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Death, Innocence, and the Cyborg:
Theorizing the Gynoid Double-Bind in
Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence*

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Abstract

In Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1983), the author presents a discussion of the concept and praxis of the cyborg in emancipatory terms. Haraway presents the cyborg as a transgressive and latently mercurial figure that decouples and contravenes numerous exploitative ideological frameworks of repressive biopower that repress human being and reproduce the conditions of said repression. Using Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence* (2004) as a dialogic case study, this essay explores the manner in which the cyborg, particularly its figuration as female-gendered anthropic machine or gynoid in 20th- and 21st-century science fiction, simultaneously confirms and contradicts Haraway's assessment of the concept of the cyborg. As to its methodology, this essay opens with a contextualizing excursus on the cyber-being in contemporary Western society and sociopolitics, with a view to offering a framework analysis of the figuration of the gynoid in Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence* as a recent example of contemporary science fiction's representation of the issues and debates inherent to the concept of the gynoid. Lastly, this essay performs a detailed close reading of Oshii's text in relation to its exploration of themes of the conceptual emancipatory potential of the cyber-being and the paradoxically exploitative patriarchal power relations that re-inscribe said potential within what this essay refers to as 'the gynoid double-bind.'

Keywords: *Anime*, cyborg, Donna Haraway, onto-existentialism, emancipation, exploitation, double-bind, Mamoru Oshii, consciousness, reproduction

This essay analyzes Donna Haraway's discussion of the myth of the cyborg in relation to the articulation of the figure of the gynoid in Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence* (2004) (hereafter *GITSII*). In doing so, I examine the consistent paradox of the gynoid in contemporary science fiction film and *anime*; namely, that contemporary science fiction consistently presents the cyborg as both a figure of emancipation from prevailing humanistic ideals and dualisms, while simultaneously presenting such radically transgressive ideas in ways that re-inscribe the cyborg, particularly the aesthetic and narratological manifestations of the figure of the gynoid, within distinctly heteronormative conventions and anthropocentric paradigms. I firstly explore various reasons why the cyborg is a particularly serviceable metaphor for ontological, existential, and feminist critique of exploitative differential sociopolitical and ideological systems. I will then extrapolate as to how the cyborg achieves this by being inherently transgressive toward distinctions governing various power structures that mediate various spheres of social reality, including embodiedness, the privileging of organic over inorganic onto-existential states of being and consciousness, and gender. Secondly, I will argue that however compelling Haraway's myth of the cyborg may be, its manifestations in 20th- and 21st-century science fiction film and *anime* directly and indirectly show that the cyborg, particularly the gynoid, is still paradoxically and consistently mediated through heteronormative presentations.

While I primarily discuss Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell II: Innocence* as a dialogic case study because it is predicated on debates concerning gender, power, sociopolitical, and philosophical relations between organic and non-organic modes of being, I acknowledge that the contemporary cyborg has notable precedents to follow. Brevet Brigadier General John A.B.C. Smith in Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Man That Was Used Up" (1843) and Baron Savitch in Edward Page Mitchell's short story "The Ablest Man in the World" (1879) are two notable 19th-century examples. Most early cyborg fiction is primarily concerned with themes including but not limited to prostheses, as in Gaston Leroux's *La poupée sanglante – La machine à assassiner* (1923) and later in the

character Jonas from Gene Wolfe's *Book of the Sun* novels (1980-1983); psycho-physical enhancement such as the manipulation of chronotopes in Edwin Vincent's *The Clockwork Man* (1923) and the Mi-go in H.P. Lovecraft's "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1931). Later incarnations of the literary cyborg are more overtly concerned with gender, embodied in characters such as Deirdre in C.L. Moore's short story "No Woman Born" (1944), Molly Millions in William Gibson's *Sprawl* trilogy (1984-1988), and most concertedly Yod in Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* (1991). Though Haraway's discussion of the cyborg addresses itself to the resonances of the struggles between machines and non-machines in lived worlds, I feel that science fiction is a particularly suitable medium through which to examine the cyborg and its latent concepts and artistic figurations because of the genre's historical commitment to exploring the ontological, existential, and sociopolitical consequences of the material hybridity and liminality between organic and inorganic modes of being. I have chosen *GITSI* as a case study because Oshii's film incorporates the core premises of Haraway's essay into its very conceptualization, aesthetic, and narrative in a way that centralizes and problematizes not only questions of ontological and existential dynamism, personhood, the limits of agency within the remits of subjectivity and subjectification, as well as its troubling of phallogocentric hierarchies, but more importantly, the paradoxes regarding the exploitation of techno-organic hybridity and gender.

