The Ghost in the Shell's Philosophy

:: An Analyze on Japanese Animated Feature Film
"Ghost in the Shell" In Related To New Media & Globalization ::

in

MSc in Multimedia and Entertainment Technology
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## Director Mamoru Oshii - his Philosophy, Envision and Creation

Tokuma 2004

Mamoru Oshii (押井守) was born in Tokyo in 1951 and graduated from the School of Education - Education of Arts in Tokyo Gakugei University (東京学芸大学教育学部美術教育学科) in1976 (Oshii Mamoru Official Site. 2004). He started his anime career from 1976, and has directed numerous animation TV series and eight live action films since 1983 (Works of Mamoru Oshii - Persona Remix. 2004, 126). In Japan, starting from the first animation TV series Tetsuwan Atomu (The Mighty Atom, outside Japan as Astroboy) created by Dr. Osamu Tezuka (1925-89) (Patrick 2003, 5), the main stream of Japan's anime story telling are mostly emphasis on the relationship between human and the Earth. Even for some campus story about teenagers' school live, it turn out become a save the Earth story at the end. Characters with weird looking wardrobe and outfit are designed to be responsible to protect the Earth. Just like other Japanese traditional animie artists, most of Mamoru Oshii's early works are basing on this formula. After years of anime life, he feels uncomfortable and starts to challenge and rejects this type of creative direction. For characterization, he prefers to let the quest of the story to drive the character rather than superimposing directors personal wills to drive the character. For instance, Hayao Miyazaki - the most influential anime master in Japan has project his personal wills on the lead character in Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind (1984) so as to reflect his view on environment protection and treasure on the things in the good old days. Mamoru Oshii critiques on this approach, because he believes that character should have their own soul and life driven by the story and should be independent from the director's personal attributes. Otherwise, what audience sees is merely a replication of the director repetitively in different forms in their creations. Furthermore, he also critiques on the needs of the overly used human centric premises and provocative "Destine of the Earth" as the core idea for story development. He claims that although the society may required this type of ideology to reinforce the contemporary value system, but he feels that this creative direction is too old and is lack of interest (Mamoru 2005).
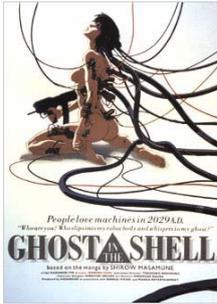
In 1995, the first Ghost In the Shell production, he try to choose a totally reverse direction and treatment. By using a bi-directional point of view between non-human (cyborg, doll and robot) and soul (mind and ghost); Illustrate their contrast of desire; Using non-human as all character design and eliminate their facial expression through out the whole movie; Exaggerate the negative consequence of contemporary globalization phenomenon – global economic recession, corporation downsizing, violent crime, explosion of cybernetic culture … All of these setup bring up the awareness of human nature, meaning of the existence of life, soul, body, and envisioning the impact of globalization and new media in the world of cybernetic in the future (Production I.G. 2004. 1). This approach seems to be conforming to Renē Descartes philosophy (The Online Literature Library 2005) to prove an opinion by ignoring Sense, Memory and Body from this film so as to lead audience to provoke their through consciously just on their mind and existence.
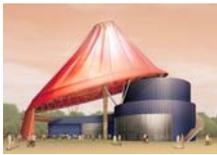
Sekisui House/Takenaka Corp. Joint Design Team

In aligning with Mamoru Oshii's awareness of human nature and globalization, he also participates in new media creation for bringing up attention of environmental protection in the 21 Century. In the 2005 World Exposition, Aichi, Japan, he has created a multifaceted performance that make use digital imagery on the world's largest floor screen to produce a three-dimensional performance – a kind of virtual reality installation, making this the first experiential space in the history of World Expositions. The aim is have visitors think anew about the recovery of the Earth while experiencing the wonder of nature and the environment (Japan Association for the 2005 World Exposition 2005). As describe by Shulamith Kreitler, virtual reality (VR) is designed to be a close copy of "normal reality" so that the perceptually accessible qualities, including all sensory qualities (especially, color, form, sound, tactility, temperature, kinesthesis), as well as size, weight, location and space are likely to be close reproductions of the corresponding qualities in "normal reality" (Alexander Riegler…(eds.) 2001.,39). In Mamoru Oshii's three-dimensional performance, audiences' visual and aural sensory are mediated into the wide open immersive system. In turn, their primary qualities - body, time, space, shape, quantity and magnitude defined as the - "the fundamental truth" by Renē Descartes (Literature 2005) are separated and stay in the reality world. This not only enables audience to immerse their mind into Mamoru Oshii's virtual world, but also subtly let them recognize the existence of their mind while they are switching back and fore between "realities", thus aligning Mamoru Oshii's philosophy – provoking the awareness of the existence of life.

