFERENCE BEHIND IT

In the film *Ghost in the Shell*, protagonist Motoko Kusanagi is a cyborg who works as a secret agent in Public Security Section 9. As a cyborg, Kusanagi’s body is fully produced by human technology, her only remaining organic parts are her brain and spinal cord. As the cyborg body is known as the ‘shell’, the soul that is contained in a brain has been called a ‘ghost’. Despite having a female body, Kusanagi often appears naked during most of her fight scenes. However, Kusanagi sees her body as an emotionless object, and uses it as a weapon instead of showing it in a sexual way. For example, Kusanagi would rather tear off the clothes she is wearing and use her naked body to trigger the invisible function instead of changing into a jacket that has the same function during fighting. During the final fight in the film, when Kusanagi fights against the Puppet Master, she uses her body as a weapon and does not even hesitate to break her arm apart just to break into a tank. According to Chahal and Gindwani, Kusanagi’s “acts of often appearing nude in front of her squad symbolizes her lack of concern of exposing herself publicly or any kind of attachment to her body” (28). The way Kusanagi treats her body

indicates that she does not see the cyborg body as ‘herself’ and that her mind, or so-called ghost, is not emotionally attached to the body she is having. As stated by Orbaugh, “In *Ghost in the Shell*, Kusanagi’s lack of shame is not depicted as a moral issue. Rather, Kusanagi in a sense stands for the inauthenticity of the body/shell, and it is therefore not surprising that she exhibits no affective connection with it or through it” (162). The “inauthenticity of the body” (Orbaugh 162) shows how unreliable Kusanagi’s identity can be if it is based solely on her body itself.

However, by emphasizing and presenting the feminine features of Kusanagi’s body, such as her breasts, hips and thin waist, *Ghost in the Shell* emphasizes Kusanagi’s human identity and gender. According to Franzoi, it is more common for women to identify with elements such as their legs, buttocks, and chests, because those parts are objectified and judged by others on the basis of their beauty (418). By portraying Kusanagi with such a distinctly feminine body, the film builds up a strong contrast between her female body and her complicated conflict about her own identity. Furthermore, while portraying the male character, Kusanagi’s colleague Bato, his muscular body was clearly shown in the film *Ghost in the Shell*. Also according to Franzoi, unlike women, men place more importance on physical characteristics such as reflexes and muscular strength based on their role in the world (418). As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Franzoi’s concept can be considered backward from the contemporary perspective. However, his idea from the year 1995 is comparable with the film *Ghost in the Shell*, which was released in the same year. In the film, the male character Bato has an extremely masculine body. His body is built with big and obvious muscles. Moreover, Bato’s body not only indicate masculinity, but also reflect how feminine Kusanagi’s body is, indicating that Kusanagi is a woman.

In spite of the fact that Kusanagi’s feminine body indicates that she is a woman, her way of treating her own physical body shows that there is no connection between her mind and her body. In the article *Ghost in the Shell as a Cross-Cultural Franchise: From Radical*

*Posthumanism to Human Exceptionalism*, Michal Daliot-Bul, states that, “Kusanagi’s body is an Amazonian ideal and is life-like and attractive in an athletic way. She does not, however, use her sexed body in a sexual way. She obviously has no sensing cell implants anywhere in her body” (535). By treating her own body without care and emotion, Kusanagi only sees and uses her body as a lifeless weapon. However, Kusanagi’s colleague, Bato, sees her body as a female body and always treats it with proper respect. During the scene when Kusanagi appears naked, Bato tends to look away from Kusanagi’s body, or give her a jacket to cover up Kusanagi’s nudity. According to Daliot-Bul, “It is Batō who gives her body meaning by looking away when she undresses or by covering her “nudity” with his own jacket or combat vest. Batō still sees her nostalgically as a woman” (535). By doing so, Bato gives meaning to Kusanagi’s cyborg body. According to Manea’s theory, skin and appearance are closely related to the act of gazing, when people start gazing, they start objectifying (293). Seeing and treating Kusanagi as a woman, Bato indicates that Kusanagi’s body is more than just a machine, his gaze and his way of treating Kusanagi’s body give it a deeper meaning.

