Rethinking the Embodiment of Gender in Mamoru Oshii's Film *Ghost in the Shell*

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Abstract: This paper critically examines the posthuman narrative of Mamoru Oshii's film *Ghost in the Shell* as it depicts a posthuman embodiment that addresses a complex and shifting relationship between body and technology. Considering how cyborg feminists and posthumanists find the technological particularly productive in redeploying embodiment within a gendered context, this paper particularly analyses the deployment of posthuman bodies in the film and the extent to which technology in the (re)formulation of subjectivity has been bound up with gender. The portrayals of cyborg bodies throughout the film, the paper argues, provide a valuable site of exploring (1) how a gendered subject specifically emerges within the general corpus of cyborg texts, and (2) how the gender performativity that the subject executes offers a queer imaginary—one that potentially undermines and denaturalizes heteronormativity. This implies that the ways in which the film uses the cyborg figure to articulate the discursive constitution of the posthuman body offers significant implications for the theorization of the posthuman and human that is in dialogue with the questions of gender.

Keywords: Posthuman; cyborg; artificial intelligence; gender; queer

1. INTRODUCTION: FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY, AI AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF GENDER

The idea of AI as a step in human evolution is one of the central themes explored in science fiction such as the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise. Science fiction as a point of contact to seeing possible futures has not only been a valuable pedagogic resource to a meaningful philosophical discussion of emerging developments in scientific technologies such as AI but also feminist questioning of the construction of the artificial modes of existence. Science fiction conjures up AI images of androids and robots exercising thought and performing intellectual tasks similar to rational human beings that raises a similar philosophical question of, "Can there be such?" or "Are they really thinking?" which are understood within human terms of intelligence and thinking. Feminist critique of science fiction as a predominantly male genre raises, among others, questions of "How does gender affect the development or construction of AI?" or "How does it mimic or critique normative notions of femininities and masculinities in its design?"

The animated film *Ghost in the Shell* is a work of science fiction that touches upon a key discourse on the body as a site of political struggle. It impels us to reformulate our social and cultural understanding of meanings of gendered body in the technological age.[1] Set in the near future year 2029, where an advanced cybernetic technology allows humans to augment or improve any of their body parts in place of a cybernetic or mechanical one, the film presents us with questions about the nature of humans, machines and the intersections and/or blurring of the boundary between the two. Major Motoko Kusanagi, the protagonist, is a cyborg employed as the commanding officer of her squad in Public Security 9, an intelligence department that protects the public from cyber related crimes such as hacking and cyber-terrorism. She and her cyborg partner operative Batou investigate cybercriminals in a future where terrorism means planting false memories into citizens' digitally enhanced brains. Like many other technologically enhanced humans in this vision of 2029 Japan, Motoko has a full cybernetic body and augmented human brain with artificially generated memories. Throughout the film she seeks

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[1] Kaye Mitchell, "Bodies that matter," *Science Fiction Studies* 33 (2006): 112.

to find the origin and location of her consciousness. And by the end of the movie, she merges with the Puppet Master or Project 2501, an AI project developed by Section 6 that developed sentience and gone rogue, to form a new entity and assuming a new, younger body.

With the utopian tale of evolution that centers on the potential of information networks in creating new consciousness that is neither human nor entirely artificial, the *Ghost in the Shell* suggests the possibility of a new reality that welcomes a dynamic state of being. This paper would like to consider what the film can contribute to the discussion of the liberating force of science fiction films, specifically in complicating the feminist critique of the dominant understandings of sex and gender in its representation of cyborgs. I will be working on Adam's feminist epistemology as a framework in highlighting the problem of the traditional critiques of AI that mainly focus on the philosophical test of intelligence—the philosophical debate that revolved around the question of whether computers can or cannot "think." While recent advances in AI have demonstrated the importance of embodiment, Adam[2] argues that rationalist philosophy has still sidelined the body in assigning primacy to the mind in the making of knowledge and rationality. Engaging with Adam's critique of traditional knowledge production inherent in AI conceptions is particularly useful for my purposes of exploring how the cyborg figures in *The Ghost in the Shell* can be articulated in terms of the question of "how far is the body or embodiment necessary for having knowledge and how does this relate to gender"?[3]