Cultural Influence and Export for the Global Market

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No matter from creative point of view or marketing point of view (ref. Appendix B), Mamoru Oshii's treatment, direction and aesthetic license used in the Ghost in the Shell series has created huge influence to the filming industry. We can easily recognize similar plots, designs and treatments in a lot of Hollywood films, for instance, Alex Proyas' I, Robot (2004) (ref. Appendix C: Fig.01), and Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski's The Matrix (1999) (ref. Appendix C: Fig.02),. Ghost in the Shell is one of the anime which inspired most on Wachowski brother's creation of The Matrix series film making. In which they tried to bring the juxtaposition of time and space in life action beats into their film from the anime world together with cyberpunk [GenXers - a post-punk generation (Douglas 2002, 31)] elements (Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. 1999) (ref. Appendix C: Fig.02), which conform with Mamoru Oshii's concern on time, space and post-humanism in Ghost in the Shell.

Nevertheless, as Japanese did with automobiles, they have taken an American creation and reworked it into something far beyond what its creators considered to be the state of the art (Patrick 2003, 3). In reverse, we can easily recognize numerous plots, designs and treatments in The Ghost in the Shell series are very similar to Ridley Scott's Blade Runner(1982) (ref. Appendix C: Fig.03), George Lucas' Star Wars(1977) (ref. Appendix C: Fig.04), Ridley Scott's Alien (1979) (ref. Appendix C: Fig.05), and James Cameron's Aliens (1986) and The Terminator (1984) (ref. Appendix C: Fig.06).

From marketing point of view, by using a layer of Hollywood successful elements, plus the distinctive style of Japanese anime, striking visual impacts with the extraordinary plots and culture, it enables most of the Japanese anime which aimed at viewers with double-digit ages and trible-digit IQs (Patrick 2003, 3) to be easily delivered and accepted by different layers of audiences in the global film market, while at the same time maintaining the original complex social, economic, political, and philosophical commentary layer. Ironically, this approach becomes a trible-win strategy for the creators, Japanese anime industry and the audience.

At the back-end of the Ghost in the Shell – Innocent production, beside the above mentioned strategy, there are strong local and global business and production infrastructure which provide advantages in different aspects during the production and delivery of the film to the global market especially North American (one of the largest Japanese anime consumer). Beside the film, this infrastructure also supports the associated products development like DVD, toys and video game in various formats and versions for the global market.

The film production was taken up by the two top animation studios in Japan, namely Production I.G. (founded by Mitsuhisa Ishikawa and Takayuki Goto) and co-produced by Studio Ghibli which is led by Hayao Miyazaki - the most influential anime master in Japan, who has a very good relationship with John Lasseter who lead the creative department in Pixar Animation Studio in U.S.A. This team up helps sourcing the best animation artist to create this master piece. The sound design, editing and mixing part was produced in Skywalker Sound - Lucasfilm Ltd. Companies in U.S.A., which is owned by George Lucas – fame does matter in helping marketing promotion and establishing industry linkages. The song was strategically sung in English, was recorded in Firehouse Recording Studios – a subsidiary of DMI Music & Media Solutions in U.S.A. which have a good relationship with numerous world class artists and musicians like Lee Ritenour, Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and Bob James (Firehouse Recording Studios 2006). The music video is produced locally by Bandai Entertainment Japan, which is the premier distributor of Japanese animation on DVD home video and Japanese animated licensed programming for television broadcast distribution in North America, and is a subsidiary of Bandai America Inc., who makes the toys for television series and is the third largest toy company in the world comprising 53 subsidiaries in 18 countries. bandaigames.com – a subsidiary of Bandai America Inc. is responsible to produce the video game for Ghost in the Shell on SONY PS2 and PSP platform. In addition to toys and children's entertainment, Bandai Co.'s global interests include video game software, multimedia, music and full-length feature films, vending machines, trading cards, candies, and licensed apparel. (Bandai Entertainment, Inc. 2004).

Under this infrastructure, it show off the interconnection and independencies between different levels such as the economic, political, cultural and psychological, as well as between flows of products, ideas, information, people and technology (Douglas Kellner 2006) – a typical globalization phenomena which enable sustainable growth and resource sourcing for cross nations corporation. Ironically, it does reinforce the sustainability of the original concept and product and transforms it into different forms for targeting different consumers' needs for different nations with different culture. Indeed, anime is just the most visible sign of a growing trend in the world. In the last few years, Japan has become a rising force in a wide swath of fashion-focused industries, from kids' toys to entertainment, cell phones, and car racing (BusinessWeek Online. 2004).