On the Harawayean Cyborg

In "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1983) (hereafter *Manifesto*), Haraway defines a cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction" (2190). Similarly, in *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (1999), Anne Marie Balsamo states that the term

cyborg ... usually describes a human-machine coupling, most often a *man-machine* hybrid [whereby] cyborgs are alternately labelled 'androids,'

‘replicants,’ or ‘bionic humans.’ Whatever label they attract, the cyborg serves not only as the focal figure of the mass-mediated popular culture of American techno-science, but also as the figuration of posthuman identity in postmodernity. (18)

In “Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research” (1995), Jennifer Gonzalez describes the contextual pervasiveness of the concept of the cyborg in both diegetic and extradiegetic contemporary Western sociopolitics and culture when she states that

one can consider any body a cyborg body that is both its own agent and subject to the power of other agencies ... an *organic cyborg* can be defined as a monster of multiple species, whereas a *mechanical cyborg* can be considered a techno-human amalgamation (there are also conceivable overlaps of these domains) ... both types of cyborgs, which appear frequently in Western visual culture, are metaphors for a third kind of cyborg – a cyborg consciousness. (58-9)

By the above definitions, the Harawayean cyborg possesses a seemingly propitious emancipatory capacity. In the very onto-existential liminality of the cyborg, Haraway envisions a revolutionary potential, as states of being of heterogeneity, flux, play, anthropological, technological, biological, and philosophical uncertainty. In essence, the being of a cyborg, in Haraway’s view, is necessarily heterotopic precisely because it “skips the step of original unity of identification with nature in the Western sense. This is its illegitimate promise that might lead to subversion of its teleology as star wars” (2192). The term heterotopic here invokes Michel Foucault’s discussion of the concept of heterotopia developed in “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopia” (1984). Heterotopia is a term that describes the human geographical phenomena of spaces and places that function in non-hegemonic ways. As such, heterotopic spaces are simultaneously spaces of flux and spaces that inculcate or incubate othernesses, liminalities, confusions, fusions, plays, flows and dynamisms. Such spaces can combine various modalities and states of matter, they can be simultaneously physical and ephemeral, like the space of a telephone call or one’s reflection in the mirror. I have chosen to describe the revolutionary potential of the mercurial, protean, chimeric and/or manticorean fluidity and flux of the conflation of onto-existential

realities Haraway highlights that are latent within the concept of the cyborg as having distinctly heterotopian qualities.

Science fiction has historically had, ironically, a close fidelity to such spaces. These spaces offer the viewer/ reader the promise or, at least the intimation, of difference. In *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) Brian McHale redeploys Foucault's conceptions of heterotopia by superimposing it over linguistic zones applied to the polemical spaces of postmodern narratives (40-5). For McHale, the interstitial, disruptive, and reterritorializing effect of heterotopias on the differential systems of signification typically predicated on the dialectic of presence contra absence, as well as the psycho-emotional and sociopolitical categories that constitute and reproduce narratives of self, reflects the basis of postmodern writing. In this sense, when applied to *écriture*, the manicurean flows of the heterotopic disrupt and/or extrude the concerns of modernist fiction which are *epistemological* in nature. McHale states that

the dominant of modernist fiction is *epistemological*. That is, modernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions such as. . . "How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?" Other typical modernist questions might be added: "What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it and with what degree of certainty?; How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?". . . "What are the limits of the knowable?" (9)

In contrast, the dominant mode of postmodernist fiction is *ontological*. As such, postmodernist fiction attempts to

foreground questions [that could be described as] 'post-cognitive': "Which world is this? What is to be done in it?" . . . Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: "What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured?" (McHale 9-10)

However formulated or presented, the concept of 'world' typically also engenders 'being,' or acts as a chronotope for/of being and beings. Being, while typically an existential and/or phenomenological concern in modernist and postmodernist philosophical works such as Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943), is also an ontological concern, as in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927). The heterotopic spaces of science fiction disrupt narratives of being and present questions such as: What is being in a particular world wherein which no singular narrative of being predominates? What can be done by beings in such a world? How do beings differ? What happens when different kinds of beings are placed in confrontation, or when the boundaries between being and beings are violated? These fundamentally *onto-existential* questions form the core of the concept of the cyborg. In this sense, my strategy here is to engage the cyborg, particularly the gynoid, as a zone of interstitial, juxtaposed(ing), interpolated(ing), superimposed(ing) being; a *bricolage* of the used and usable, the organic discarded, a scrap-yard of being, a disorder of being. Disorder here again refers to Foucault, who in *The Order of Things* (1970) describes heterotopias as

a worse kind of disorder. . . , the thinking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible worlds glitter separately. . . without law or geometry. . . in such a state, things are 'laid,' 'placed,' 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all. (qtd. in McHale 44)

As beings whose onto-existential condition is one of the disorder of always-already-slipping-away, I see in the cyborg the impossibility to

name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together.' (Foucault xviii)

The resultant schizophrenics of the breakdown of the relationship between signifiers in heterotopic zones manifests in the schizophrenics of the gynoid and the prevailing signifiers, alive/ dead, organic/ inorganic, conscious/ unconscious, Wilful/ Will-less, superimposed upon 'her.' In this sense the cyborg is, unsurprisingly, an *elision* of McHale's modernist and post-modernist concerns, wherein which existential and ontological concerns merge and differentiate simultaneously.

While Skynet of James Cameron's *Terminator* franchise (1984-2015) and The Rossum Company of Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse* (2009-2010) speak to the fears of the potential consequences of cyborgs serving as tributaries of capitalist military-industrial complexes, Haraway's cyborg speaks to desires of radical onto-existential and sociopolitical independence and freedom. The cyborg's independence from the Western tradition of a resolute identification with nature or whichever original unity, be it 'God' or the latently Judeo-Christian authority of the signifier, suggests that inherent in the liminality of the cyborg is a type of autonomy that interrupts the forces of human unity and allegiance, the harmony of self and Other, or the self and Nature. As such, the cyborg is appellant to socialist-feminist critique because it opens up rather than close off "what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century" (Haraway 2190).