Having the detachment of body and mind, Kusanagi enjoys diving, as diving is the only way for her to feel emotion, which thus makes Kusanagi feel like a human. In the film, Kusanagi states, “I feel fear, anxiety, isolation and darkness, maybe even hope. Sometimes I feel that when I come up to the surface I can become a different person” (00:30:32-00:30:47). All the emotions that Kusanagi feels when she is diving make her feel more human, as she cannot normally feel emotions. According to Chahal and Gindwani,

Kusanagi probably feels more human while diving because she could feel emotions which she often doesn’t in her cyberbody. Oshii, here, tries to state that no matter how invincible and sentient an individual becomes, a need to feel will always be there, and being a cyborg takes away that connection with your human self. (28)

In other words, the “need to feel” (Chahal and Gindwani 28) of Kusanagi’s mind and the process of feeling are what give Kusanagi her human identity. As stated by Ornella, instead of the body, whether to have the ability to feel emotions has become the standard of being human (332). Even though Kusanagi is unable to find identification with human identity in her own cyborg body, it is the human emotions that make her still feel like a human. Chahal and Gindwani also state, “*Ghost in the Shell* not only lays out differences between a human and cyborg, but also creates a binary between body and soul, marking ‘ghost’ as the foundation of being human” (27). While Kusanagi’s ghost shows independence from her body, her ghost and emotions are what give her identity and make her see herself as a human. While Kusanagi’s mind is unattached to her cyborg body, having Bato treat her body as a proper woman, Kusanagi’s identity as a human is determined by a different standard.

Even though Bato’s gaze and emotions towards Kusanagi give Kusanagi’s cyborg body meaning, Kusanagi herself does not see her cyborg body as ‘her’. For Kusanagi, it is the ability and the “need to feel” (Chahal and Gindwani 28) emotions that became the standards of being human. As Robinson introduces dualism, “the mental and the physical are both real and neither can be assimilated to the other” (4). As dualism asserts, the body and the mind are two separate, unattached parts that are independent of each other. To Kusanagi, it is her mind and her soul that have meaning and contain the meaning of being human. Her cyborg body, on the other hand, is only a container for her mind and humanity.

Taking Kusanagi as an example, it is clear that with the development of technology, the cyborg body will eventually become a shell of the mind. The criteria for evaluating whether an individual is human have also changed, from whether the individual has a human body to whether the individual possesses the emotions that can only be produced by a human being.

TECHNOLOGY, MEMORY, AND ITS UNRELIABLE WAY OF SHAPING KUSANAGI’S IDENTITY

In spite of the fact that Kusanagi considers herself human based on her ability to feel emotions, it is undeniable that her identity is also largely dependent on the human technology that created her body. In the scene when Kusanagi finishes her diving and communicates with Bato about her uncertainty regarding her human identity and her desire to have emotion, Bato advises Kusanagi that it is still possible to quit Section 9. In response to the advice, Kusanagi said to Bato,

Indeed, we have a right to quit. If we return our bodies and part of our memories to the government with great humility. Just like there are many elements for a human to be a human, you need surprisingly many elements for you to be yourself. A distinct face, an unconsciously distinct voice, a hand you look at when you wake up, your childhood memories, foresight. But that is not all. A wide range of information and a network that I can access. All those are part of me, create my consciousness itself, and at the same time constrain me within a certain limit. (*Ghost in the Shell* 00:31:49-00:32:34)

Kusanagi is stating the fact that other than her body, memories, and mind, the human technology that she is depending on is also a part of what makes her who she is. According to Orbaugh, what Kusanagi said to Bato represents “her recognition that her current body—despite being entirely artificial—contributes in fundamental ways to that sense of self; her organic brain is not the sole source of her selfhood” (155). With Kusanagi being made and also relying on human-dominated environments in order to work, she validated the following concept, the creation of posthumans may be an intentional action taken by governments or corporations in an effort to create and control the ‘perfect soldier’ (Meeler and Hill 279). Being highly dependent on human technology, Kusanagi realizes that once she is separated from what makes her who she is, her identity will no longer be complete and the same.

Furthermore, the use of human technology has caused Kusanagi to realize that her memory and mind are no longer reliable. And what is even worse, is that their credibility as proof of her humanity may not be trusted at all. In the film *Ghost in the Shell*, as Kusanagi and Bato interrogated the captured prisoner, they learned that all of the prisoner's memories, as well as his identity, had been implanted in his mind and that they were all entirely fictitious and constructed. The prisoner confessed that he had a wife and a lovely daughter, and later on, he and his wife were divorced. However, Bato and Kusanagi found out that "all of them are fake memories. Like a dream" (*Ghost of the Shell* 00:26:28), and the prisoner "has been used by someone to ghost-hack the government officials" (*Ghost of the Shell* 00:26:28). Bato in *Ghost of the Shell* states that, "all the information that exists is real, and at the same time illusion. Simulated experience, dreams. At any rate, the information one collects in his lifetime is minuscule" (00:27:41-00:27:56). All these "simulated experiences" (00:27:55) created a fake life and, therefore, a fake identity for the prisoner, without him even knowing that it was fake. The prisoner's eyes were dim, as tears slowly ran down his cheeks. Sadly, he even asked if he could delete these false memories of him, but was told that it was not possible. At this moment, Kusanagi's self-identity was challenged.