The Story World – Global Village with Cultural Mix and Crash

To establish a holistic future view of a global village and embed with foot prints of human evolution in Ghost in the Shell, Mamoru Oshii create a story world with multiple cultural identities which were crashed together with elements from the pass, present and future. For instance, beside the core linguistic – Japanese (English in the international version), there are Cantonese, Mandarin, Traditional & Simplified Chinese characters, Korean characters, English characters and Chinese poems appear in the film. In the set design, there are futuristic metropolis – skyscraper with rusty outlook and surrounded by polluted air (consequence of acid rain and pollution made by well developed nations); Traditional European style architectures with M.C.Escher style visual illusion and was destroyed by World War II style **battleship**; Gothic style cathedral with Chinese religious statues; Traditional Thai's fishermen's house at river side with futuristic metropolis on the back; Old streets and shops in Hong Kong in 70s with futuristic convenient store utilities; Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong in the 70s with futuristic police force; Futuristic apartment and garage with antique car and contemporary furniture; Futuristic laboratory and interior design with contemporary human behaviors – a smoking robot; A presentation of 17th Century western family dinner scenery by wax statues, which are sitting in front of fire (one of them is George Washington - the first president of the United States (1789-97)); A traditional festival procession inside a metropolis with China Taiwan and Tail religion identities;

These treatments not only create huge visual impact, but effectively create a montage of contrast in cultural context, which leads audience to provoke through on time, space, environment, and human's evolution under the contemporary technological explosion and globalization.

The New Media and Technological Impact to Humanism

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As conform to the early work of William Gibson who was the literature of cyberpunk and cyberspace, the future rules were made up by those on the frontier- not by bureaucrats, but depends on how smart and talented you were in the digital realm (Douglas 2003 xii/introduction). In the Ghost in the Shell, hacking become a daily tools for both protagonist and antagonist on the top layer, in the down under, hacking become an ideology for balancing the equilibrium of the society. Today, with the unlimited desires on extending human being's ability on intelligent, memory, accessibility to cyberspace and ultimately extend our life. Ironically this is no more a fiction, in June 2002 a design for a tooth implant that receives digital signals from radios and mobile phones designed by Jimmy Loizeau and James Auger, research associates from MIT Media Lab Europe was on display at the Science Museum in London (Lakshmi Sandhana 2002). The advancement of technology and new media catalyzes and accelerates the movement of post-humanism. Human-machine integration, organism cloning, transplant and implant surgery, inevitably people have begun to see the earth itself as a cyborg system (Chris 2001, 10).

In Mamoru Oshii's story world, with the driving force of unlimited human desires, cyborg became the second name of human and there will have no pure humans anymore but cyborgs and robots on the globe. When cyborg technology can replicate any living organism, this means there is possibility to replicate human soul and treat it just like data. This fundamentally enables the possibility of hacking into human soul, and in reverse, human soul can hack into robot, computer or any form of cybernetic entities. Today, we have argument on cloning human being, tomorrow, in the post-humanism realm; possibly we have argument on cloning of human soul – a technically feasible but morally illegal crime which was illustrated in Ghost in the Shell – Innocence. This phenomena provoke our through on the re-examination of our value system as human being under the contemporary overwhelming new media and technological impact.

The Sub-text in the Resolution

In the resolution of film, we realize that the root of the murder case is because of i) Human's Basic Instinct – The need of sex; ii) Economic Reason – Corporate try to find better solutions (both legal and illegal) to keep it growing in the highly competition market place and satisfying human needs; iii) Human's Impure Ego - Selfish - To keep alive by killing each other. Initially, because a corporate want to increase the sales and profit of a hyper-realistic female robot which created specifically for sexual companionship, the corporate illegally kidnapped and clone the soul of little girls into their product in order to make them more human - that is a controversy of post-humanism – desire for natural humanity. However, soul is not a controllable entity like data. One of the kidnapped little girls knows that if the robots make trouble, someone would notice the crime and come to rescue her. So her soul decided to instructs the robots to slaughter their owners and then self-terminate so as to alert others – an act of moral breakdown as non-human.

In this Century, why human want to become non-human? Look at our "technological attachment" cellar phone, mp3 player, portable computing device, etc… Why machine become more human? Like human shape robots and artificial intelligent. Do we really need it or those corporations create the needs for us? Do we forget our body and even our mind? What is the value of our existence as human being on Earth?