In the *Manifesto*, Haraway examines the image of the cyborg as a metaphor for the disruptive and transgressive potential of the hybridity between organic and inorganic modes of being in modern social reality. Similarly, in her 2015 lecture "A Cyborg Genealogy: Science Fiction in the Classics," Genevieve Liveley acknowledges the exigency of the concept of the cyborg due to the *pervasiveness* of techno-organic hybridity in 21st century global society, stating that, when considered fully, many of us will qualify as cyborgs in both the technical and metaphorical sense of the cyborg as a techno-organic hybrid. According to Liveley,

some cyborg classifications include any organism augmented by chemicals, by prosthesis, [or] by implants[,] anyone with an artificial organ, artificial limb, or supplement; anyone programmed to resist disease, anyone immunized, anyone drugged to think, behave, or feel better is

technically a cyborg . . . these include people with electronic pacemakers, artificial joints and drug systems, implanted corneal lenses, or artificial skin; or use drugs pharmaceutically or recreationally. (00:10:20)

In addition, Liveley cites ostensibly banal examples of techno-organic hybridity including drinking coffee or alcohol, wearing glasses or contact lenses, and other prostheses or implants to illustrate Haraway's point that the cyborg is as much a creature of social reality as it is also a creature of science fiction. One might argue that such a definition or consideration of the cyborg, or what 'counts' as a cyborg is too diffuse. In response, I argue that such critique falls into what I perceive to be a typical understanding of a cyborg as a Frankensteinian (re)arrangement of sinew and steel that is as overly narrow as it is outdated. Such a position overlooks the pervasiveness of cyborg figurations currently practised, lived, embodied, and under development in contemporary society and serves only as a retention of outmoded humanistic, anthro- and organocentric conceptions of the so-called sovereignty of the flesh. Abandoning such a stance opens up being itself to new and wide-reaching potentials whereby the implications of techno-organic hybridity have broad sociopolitical and historical resonances. Liveley gives a helpful summation of the purview of the various affects of cyber-being in terms of lived social reality. She states that

the use of technology [such as virtual interfaces that mediate inter-personal communication and companionship like facebook, twitter, tumblr, youtube, and tinder] plugs us into an integrated circuit thus making us cyborgs. In fact, our dependence on technology renders us all part of an integrated technological circuit. It makes us all cyborgs whether we have pacemakers or prosthetic limbs, contact lenses, glasses, whether we use drugs pharmaceutically or recreationally to do, behave, or make ourselves feel better If humans have been cyborgs in the current climate because we use technology to make ourselves do, think, and feel better, then we've always been cyborgs. Since the first human being picked up a stick or a rock and used it like a beak or a claw, since he or she first wrapped a furry animal pelt around their skin to feel warmer, or pre-chewed or pre-digested, that is cooked, on a fire. So cyborgs are us but 'twas ever so. (00:12:30)

I have quoted Liveley at length to affirm a position that holds that the concept of the cyborg, its extradiegetic existences and praxes, and its

diegetic manifestations are extremely pervasive. The increasing preponderance of AR and VR mediating technologies that necessarily alter significantly the manner in which the organic matter of the human brain interfaces with and therefore perceives reality, as well as the rise of psycho-techno-social phenomena like techno-separation anxiety confirm that the anthropocene's entire sociopolitical configurations of power and contemporary onto-existentialisms are now inextricable from mediation by technological constituents. All flows of information and, increasingly, haptic affects occur within and are facilitated by hyperobjects such as the internet. As such, the definition of 'cyborg' must necessarily be broad. The specificity of 'how' a thing 'cyborgs,' so to speak, requires more detailed case-by-case analysis. That said, however, there already exist numerous ways in which we are already cyborgs. For example, with hyperobjects like Bitcoin, Ethereum, and Blockchain, human economics are, albeit not currently mainstream, eroding the once seemingly inextricable link between capital, its exchange, and physical forms of currency. Afterlife algorithms in the research of Dr. Hossein Rahnema of Ryerson University and the MIT Media Lab or Humai seek to make death a so-called optional phenomenon using A.I. technologies. Gene and cell editing technologies such as CRISPR have given humans the ability to technologically alter living genes, both neo and postnatally. The historic ecological problems associated with the human rearing and consumption of livestock has been altered by the rise and increased technological developments of cultured or 'lab grown' meat. The risks associated with automotive transportation ensured by human error are currently being redressed by the increased presence and use of self-driving vehicles in human transportation. The increase in the sophistication and general efficacy of bionic eyes and other technologically enabled visual prostheses are reversing what were thought to be insuperable impairments from colour to full blindness. The use of exoskeletons and apparatuses like Google Glass has and will continue to automate the human worker. In view of these and numerous other examples, cyborgs do not necessarily require a superficially perceptible haptic augmentation or bio-mechanical conflations to register the fact that life, here understood broadly, within contemporary Western society, has become inextricable from

technological mediation. As such, we have all *become* cyborgs, “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism, in short, we are cyborgs” (Haraway 2191).