At the same time, this paper inquires into how concepts of AI are gendered and how science fiction films, such as *Ghost in the Shell,* persist in gendering AI within the dominant discourses of power and control characterized by patriarchal structures. How science fiction casts AI-enabled robots replicating certain gendered traits to make them appear more human not only raises questions of "How intelligence is gendered?" but also "How the gendering of intelligence informs the notion of 'human' and replicate the hierarchical and heteronormative binary of femininity and masculinity?" Despite the fact that artificially intelligent machines are

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[2] Alison Adam, *Artificial knowing: Gender and the thinking machine* (London: Routledge, 1998), 129.
[3] Ibid.

generally exempt from the categories of sex and gender, the tendency to construct individualized AI's notion of self and identity within the category of gender correlates with Judith Butler's insight that gender is produced by means of performative acts.[4]

This paper takes on Butler's theorization of gender as "a corporeal style, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning."[5] In this theorization, although gender is not tied to one's biological sex, perceived sexual differences are heavily affected through gendered actions, which is based on social conventions. Also following Butler's theory of performative construction of identity, the gendered embodiment of AI emerges, in the same way as the human subject is transformed into a gendered subject, as a result of socially enacting the norms that constitute the disciplinary regime of gender and heterosexuality. Butler's argument of the subject as always inscribed into the gender power relations might be an important clue that the theory of performative construction of identity can provide in investigating the ontological (non)difference between human and AI. Which, in turn, opens the question of how technology's construction of a perfect idea of female and male challenges the idea of biological sex, and potentially queers the boundaries of normalization, i.e. discourses that serve to fix the subjectivity of AI and stability of gender.

It is in these contexts of Adam' feminist epistemological critique of AI conceptions and Butler's critique of the idea of stable identity categories that this paper explores the extent to which the film could potentially constitute a place of imagining the future possibilities of new gender identities and be utilised to question conservative conceptions of gender. Firstly, it inquires, through Adam's[6] critique of "the gendered models of knowledge represented and inscribed in AI," into the kind of masculine vision that has dominated the posthuman embodiment depicted in the

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[4] Marion Gymnich, Kathryn Ruhl, and Klaus Scheunemann, eds. *Gendered (Re)Visions: Constructions of Gender in Audiovisual Media* (Gottingen: V&R Unipress GmbH, 2010), 183.

[5] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 177-179.

[6] Alison Adam, *Artificial knowing*, 4.

film. Secondly, it highlights the constitutive aspect of gendered embodiment within a posthuman paradigm in terms of how cyborg figures in the film are instituted through the stylization of the body in accordance to the heterosexual social matrix. In the end, I argue that AI gender performativity offers a subversive vision of the post-gender through opening up a radical interrogation of mind/body that has perpetualised an oppressive male/female dualism.

2. MAKING OF CYBORG: GENDERED ASPECT OF CYBORG TECHNOLOGY

Haraway's concept of the cyborg continues to serve as a metaphor for narrative on how cyborg technology affects the understanding of what it is to be human but also on how AI in cyborg technology is gendered and/or racialized. Moreover, science fiction films, as they continue to open up discussions on the feminist theorizations on how the cyborg metaphor as an alternative way of understanding identity in a new technological landscape, could be potentially emancipatory in disrupting the constructs of gender. It is in this sense, while it remains admittedly limited, that *Ghost in the Shell* illustrates a mutability of the concept of bodies and gender within a society where technology is omnipresent. From the transference of Motoko into a cybernetic prosthesis to her merging with the Puppet Master, the film both challenges the rigidity of the humanist body—confined by fixity, definition and boundaries, and articulates a posthuman concept of subjectivity that is multiple and fluid. It is in these moments, as Motoko finds herself merging with cyber-intelligence and inhabiting a body, that the film also illustrates the underlying social structures and assumptions of gender that the cyborg figure is also subjected to.