The memories and mind, are Kusanagi's criteria for perceiving herself as human, but sadly, not even the memories and mind can be trusted anymore. According to DiGiovanna's theory, despite the fact that memory is an integral part of the sense of self, its metaphysical role as a guarantee of identity is fragile and easily challenged (353). Even though memory is an indispensable part of building one's identity, how can the identity be trusted while the reliability of the memory itself is no longer guaranteed? Kusanagi is caught in doubts regarding the reliability of her own identity. When she saw a cyborg with the same body and production model as her own, Kusanagi finally lost herself and her identity. According to Silvio, "While the body's status as nothing but a "shell" may work to control the occupant of that shell, it also

suggests the possibility that the shell could be re-coded, exchanged for another, or discarded entirely” (60). The cyborg body can be replaced, and the memory can be tampered with and fabricated. When all the evidence of Kusanagi being a human is no longer credible, Kusanagi said to Bato,

Doesn't that body look like me? Everyone who's entirely made of cybernetic parts like me wonders if I died a long time ago and the current me is just a pseudo person made of cyberbrain and body parts. Or maybe "I" did not even exist in the first place. If the cyberbrain itself creates a ghost and puts a soul in it, on what grounds should we believe in ourselves? (*Ghost in the Shell* 00:42:18-00:42:43)

Kusanagi began to suspect that her memory was fabricated, not only that, she even suspected that she never existed. All these doubts, confusions, and conflicts about Kusanagi's self-identity have reached a new level after she fought against the Puppet Master. According to Silvio,

Kusanagi's "inner self" is largely determined by her corporeality her tactile memories, sensations, and the organic tissue in her skull—that self is subordinate to the systems within which her body circulates. It should be noted, however, that this subordination of Kusanagi's material self already lays the groundwork for the supposed liberation of the mind from the body in the subsequent narrative that follows the conversation between Kusanagi and Bato. (60)

In other words, Kusanagi's thoughts will become the foundation to enable her to be completely free of any physical limitations she is currently experiencing—the body, the shell, and even the human technology that are constraining her and her mind.

In the film, Project 2051 is a program that attempts to implant fabricated and tampered memories into one's mind. Before anyone can even notice, the target that got hacked in their

mind will become a ‘puppet’, just like the prisoner who was caught by Kusanagi, living with a mind full of “simulated experiences” (*Ghost in the Shell* 00:27:55). During the attack of Project 2051, it somehow gained its own awareness from the sea of information, and even created its own ghost. It became a cyber lifeform with its own identity, and decided to call itself the Puppet Master. According to Silvio, “Project 2051 represents a truly technologized, posthuman subject, an example of a non-human cyber-consciousness whose computerized existence enables rather than limits” (61). Born in the sea of information, Puppet Master knows that its lifeform is yet to be completed. Not only that, the body that Puppet Master hacked into is a female cyborg body, with significant feminine features, however, Puppet Master owns a male voice, which was also referred to as a “he” by Section 9. According to Silvio, Puppet Master is “a character of “undetermined” sex that figures as linguistically male but visually female” (62). And it “represents the capacity of cyber-technology to confuse and disrupt its conventional deployment (including the fact that cyborg shells are mass-produced as either male or female semblances)” (Silvio 62). In other words, Puppet Master’s feminine body, his male pronouns, and his male voice give him a chaotic setting of gender, more specifically, it can even be said that his own identity is not restricted and defined by gender.

The film *Ghost in the Shell* kicks off the final climax of the film with the scene when Kusanagi finally meets the Puppet Master. He asks Kusanagi to merge with him since he considers himself an intelligent lifeform because, as he states, “I am sentient and am able to recognize my own existence” (*Ghost in the Shell* 01:09:38). However, born from the sea of information, Puppet Master knows that he is still incomplete. As he keeps talking to Kusanagi, he says that he still “lacks the most basic life processes inherent in all living organisms: reproducing and dying” (*Ghost in the Shell* 01:09:47). According to Chahal and Gindwani, “The Puppet Master makes Kusanagi realise that searching for one’s identity is impossible because individuals are constantly changing and evolving, therefore trying to obtain one perfect

identity is irrelevant” (29). At this moment, Kusanagi seems to have been awakened by Puppet Master. The uneasy and doubtful feeling she once felt about her identity because of her memory and body were no longer reliable, and the feeling she had when she was doubting whether she was alive or ever existed, all her doubts and anxieties have turned into a simpler, more basic pursuit, to ensure that she is a free living being.