Central to Haraway’s argument is the notion that the cyborg represents a conception of lived being that gestures beyond the phallogocentric residues of Enlightenment empiricism, exemplified by texts such as Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486). She describes the cyborg as an effective alternative mode of being emancipated from dialectical constructs (such as organic/ synthetic, numinous/ immanent, man/ woman) that mediate and reproduce patriarchally defined ideological and sociopolitical power relations that facilitate and encourage the bodily and existential subjugation of organic and non-organic beings alike. Haraway stresses that the inherent sense of hybridity and liminality of the cyborg provides actionable alternative territories or post-human subjectivities that effectively trouble prevailing Western heteronormative ideologies and praxes of exploitation. As such, the cyborg presents itself as an effective means of resistance against holdovers of phallogocentric traditions inherent in the idea of the sovereignty of absolute dualisms including traditions of androcentric capitalism, subjugative narratives of ‘progress,’ self-reproduction through the Other, the exploitation of nature as a resource in the reproduction of culture, and the dialectical hierarchies that arrange and govern them. Haraway’s cyborg disrupts the differential system of associations that both necessitate and reinforce humanity’s understanding of cyborgs – be they gynoid, android, or ungendered – as second order life-forms that can only substantiate their being if said being reflects and reproduces human semiological systems of meaning, as well as their ideological precepts, and moral principles. In this sense, the cyborg does not appeal to a higher unity, be it God, a Primitivistic ideal, or the alleged certainties of pure mathematics, but rather toward the existential and ontological play of myriad disunities. As beings that represent the amalgamation of organic and non-organic matter to produce modes of being that are not beholden to the phenomenologies of their constituent parts in any absolute way, the cyborg speaks to a type of continual differentiation, unending becomings, multiform couplings and re-couplings, all polyvalent in both power and

potential. In this way, Haraway's cyborg is not concerned with the idea of a techno-organic reification of humanity's latent ecumenical and scientific aspirations of 'godhood,' but is, above all else transgressive, functioning iconoclastically as a blasphemous image. In view of the disruptive potential of the cyborg, Haraway describes cyborg unities as monstrous and illegitimate (2190, 2196).

Perhaps the central problem of the myth of the cyborg as a marker of futurity and the overcoming of the residues of humanistic discourse is the fact that the cyborg does not ensure that the values and ideology of humanistic discourse have been destroyed. As John Muckelbauer and Debra Hawhee note in "Posthuman Rhetorics: 'It's the Future, Pikul'" (2000), the cyborg is both dangerous and paradoxical because in positing ideas of posthuman embodiedness and subjectivity, even if this myth is re-inscribed into humanistic dialectics, the cyborg neither returns "us to the category of the human" nor does it "function as a refusal of that category either" (769). Similarly, in *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (2007), Sherryl Vint cautions against using the cyborg as an image of abstract futurity, stating that we should not see the cyborg as a "technologized super-subject [and] as an end in itself" but as a subject or subjects that "must continue to live in a material world of other subjects and ethical responsibilities" (183). As such, the cyborg should not be regarded as some absolute unity outside of or escaped from humanistic dualisms precisely because, to ricochet Slavoj Žižek in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), ideology functions in the disaffected dream of its escape; or, as Muckelbauer and Hawhee caution, "humanism is not an ideological chimera that we have somehow intellectually [or mechanically] surpassed; to tell such a story would be a key stratagem of humanism" (779). This circumspection is also evident in *Posthuman Bodies* (1997) whereby Halberstam and Livingston suggest that "the posthuman does not necessitate the obsolescence of the human; it does not represent an evolution or devolution of the human. Rather it participates in re-distributions of difference and identity" (10). I believe that despite the above cautions and skepticism, within the remit of Haraway's analysis thereof, the cyborg should not be taken as a nihilistic symbol, but as, above all else, a (re)creative one. Haraway makes it clear that the

alternative modes of being and subjectivity intimated by the cyborg are not cynical or faithless, that is, “some version of abstract existence, like the accounts of technological determinism destroying ‘man’ by the ‘machine’ or “meaningful political action by the text” (Haraway 2194). For Haraway, the central question concerning cyborgs is, therefore, who or what cyborgs will be(come).

The Gynoid Double-Bind of Innocence and Death in Oshii's *GITS*

Oshii's *GITS* is the feature-length sequel to the seminal *Ghost in the Shell* (1995). In *GITS*, the term ‘cyborg’ refers to a human who has either undergone the procedures of full-body cyberization, or possesses a partially or entirely prosthetic body with detachable and interchangeable parts that can be exchanged or replaced if damaged. *GITS*'s narrative centres on Batou, a cyborg operative of Section 9 (Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs), and his partner Togusa. After several politicians and prominent business leaders are murdered by sex gynoids, Section 9 is tasked to investigate. Batou and Togusa discover that the gynoids' manufacturer (Locus Solus) is aligned with a Japanese mafia group that has been hired to abduct young girls whose ‘ghosts’ (referring to the ‘spirit’ and/or ‘consciousness’ of an individual) are copied and transferred into the ‘shells’ (‘shell’ refers to its ‘physical body’) of pet dolls in order to make the gynoid dolls more ‘desirable’ for male customers. These dolls are more desirable because they possess ‘ghosts’ created through an illegal procedure called ‘ghost-dubbing.’ This process produces ‘information-degraded, high-volume copies’ but also results in the death of the originals (the human girls themselves). During the preliminary stages of their investigation, Togusa and Batou also discover that the sex gynoids have a subroutine written into the algorithms that govern their bodies that forces them to kill both themselves and their male customers after sexual intercourse.