It is along these lines that I argue that while the cyborg's posthuman nature and its embodiment as it is imagined in the film can be seen to re-embody a homogenization of gender and sexuality in its gendered construction of AI, it nonetheless, in articulating the cyborg as embodied boundary-crossing concept, challenges the hierarchies of human and posthuman embodiment in feminist terms in explicitly breaching the dominant vectors of bodily differentiation that are used to, among others, reproduce old hierarchies of biological and mechanical. That is to say, although the film tacitly reinscribes the hetero-norm in the way the

cybernetic construction of body extends exteriorities of the masculine and/or the feminine, the way the cyborg ontology symbolizes a trajectory towards gendering embodiment as metal and machine potentially undermines biological and naturalized norms of identity.

2.1. GENDERED CONSTRUCTION OF AI

This brings us to Adam's concern with how representations of gender are being embedded in technology and expressed through it. Adam[7] as a consequence, turns to feminist epistemology to challenge the traditional epistemology in its production of a unified theory of knowledge that ignores the cultural context and status of knowers. Adam problematizes the conservative critiques of AI that mainly focus on the philosophical test of intelligence—the philosophical debate that revolved around the question of whether computers can or cannot "think." The main problem with this philosophical criticism, she argues, is that it fails to consider how AI systems are used to represent knowledge. That the philosophical critiques merely inquire into the possibility of true AI but disregard the questions of how AI is used and what knowledge it uses, she made a strong claim that feminist epistemology is the theoretical approach that is most adequate for a critique of AI.

As such, Adam's feminist critique of AI centers on the question of situatedness of the knowing subject within the social, racial, and gendered context and examines the ways in which gender is inscribed in AI systems. She problematizes the 'monolithic' view of AI or "the assumption that AI, is above all, about the building of an artificial mind or person" neglects what she claims should be a focus on embodiment concerned with the role of the body in knowledge production.[8] Haraway's approach on the situatedness of knowledge, which has been central to Adam's feminist epistemological approach, recognizes that neither social location nor a historic construction of unmarked social location could provide a single consistent vision, her embodied objectivity which emphasizes the material practices of knowledge production, and not just location of subject, could all the same accommodate the dominant and subordinated situated

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[7] Alison Adam, "Gender/body/machine," *Ration: The Journal of Analytic Philosophy* 15, no. 4 (2002): 327.
[8] Alison Adam, *Artificial knowing,* 4.

knowledge but only through a critical examination. It is, thus, a more democratic approach that fundamentally integrates the partiality of knowledge without privileging neither the subjugated nor the dominant position; and with the critical positioning—which we can see and question not just our position but all that it entails—it undoubtedly represents a feminist objectivity that continually values partiality and objectivity in its epistemic approach of encouraging more careful and rigorous use of existing scientific methods.

Adam's feminist epistemological critique of AI is of legitimate concern in examining how the film, despite its postgender potential of moving away from a heteronormative imagination of posthuman subjectivities, remains naively blind to the hyperbolized gender labels in its depiction of cybernetic beings. Although the film symbolizes a denaturalization of the essential feminine, it reaffirms a patriarchal desire for technological mastery over women.[9] Motoko's births—from the opening scene of the film that shows the cybernetic brain and cybernetic body being assembled into a full-body cyborg to the final scene of merging of AI and human consciousness into creating a new life form—narrativize these tensions in the male project of creating a supposedly neutral cyborg identity.