In order to “truly become a “living,” post-gendered organism” (Silvio 62), Puppet Master wishes to merge with Kusanagi to create a new form of individual that lives freely through the internet, and to pursue the certainty of being alive and wanting to know who exactly she is, Kusanagi accepts the requirement from Puppet Master. Eventually, Kusanagi merges with Puppet Master and creates a new, completely independent individual that lives through the internet. Even though the newer life form that was created by Kusanagi and Puppet Master does not have a physical form at all, this “evolutionary procreation” (Chahal and Gindwani 29) emphasized that “the physical, therefore the being is presented as completely secondary to the mental” (Chahal and Gindwani 29). The ending of the film *Ghost in the Shell* is once again emphasizing the theory of dualism, that the body is completely separated from the mind and that the mind can exist without the restrictions of the body. The brand new Kusanagi finally breaks through all the restrictions of physical conditions, living in the confidence of her own identity and life.

## CONCLUSION

In the film *Ghost in the Shell*, director Mamoru Oshii reveals the entanglement of body, mind, and memory. These elements are the fundamentals of shaping one’s identity, and this film not only reveals how important they are when it comes to human identity, but also how fragile and unreliable they can be for a cyborg lifeform. Different ways of treating Kusanagi’s body

indicate the multiple identities that are portrayed by Kusanagi and her body. Kusanagi's body and mind are separated, the lack of attachment between her body and mind makes her see her body only as a shell of her mind and a lifeless weapon. To Kusanagi, it is her emotions and memories that make her who she is, and her identity is also based on her mind instead of her body. However, the film portrays Kusanagi's body as a typical feminine body, hinting that Kusanagi's gender and also her identity are projected on her body. Furthermore, with Bato treating Kusanagi's body with respect and often offering to cover up her naked body and look away while she is not wearing anything during fighting, Bato's way of treating Kusanagi and her body shows that Kusanagi's cyborg body is more than just a shell of her mind.

When Kusanagi finds out that even memory and mind can be hacked and manipulated, the authenticity and authority of memory and mind are challenged, and she realizes that even what she has always regarded as the standard of her own identity and the proof of human identity is no longer reliable. Kusanagi began to suspect that the memory in her head was false, and even that she had never existed. Her cyborg body, and her unreliable memory became the technologies that were constraining Kusanagi and her mind. During Kusanagi's fight against the Puppet Master, she is reminded by the Puppet Master that the most basic life processes inherent in all living organisms are reproducing and dying (*Ghost in the Shell* 01:09:47). After Kusanagi is encouraged by the Puppet Master, the worries and doubts she had have turned into a simpler pursuit to make sure she can be a free living being. In the end of the film *Ghost in the Shell*, Kusanagi and Puppet Master merge and create a completely independent individual that is living freely through the internet.

From the perspective of contemporary society, the film can be considered outdated in the aspect of shaping Kusanagi's body and her female identity as it ignores the difference between gender, sex, and body. However, this 1995 film is so advanced in predicting the future world and exploring and understanding the relationship between humans and cyborgs that it

can still bring a lot of inspiration about humans and technology to today's society. Oshii uses *Ghost in the Shell* to demonstrate his understanding of body, mind, and dualism, which is that body and mind are separate from each other and can exist independently. Furthermore, the film also reveals the potential dangers that excessive use of technology may bring to human society, as one's identity can be so fragile and easily challenged by technology. Throughout the analysis of this film, I use Kusanagi as an example to explore the confusion and doubt that technology and posthumanism may cause humans. Using *Ghost in the Shell* as an example, I also explore the reactions and thoughts one may have when their identity is threatened by advanced technology. Technology is closely connected with human life. When people in reality face the identity crisis brought by technology, what should they do? At that time, how can people tell who is human and who is not? There is no opposition between humans and technology. However, if humans rely too much on technology, eventually they will face the challenges faced by Kusanagi in the film. By analyzing the film *Ghost in the Shell*, ultimately saying, the ability to discover their own identity, and the ability to perceive emotions might be the most suitable standards for a cyborg to be seen as a human being instead of a machine.

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