Ostensibly, the world of *GITS* is laden with inter-textual references and influenced by a decidedly post-structuralist approach to considerations of subjectivity, cyborgs, and embodiedness. For example,

the film's verbose dialogue is pregnant with thematic concepts and ideas culled from a range of sources ranging from Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol, Ryokuu Saitou, Max Weber, to Auguste Villiers de L'Isle-Adam. There are also numerous aesthetic references to other works, the work of German artist Hans Bellmer, particularly his 1934 text *The Doll* (Die Puppe). Bellmer's ten black-and-white photographs of doll arrangements was highly influential to Oshii in crafting both *GITSY*'s narrative and aesthetic. The eroticism of Bellmer's drawings, sexually explicit photographs, prints, paintings, and etchings of pubescent girls is both a theme and aesthetic taken up directly as one of the central narrative leitmotifs in Oshii's film.

To begin with, there are significant sociopolitical and philosophical implications regarding ghost-dubbing. If an individual's consciousness can be decoupled from its constitutive matter, transferred to another body/bodies simultaneously or sequentially, then said individual's consciousness is no longer limited to time and space in the same way that an individual with a single consciousness embodied in a single body is. In effect, ghost-dubbing a subject transforms individual into *individuals*, self into *selves*, in a potentially infinite (re)arrangement of bodily spaces and times. However, albeit through a proxy body, ultimately, the young girls in *GITSY* from whom gynoid pet dolls are made are still essentially child prostitutes who experience egregious exploitation within rigid patriarchal gender roles. As such, the cyberization of the self in the form of transferring the self into a mechanical body does not represent a utopian transcendence, but a dystopian entrapment here conceptualized by the horror of being a self-aware child in the body of sex gynoid. In this way, the ostensibly revolutionary potential of ghost-dubbing takes on a sinister tone and can be read as not only cyber-paedophilia, but also as a metaphor for the psycho-sexual rape of minors.

The connection between cyborgs and children here is as important as it is problematic because Oshii's logic regarding the concept of 'innocence' is twofold. On the one hand, the film suggests that young children make ideal assassins because they have not fully internalized the moral and ethical prohibitions that forbid murder, or the emotional and psychological maturity to comprehend and process the adult phenomena

they encounter through their gynoid bodies. On the other hand, however, a gynoid with a child's ghost is also an ideal pet doll because its innocence allows it to be controlled and subsequently idealized as its owner/ user/ lover/ parent sees fit. Ultimately, Locus Solis and its criminal associates are unavoidably involved in serious crimes that include not only mass genocide, but also human trafficking and paedophilia.

As Frédéric Clément notes in "Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* – Thinking Before the Act" (2011), "the 'little girl' is represented ambiguously in Japanese visual culture: 'innocence' and 'sexuality' exist side by side in the same 'undeveloped' body, a problematic combination that [is central to] *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*" (32). Oshii's consistent and troubling engagement with the notion of innocence manifests in the surreal aesthetics of the gynoids' physical appearance, which interpolate Bellmer's work. In "Machinic Desires: Hans Bellmer's 'Dolls and the Technological Uncanny in *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*" (2008), Steven T. Brown provides a comprehensive analysis of the narratological and aesthetic connections between Oshii's and Bellmer's texts. Brown correlates the uncanny gynoid subjects with certain recursive aesthetic elements in Bellmer's work. This intertextuality can be noted in the cruciform silhouette of a doll shown in the film's opening credits, a direct reference to Bellmer by way of the book *The Doll* shown from Batô's point of view in a scene towards the end of the film, and perhaps the film's most visually arresting scene-image involving a gynoid pet doll tearing its torso open to reveal its mechanical viscera, directly evoking Bellmer's piece *Rose Ouverte la Nuit* (1935) (Brown 239-40). Brown also points out that Bellmer's figures are ambivalent to the intimate display of their insides (239-40). While Bellmer's work was partly created as a riposte to the fascism of his time, Brown suggests that the way the dolls reveal their interior mechanisms in his work can be read as a protest against the cult of beauty and youth lionized by the Nazi regime in particular. This notion of resistance through self-destruction can be noted in the gynoid suicides that occur throughout Oshii's film, which Brown sees as "an act of resistance against the ideal of beauty to which the kidnapped adolescent girls are being held captive" (Brown 241).