2.2. GENDERED CYBORGS AND HUMANS

Arguably a signifier of a very *heteronormative* imagination of the main characters in the film is the physical body. As such, I am especially interested on how the cyborg figure as possessing a definitive gendered artificial body evoke questions of gender identity in relation to embodiment. Motoko, Batou, and the Puppet Master are assumed to perform a specific gender role. The implicit influence of cultural conditioning in the film includes the casting of male and female into oppositional categories of masculinity and femininity. While Motoko and Batou are noticeably female and male respectively, the Puppet Master is left ambiguous. The film depicts the Puppet Master with typically female

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[9] Yukihide Endo, "Ambivalent Portrayals of Female Cyborgs in Oshii Mamoru's Ghost in the Shell and Innocence," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 2, no. 5 (2012): 514.

to male registers in the way he is portrayed in a female body with a male voice. In the film's reveal of the Puppet Master, the other characters could nonetheless be assumed to perceive him as male as they consistently refer to him with the pronoun "he." Yet again, as a computer program incapable of possessing any human traits, he can also be assumed as neither male nor female. Both *males* and *females* come across as certain archetypes in anime, which is saliently evident in *Ghost in the Shell*. The importance of the anime tradition with the film shows that even with a fictional world where gender stereotypes should be non-existent, the vision of the creator of the fictional universe, and the vision of the creators of AI programs exhibit racial and gender biases.

The film embodies a tacit masculine norm in its trajectory towards new cyborg configurations as illustrated in the opening scenes of Motoko's cyborgisation process and the later scenes of Puppet Master's ghost merging with Motoko's. In both processes, Motoko assumes a female-bodied existence, which extends a heteronormative gendering of cyborg as machine. Motoko's cyborgisation process which focuses on the notion of producing machinic and cyborgian entity, and the merging on a more evolving notion of artificiality reassert the essentialist logic of the social implications for a female-assigned/female-identified person. The film, thus, depicts posthuman narratives of becoming that raises critical potential of the changing human physical ontology and entertains nonbiological forms of life; and at the same time opens up a feminist discourse on the manner in which heteronormative gendered bodies as ideal embodiments of AI are reasserted in the film's design of cyborgs.

The notion of the gendered embodiment of AI in the film, as it reflects and reasserts a masculine vision of cyborg ontology, raises relevant questions regarding the role of traditional epistemology in the representation and construction of gendered subjects in science fiction films. As the film projects a neutral model of rationality in developing codes and systems for AI yet retains exteriorities of the masculine and/or the feminine in its gendered inscriptions of cyborg embodiment nonetheless illustrates masculine strategies of reinscribing idealized notions of gendered knowledge. Significantly, the film imagines AI systems in terms of a traditional epistemological argument of the existence of a perspectiveless universal knower or the illusion that knowledge contained in AI comes from nowhere.

Following the opening text of the film[10]: "In the near future (2029): corporate networks reach out to the stars, electrons and light flow throughout the universe. The advance of computerisation, however, has not yet wiped out nations and ethnic groups" introduces in calm neutrality a posthuman world where singularity or the continuous evolution of AI as embodied by the Puppet Master is occuring. The film opens up the possibility of escape from constricting forms of identity as it introduces through the character of Motoko the idea of cyborg fluidity, and the merging of identities of Motoko and the Puppet Master the dissolution of gender and individuality that produces a flexible posthuman identity.

3. CYBORG AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF GENDER

The construction of gendered and racialized modes of embodiment in the film reveals the underlying heteronormative structures within the technology of bioenhancements. The making of a cyborg body and an augmented mind, as in the case of Motoko, suggests not only an enquiry into the posthuman potential of the fusion of humans and machines but also the post-gender potential of that fusion. This brings us to re-examine the transgression of bodily boundaries as depicted through Motoko's mechanical and digital birth. These underscore not only completely new forms of reproduction but also new forms of being that are inextricably linked to cyborg evolution. The opening credit shows Motoko's body in the initial phase of the creation as a mechanical and cybernetic humanoid machine. This highly evolved but replaceable mechanical body composed of metallic plates and wires is female in form but essentially sexless as it lacks functional reproductive organs. The later phases of the creation highlight the manufacturing of Motoko's shell and the cyberbrain wherein the latter is emphasized to be the most important part of the machine. The brain is encapsulated inside the metallic casing as if it was the "heart" or "essence" of the machine. The next phase shows Motoko's metallic shell being covered with synthetic skin and formed to be a "perfect" female body. Ultimately rising from the tank of liquid, as flakes of shell are being removed, she rises as a synthetic, cybernetic human.