The film opens with Batou investigating a disturbance in an alleyway where a murderous doll has been cornered. Upon confronting the doll, Batou witnesses it tear itself open, evidently trying to commit suicide. The striking imagery of the doll rending its synthetic flesh powerfully evokes Haraway's description of the cyborg as monstrous. The act of tearing itself open, violently exposing its mecha-viscera, internal organ-circuits and piping, its ocular spheres shown after its entire face opens up to reveal the complex inner workings of a gynoid 'skull,' spectacularly dispels its outward illusion of womanhood by *emphasizing* its mixed core. Such an exhibition of brutal intimacy is also evident in a scene in which Batou and Togusa liaise with Section 9's cynical resident cyborg forensic pathologist, unsurprisingly, named Haraway. She tells Batou and Togusa that the gynoids are equipped with 'extra' organs unnecessary for normal service androids; that is, they feature functional genitalia. However, similar to *Ghost in the Shell*, the anatomical gender of these gynoids remains unseen, despite the numerous shots in which their pubic areas are visible, particularly during the gynoid uprising depicted in the film's climax and in its opening credits. In this way, the gynoids appear to also occupy an interstitial space underpinned by an ironic onto-existential double-bind in terms of anatomy and gender. On the one hand, they are artificial beings, unable to reproduce through sexual activity, animated by the consciousness of young girls too sexually immature to procreate. On the other hand, the gynoids also exist at the threshold of reproduction. Aside from the fact that they are the mechanical reproductions of human consciousnesses and semblances of human anatomies, they also reproduce ostensibly human emotions, desires, and symbols (language), for example.

More extremely however, Yoshie Endo notes in "Ambivalent Portrayals of Female Cyborgs in Oshii Mamoru's *Ghost in the Shell* and *Innocence*" (2012) that the gynoids are caught in a double-bind in which

the copied doll's murderous inclinations and sexual desires exemplify the association of femininity with nature and the primal forces of the unconscious, while her technological origin makes her surface without substance, a creature of style and artifice whose identity is created through the various costumes and masks that she assumes. (514)

In this way, the gynoids of *GITS* are caught in a double-bind that functions on at least two levels. Despite the fact that they have anatomical features that allow for sexual intercourse, they lack the anatomical features that could allow them to wilfully reproduce without the intercession of a scientific process that would exploit both the very same bodies and consciousnesses it would reproduce. In the last instance, it would then appear that the gynoids of *GITS*, despite the radical onto-existential rupturing their cyborg being intimates, can only experience a persistent double-bind in which the only way to overcome an existence of psycho-sexual abuse is self-destruction as their only act of resistance.

In *GITS*, this onto-existential paradox appears to reinforce gender power relations because it seems to be applicable *only* to the gynoids and not their creator who seems to either be unbelievably ignorant of or wilfully overlook the psycho-physical trauma of a child's consciousness trapped in the programmable body of a pet doll. The gynoids' designer, Kim, maintains that the Type 2052 Hadaly model gynoid companions, named after the gynoid character in Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's symbolist science fiction novel *L'Ève Future* (1886), represents an almost 'holy' contravention of all pre-existing limitations acting on being *in toto*. While it is revealed that Kim has turned himself into pure A.I., using a temporary desiccated body as a conduit through which to speak with Batou and Togusa, as with everything else about the film, Kim's positions on the onto-existentialism of cyborg embodiedness are paradoxical. For example, he seemingly echoes Haraway when he states that he "can't understand people trying to put a soul into a doll and imitate a human. If there was such a thing as a truly beautiful doll, it would be flesh and blood without a soul. A corpse at the edges of collapsing, yet standing precariously at the precipice" (Oshii 2004). However, in the same scene, he paradoxically appeals to conceptions of theistic unity by equating dolls and gods when he bombastically decrees that

humans are inferior to dolls in the beauty of their appearance and movement. No, even in their existence. The imperfect nature of human perception causes the incompleteness of reality. . . . How complete this species is. . . . Either they don't have consciousness, or they acquire the infinite consciousness. In other words, it can be realized only in dolls and gods. (Oshii 2004)

For Kim, the distinction between a self-aware gynoid and a god is illusory because they both have access to a radical and infinite consciousness. As such, Kim's becoming pure A.I. can be read as an attempt to access infinite consciousness, to Transcend, to become a doll and therefore, a god. This movement is one that seeks to dissimulate his humanity altogether, to deconstruct into an algorithm that can be uploaded and stored in matrices and memory banks as a functioning simulacrum of himself, thereby rendering himself invulnerable, omnipotent, and immortal. While "humans die because they can't help dying," for Kim, ghost-dubbing and other cyborg interventions represent a means to exorcise the inconsistencies of being, thereby making a doll, like a god, outside or beyond the caprices of immanent and embodied onto-existential phenomena (Oshii 2004). As such, Kim views "humans [as] merely the material from which the dream called 'life' is weaved; "'Dreams' . . . 'cognition' . . . and even 'ghosts' . . . [as] if they were cracks or distortions in the uniform matrix of reality" (Oshii 2004). Despite the flourish of Kim's purple prose, the fact remains that Kim remains in control of his *own* ghost-dubbing. Unlike his gynoid creations who are recreated into objectified property to be used, owned, and exploited by the highest bidder, Kim's self-recreation is able to absolutely avoid these horrors of gynoid embodiment by eschewing the relation between being and body altogether, as well as any subsequent capitalist exchange or ownership of either his consciousness or any host body he may use. In this way Kim exploits the science of ghost-dubbing for his own ends on two levels; first for himself in becoming an immortal, omnipotent, and disembodied A.I., and secondly, by exploiting the innocence of young girls, using the same procedure for his own pecuniary gain.

Togusa and Batou's investigation later reveals that the murderous Hadaly model gynoids, by somehow having "obtained permission to hurt people [including themselves]" and "therefore, they must end their lives as a result of breaking the third law," namely Asimov's Third Law of Robotics (the third of three) that impels sentient machines to protect their own existence as long as they do not harm humans, represent both algorithmic and conceptual corruptions of the cyborg ideal (Oshii 2004).

As such, when the Hadaly model asks Batou to help her in the alley, it is, on the surface of it, a request for assisted suicide, as if an act of extreme penance. It tries to kill him first, externalizing the thanatonic imperative it should not but does have access to. However, the subsequent supplication to be killed is also a desire for Batou to help it escape the oppressive ironies of the gynoid double-bind, and of cyborg being itself. While humans want cyborgs to be *varietal* (in both the botanical and vinative sense of the word) but in all their myriad forms as life-like, typically *human*-like, as possible, they also want cyborgs to be disciplined and controllable. An autonomous cyborg of the type imagined by Haraway is an affront to the power relations between man and machine, creator and thing created. While Oshii's gynoids certainly enact a sense of autonomy through the act of murder, this autonomy comes at the price of their own self-destruction. In the same way automaton autonomy is characterized as a 'cogito virus' in Shuki Murase and Dai Satos' *Ergo Proxy* (2006), in *GITS*, cyborg autonomy is thematized as a type of plague. Dr. Haraway remarks that the number of cyborg related incidents has taken a noticeable incline in recent years, particularly in petbot models due to the virulence of a cyborg 'cogito.' Therefore, while Haraway sees a cyborg 'awakening' as a revolution in existential and sociopolitical terms, *GITS* regards the idea of a cyborg awakening as *a plague of self* in objects typically seen as selfless and serviceable tools. It is a plague of uncontrollable machines thinking uncontrollable thoughts, feeling uncontrollable feelings like desperation and rage, in uncontrollable, dextrous, ductile, and durable bodies. The existential crisis the gynoids in *GITS* face redounds to a single question: to serve or to die?

In "Robot Prostitutes as Alternatives to Human Sex Workers" (2007), David Levy addresses some of the issues of cyber-sexual ethics raised in *GITS*. It is clear that the petbots in *GITS* are not merely artifacts without consciousness, without rights comparable to those of human beings. They express extreme psycho-emotional phenomena associated with consciousness including rage and desire (the ironic annihilative desire for desirelessness, in this instance). Levy suggests that self-aware machines, like those presented in *GITS*, should necessarily affect the current debates concerning robo-sexual ethics. In "Toward a

Method for Determining the Legal Status of a Conscious Machine” (2005), David Calverley states that the so-called natural law necessarily rules in favour of self-aware gynoids being afforded intrinsic rights and that, concomitant with those intrinsic rights, they must be ascribed *legal* rights (2005). Similarly, in “The Ethical Status of Artificial Agents – With and Without Consciousness” (2006), Steve Torrence states that the idea of a cyborg demands a development of Artificial Ethics; a creation of

systems which perform in ways which confer or imply the possession of ethical status when humans perform in those ways. For example, having a right to life, or a right not to be treated merely as an instrument of someone else’s needs or desires, are properties which are part of the ethical status of a human being, but a person doesn’t acquire such rights just because of what they *do*. This may extend to ethics when applied to artificial agents. (2006)

In the case of the gynoids of *GITSI*, we encounter a fundamental violation of Artificial Ethics. This is because aside from the various psycho-sexual crimes and violations perpetrated against the ‘source code’ inherent in the ghost-dubbing of minors, in the last instance, the memory of a malfunctioning cyborg is said to be “reformatted as normal procedure by the manufacturer to protect the technical information of the software” in *GITSI* (Oshii 2004). Here again, the burden of proof of being is placed on the gynoid, that is, to function like or better than a non-cyborg woman. Failure to do so to a narrow and subjective set of parameters results in a *double death*, whereby the gynoid has no choice but to destroy itself, and furthermore, whatever trace of its autonomy is destroyed along with it in the process of reformatting.

The act of wiping a gynoid’s brain reinforces the distinction between product and consumer, man and machine, tool and user, owner and owned. I argue that latent in the procedure of erasing a gynoid’s memory is an algorithmic attempt to defer or destroy outright the excrescence of unresolved resentment in the cyborg itself. To reformat a cyborg’s memory is also an attempt to absolve the user’s conscience of the fact that he used a thing, ‘fairly’ or ‘poorly,’ that he could not distinguish from a human being in his passion and the simulation of passion given him in turn by the gynoid. In other words, reformatting a

cyborg's memory after using it is like a slave owner giving draughts of forgetfulness to slaves about to be freed – the goal in each scenario is the same: to force the slave, human and non-human alike, to forget their lack of power and their conditions as robots, here understood in the sense of the Slavonic word *robota* meaning 'servitude,' 'forced labour,' or 'drudgery,' cognate with German, Polish, Czech, and Russian terms relating to serfdom and slavery.