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[10] *Ghost in the Shell*, DVD, directed by Mamoru Oshii, (Japan: Manga entertainment, 1995).

In contrast with the first birth, the birth of a new entity that resulted from the merging of Motoko and the Puppet Master demonstrates a new marker of selfhood that is no longer dependent on exteriority. The ontological condition of the newly born identity from which the hybrid of AI and human consciousness has evolved is a literal merging of two silhouettes of a body overlapping one another and becoming one. The last thing Motoko sees is a figure with wings landing towards her—signifying death and rebirth. The following lines of Motoko, which tell us about her past experiences, knowledge, and limitations at the same time tells of a new perspective of individuality and networking of minds. More than exploring the possibility of leaving the physical body and elevating consciousness to a higher plane, this merging also explores the cyborg condition. After the merging the, artificial life who looks like Motoko states to Batou[11]:

> When I was a child, I spake as a child. I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things. Here before you is neither the program called the Puppet Master… nor the woman that was called the Major.

With the transformation and birth of a new identity as a result of this merger, it further distances the characters from traditional notion of identity—it is an entirely new artificial life encased within a machine body. Yet, the physical portrayals of the female form cannot be easily divorced from the traditional notion of what is 'female'. The machine body is observably female-normative. Her body is clearly based on the female anatomy, but she is not particularly feminine. Her body is now of a child. Although it is assumed that the body Batou gave Motoko is of a female child's body, the newborn Motoko reveals that with her new identity, she is no longer limited to any shell. The encasing into a child's body easily signifies a physical symbol of rebirth but her gender becomes ambiguous as she could always choose to expand into multiple subjectivities—"its forms may include the physiological, technological, purely informational, or all three".[12]

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Angus McBlane, "Just a ghost in the shell," in *Anime and philosophy: wide eyed*

3.1. PERFORMATIVITY OF AI

The basis for identity of the characters in the film is the knowledge that the "ghost" is what gives them their humanity. The mind or the soul with the same respect is what most people are holding on to as the reason for believing that they exist. However, in the following dialogue between Motoko and Batou about the legitimacy of their information about their ghost, shows how doubtful the ideology is. Regardless of possessing a "ghost," thinking that her memories are artificially generated, not only confuses her of her identity but what becomes the marker of her identity. The following conversation between Motoko and Batou speaks so much about how Motoko's doubts with her knowledge of herself could further the question of her gender identity. [13] As the film hints at the memory of Motoko being unreal, we still see Motoko fulfilling the dictates of her memories. To follow Butler's theory of performativity, Motoko has always been performing a female gender, not because of her intrinsically feminine nature, but because of the feminized 'ghost' and 'shell' constructed for her.

> Motoko: Maybe all full-replacement cyborgs like me start wondering this. That perhaps the real me died a long time ago... and I'm a replicant made with a cyborg body and computer brain. Or maybe there never was a real "me" to begin with.
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> Batou: You've got real brain matter in that titanium skull of yours. And you get treated like a real person, don't you?
>
> Motoko: There's no person who's ever seen their own brain. I believe I exist based only on what my environment tells me.
>
> Batou: Don't you believe in your own ghost?
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> Motoko: And what if a computer brain could generate a ghost... and harbor a soul? On what basis then do I believe in myself?

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wonder, eds. Josef Steiff, and Trsitan Tamplin (Chicago: Open Court, 2010), 38.
    [13] *Ghost in the Shell*, 1995.

> Batou: Bullshit! I'll see for myself what's in that body. With my own ghost!

This brings us to Butler's critique of the idea of stable identity categories and stresses that all gender is performative. She says, gender and sexuality can only emerge through repeated performance in accordance to the heterosexual social matrix. Arguing that if all sexuality is simply performative, then there is no essential sexuality or gender within a person. She goes on to question the obligatory and regulatory aspect of gender and sexuality that produces an ideal that we pattern ourselves from. As such, if gender and sexuality are constructed on the repetition of acts and imitation of the dominant conventions of gender, then heterosexuality, as she explains, is an imitation, a copy, of an idealized concept of how heterosexuality ought to be done. It is a consistent patterning that produces the subject.

It is in this sense of AI's performativity of gender that the world of *Ghost in the Shell* both highlights the importance of performance in the construction of cyborg identity and feminist analyses of the conventional understandings of the body as a site of natural identity. As Butler[14] contends, "gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo;" but "in its very character as performative resides the possibility of contesting its reified status." The common position of Motoko's performance of human identity and femininity within the framework of social construction thus points to the possibility of anti-essentialist views of human identity. With the line between an AI and a human being blurring, not only raises questions about the nature of human consciousness but also the 'illusion of an innately gendered self'.[15] How the film depicts AI embodiment in terms of performing their gendered selves thus reduces the difference between AI and humans to the presence or absence of a biological body. The body of the cyborgs such as Motoko, Batou, and most personnel in Section 9 are indistinguishable

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[14] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminism," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory,* eds. Katie Conboy, Nadia Median, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 402.

[15] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* 24.

from a biological body with a cyborg body. That cyborgs in the film perform gender as well as humanity also entails that gender can be performed with a human or a full cyborg body like that of Motoko's or Batou's. Similarly, as with the Puppet Master's sentience, it becomes difficult to conclude that he is not a life-form and merely an AI program.

The depiction of Motoko's body, in particular her physique, lies her identity as a sexual entity. Apart from the explicit mention of her female identity near the end of the film "I am neither the program called the Puppet Master nor the woman called Motoko,"[16] the various depictions of Motoko's body directly hints at her exterior gendered self. Motoko inhabits a female body, which has enunciated curves especially with the breasts and buttocks area. Her eyes are larger than male's, which is characteristically anime art style to either show the character as female or very young. While the narrative operates outside the conventional norms of gender in terms of Motoko's cybernetic construction as an iconic hero of strength, it fails to disconnect stereotypical gender roles in a number of encounters with her male counterparts. One of the prevalent gestures for stereotypical gender roles show in the film is the scene where Batou puts his coat over Motoko's naked body after she has used her shell's stealth capability. Which, in a way, suggests that Motoko accepts the protective gesture of Batou. With another instance near the end of the film, Batou, this time, comes to the rescue before Motoko could be killed.

Motoko's partner, Batou, with his archetypal masculinity is the film's main source of machismo. His physique is larger than an average man and boasts of above average physical strength. One of his notable features is his cybernetic eyes. It is also shown in the film during his conversations with Motoko that he does not have a full cybernetic body. Batou's attitude towards Motoko shows a very protective or defensive side to his character. As mentioned before in anime stereotypes, even if Motoko seems to be more skillful than Batou, the latter nonetheless still persists in trying to portray a traditionally masculine role of protector—to keep Motoko away from any harm. Different instances of Batou's gestures of protectiveness of Motoko are highlighted in the film. One of which is the boat trip scene where Batou puts his jacket around Motoko's nude body. He consistently

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[16] *Ghost in the Shell*, 1995.

mirrors the traditional image of the chivalrous man who protects the woman. In desperate fight to save Motoko, Batou sacrifices his left arm to shield her brain from attack in the last battle scene.

3.2. THE POSTHUMAN QUEER BODY

The Puppet Master's gender is assumed to be unknown. In various dubbed versions of the film, the Puppet Master's voice can be heard as either male or female. In the English version of the film, the Puppet Master's voice resembles male. It was not explained though why the characters use the pronoun "he" when referring to the Puppet Master. In the scene with the heads of Section 9 and Section 6 gaining possession of what seems to be the shell of the Puppet Master. It is interesting to note that even with the ungendered identity of the Puppet Master, Section 6 has used "he" as a generic pronoun for a non-gendered program[17]:

> Dr. Willis: It's definitely him.