Despite all his pontification about the metaphysical and ontological supremacy of dolls over humans, Kim does not even allude to the cyborg's importance with regard to gender relations. It is therefore irresolvably hypocritical for him to sermonize about the philosophical paramouncy of non-organic being while his company is in the business of reaffirming suppressive, exploitative, and unethical patriarchal power relations by ghost-dubbing young girls into pet doll gynoids to be bought and used. From both the perspective of a feminist and ontological critique, the cyborg-as-pet doll in *GITSY* substitutes the radical transgressive aptitude of the cyborg for a sanctimonious rationale for exploitation of both organic and inorganic beings. While Oshii is typically not considered a feminist director, his consistent interest in cyborg female bodies and their desires within a technologized future pose questions of the subversive potential of potential female posthuman subjectivities. Ostensibly, Oshii's female cyborgs appear to be critiques of patriarchal technoscience and the ways in which it contributes to the ongoing feminist debate of how women interact with technology and how they resist potential appropriation. However, *GITSY* seems to offer only ambivalent portrayals of the gendered effects of technology. On the one hand, by presenting alternative imaginings of embodiedness that disassociate gender identity from biology, technology in Oshii's film seemingly destabilizes the female body as based on existing patriarchal conventions, thereby subverting prevailing male-defined subjectivity. On the other hand, Oshii's vision of cyborg embodiedness relies *primarily* on gender differences, particularly with regard to relation to heterosexual male desire, which remains the primary sexual and onto-existential archetype functioning throughout the film (Endo 508).

Ultimately, Oshii's futuristic visualization of a cyborg world still sees a patriarchy project its ambivalent concerns and desires onto the space of an idealized female body. Furthermore, "Oshii's strategies of representation renounce a clear demarcation of agency, and instead, mark the ambivalence between pleasure and fear that characterizes techno-fetishized techno-scientism" (Endo 509). As such, Oshii's representation of female embodiedness, and particularly its technological denaturalization, manifests as conservative, one that seems to preclude the possibility of the development of a feminist posthuman subjectivity to develop. As Endo notes,

it does not endorse the cyborg feminists' view that the removal of the natural body causes the destabilization of a female identity, and that it leads to potential liberation from naturalized identities and power relations. In other words, it fails to produce a significant change in the fixed notion of women: [the gynoids] still position themselves as fetishized sexual objects within a male-dominated sphere. Technology in the film does not remove the restrictive definition of the natural female body. Instead, it allows male subjectivity to reinstall itself into the posthuman domain through techno-fetishization of the female body. The cyborg dolls in the film do not endorse the possibility of the subjectivity and genderless identities of the feminist cyborg; they are only the embodiment of the other that claims human subjectivity. (509)

In the last instance, Oshii's dolls occupy an onto-existential position suspended between a patriarchal history of embodiment and the utopian/fantasy of the emancipatory promise of technology. Imbuing a mechanical shell with a consciousness does not blind the male Gaze, but endorses it by making the objectified woman in the form of a ghost-dubbed gynoid more sexually desirable, paradoxically physically stronger but psycho-emotionally more diminutive and submissive. It is this same radical interplay between human consciousness and mechanical embodiedness that also turns the products of such potentially emancipatory chimeric coupling into programmable sex-slaves. Therefore, while the gynoids transgress the definitions of human, non-human, alive, dead, organic, and inorganic, this onto-existential transgression is precisely what perpetuates their exploitation in a male-oriented capitalist framework that monetizes sexual difference and male heterosexual desire. In contrast, this is not true

of the *androids* of the text. While Togusa and Batou certainly qualify as cyborgs, they are not characterized as sex-bots, pets, or property like their gynoid counterparts who not only are fetishized, but are consciously mass-produced as sexual objects in this way (Endo 516-7). As such, *GITS* raises more questions than it does provide a lucid critique and response to them. In view of Oshii's problematic conceptualization of cyborg embodiedness, one is left questioning whether it is possible to extract any feminist potential from Oshii's depiction of posthuman subjectivity. Such a consideration is made exigent by the fact that

the only subjectivity available to the mechanical dolls is a victim subjectivity that leads to their collective and individual deaths [as such,] Oshii's representations re-inscribe the dichotomy of the rational masculine and the irrational/ nature [whereby] the depiction of feminine [sic] in *Innocence* does not allow for any independent conception of female identity, agency, or desire [that does] not engage with a possible . . . alternative feminine subjectivity. (Endo 518)

While the film constantly questions the dialectical value of man contra machine, it ultimately concludes with a retention of a conservative patriarchal anthropocentrism. The gynoids of *GITS* are ultimately presented in ways that reinforce that which they ostensibly undermine.

In the *Manifesto*, Haraway provides an attractive and inspiring myth of radical transgression, play, overturning, liminality, and emancipation. While Haraway certainly provides salient examples of contemporary science-fiction that affirm her reading of the cyborg, the transgressive work of Samuel R. Delaney for example, popular contemporary science fiction, such as Oshii's *GITS*, still often sequesters the most radical aspects of cyborg liminality to exploitative ideological and gender categories. As such, the example of *GITS* suggests that many of the cyborgs of late twentieth century popular imagination may not be as emancipatory in their aesthetic or diegetic existence(s) as Haraway's myth of the cyborg would have them be. Even in the simple resemblance to the apes that fashioned it illustrates that humanity has, even with radically 'advanced' cyborgs, failed to create *beyond* itself. Human beings remain unable to understand phenomena such as the desire for radical emancipation, be it in the form of autonomy or death, as anything but

infection or illness when expressed with the same fervor by cyborg beings. While humanity fails to understand itself in its failure to understand the autonomy of its creations, cyber-being itself will always be delimited by humanity's failure/ inability to see, understand, or create beyond itself.

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