> Section 9 Department Chief Aramaki: "Him?"

> Section 6 Department Chief Nakamura: He's referring to the original ghost block within the shell. Its sex remains undetermined, and the use of the term "he"...is merely a nickname the good doctor has given it

The film consistently maintains this particular generic use of the masculine pronoun, that in a way affirms the principle of male-as-norm. With the Puppet Master's scene with Section 9 Department Chief Aramaki, he did not mention of his gender but clarifies that he is neither a cyborg nor an AI, "I refer to myself as an intelligent life form because I am sentient and I am able to recognize my own existence, but in my present state I am still incomplete. I lack the most basic processes inherent in all living organisms: reproducing and dying."[18]

Portrayed as a slippery entity, the Puppet Master possesses a female shell while his face projects masculine features in his every scene. While

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

this is telling of the patriarchal government agency's construction of a default masculine gender of the program, the film at the same time seems to project into his character a reiteration and obscuring of hyperbolize gender markers of masculinity and femininity. It is interesting why the Puppet Master—a computer program who gains sentience—chooses a female body. Storywise, the Puppet Master could be seen as something that is gender queer because of his male voice and female body. The difficulty to read his gender comes from behavior during the time that he shows himself in the film. Although the Puppet Master assumes a male-like role through its low masculine voice, the Puppet Master's inhabiting a female body highlights particular aspects typical of Japanese science fiction—queering sex/gender. He can embody any shell, be it male or female, and assume any role he deems necessary. The Puppet Master could have a female voice with a very masculine male body and still deliver its message of the possibility of serving feminist interest of challenging the normative sexualities and binaristic discourse of gender.

Gender performativity requires individuals to perform behaviors corresponding to their sex as per social requirement or else it would be branded as taboo, queer, or abnormal. The Puppet Master's ambiguously masculine and feminine identity queers AI insofar as it articulates the possibility of a gender fluid AI. Thereby, potentially challenging the traditional gender norms with its very notion of unstable gender identity. Motoko and Batou, on the other hand, as they accomplish the performance of their respective feminine and masculine roles, exemplifies what Butler[19] expresses that gender is in the sequence of the acts and that it is "doing" rather than "being." Motoko and Batou could easily fit within the heteronormative assumptions, which underlie our construction of gender roles, in this sense, as Butler[20] puts it, these characters' gender identity is based on the results of their expressions—the proper performance of femininity and masculinity. It must be taken that gender fluidity in the film is not alien to idea of the film's reality. Granting that all characters can possess any type of shell and thereby assume any role they please, as presented by the Puppet Master, the identity crisis of Motoko, and Batou's denial of Motoko's dilemma, the idea of cyborg technology in

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[19] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* 25.
[20] Ibid.

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the film shows the potential of posthuman feminist critiques of dismantling the naturalistic notion of sex and creating a new paradigm of gender.

4. CONCLUSION

While the film tacitly reinscribes the hetero-norm in the way the cybernetic construction of body extends exteriorities of the masculine and/or the feminine, the way the cyborg ontology symbolizes a trajectory towards gendering embodiment as metal and machine potentially undermines biological and naturalized norms of identity. Indeed, the film allows new ways of perceiving a more dynamic notion of gender and sexuality and (re)imagining embodiment, gender and sexuality beyond the binary logic that characterizes the Western thought. The film, thus, provides a new and valuable site of exploring the transformative relations between embodiment and technology insofar as it deploys posthuman bodies and technology in the (re)formulation of subjectivity as bound up with gender, and renders a cyborg ideology that opens up a possible understanding of AI technology without the removal of gender. For one, AIs performing a gendered self like humans do radically bridges man/machine divide that has evoked an essentialist understanding of the human being. Another, AI's performative accomplishment of gender identity, while reifying the gender binary, at the same time radically queers AI as it deconstructs the notion of a fix and stable gender identity that is inextricably linked to biological sex.

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