When other Japanese directors critique Mamoru Oshii's non-human approach, like Mr.Fumihiko Sori - Producer of Appleseed; Director of "Ping Pong" who critique his works as lack of human factors on December 4th 2004 in our personal conversation. I feel that they have to re-evaluate Mamoru Oshii's works at a deeper level. Because what he did is a bidirectional through on both human and non-human entities on Earth to awaken our gradually disappearing human mind under the wave of new media and globalization. This is pure humanism.

End.

APPENDIX A - Subject Information (Production I.G. 2004. 1)

Film Name:	Ghost in The Shell (Innocence-2004)
Release in Japan	March 6, 2004
Original Story:	Shirow Masamune / "Ghost in the Shell"(Kodansha)
Genre:	Animation / Action / Sci-Fi / Fantasy / Thriller
Screenplay/Director:	Mamoru Oshii
Producers:	Mitsuhisa Ishikawa and Toshio Suzuki
Music:	Kenji Kawai
Animation Production:	Production I.G
Co-Produced by:	Studio Ghibli
Produced by:	Production I.G, Tokuma Shoten, Nippon Television Network, Dentsu, Disney, Toho, Mitsubishi Corporation
Distributed by:	Toho
Synopsis:	The story is set in 2032, when the line between humans and machines has been blurred almost beyond distinction. Humans have forgotten that they are human, and the few who still own an organic body coexist with cyborgs (human spirits inhabiting entirely mechanized bodies) and dolls (robots with no human elements at all). Detective Batou, an agent for covert anti-terrorist unit Public Safety Section 9, is assigned the case of gynoids -hyper-realistic female robots created specifically for sexual companionship- that have apparently malfunctioned and started slaughtering their owners. In the course of the investigation, Batou and his partner Togusa take on violent Yakuza thugs, devious hackers, government bureaucrats, and corporate criminals to uncover the shocking truth behind the crime.

More than a visually stunning futuristic hard-boiled mystery, *Innocence* is the story of a solitary cyborg that desperately wants to hold on to what's left of his humanity in a world where the value of the human soul has largely been forgotten. (Production I.G. 2004. 2)

APPENDIX B - Production History of the Ghost in the Shell series

Originally, *Ghost in the Shell* is a feature anime directed by Mamoru Oshii's, released in 1995 and based on Shirow Masamune's original comic book. With cutting edge digital visual effects as well as with detailed drawings, visual arts and a unique philosophical approach, later in May 1996, when the movie video was released in the USA, it soared to the top of the Billboard Sell Video Charts and sold more than one million copies, which made it one of the biggest Japanese animation works ever sold there. In October 2002, pay-per-view distribution of a TV series based on the same characters, *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, started in Japan on SkyPerfecTV!'s Animax Channel. A record breaking 800 million yen was invested for the production of this single TV series. The director for the series was Kenji Kamiyama. *Stand Alone Complex* was originally planned as a 26-episode series, but the production of a second season of additional 26 episodes was quickly decided immediately after TV airing started. Then in January 2004, pay-per-view distribution of *S.A.C. 2nd Gig* started on SkyPerfecTV!'s Animax Channel. This time Mamoru Oshii participated in the project by contributing the story concept at the initial stage. In Japan, the two seasons sold a total of over 1.3 million DVDs. In North America, every DVD volume is selling over 100,000 copies, making the *Stand Alone Complex* series a worldwide mega hit. In 2004, *Ghost in the Shell: Innocence* screenplay and directed by Mamoru Oshii became the first Japanese animation feature film to enter the official competition at Cannes International Film Festival. In 2005, *SAC* and *2nd Gig* have been both re-edited as two full-length features: *Stand Alone Complex: The Laughing Man* (released on September 23, 2005) and *Stand Alone Complex 2nd Gig: Individual Eleven* (released on January 27, 2006). (Production I.G. 2004. 2)
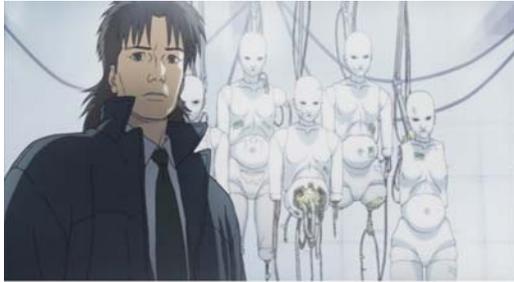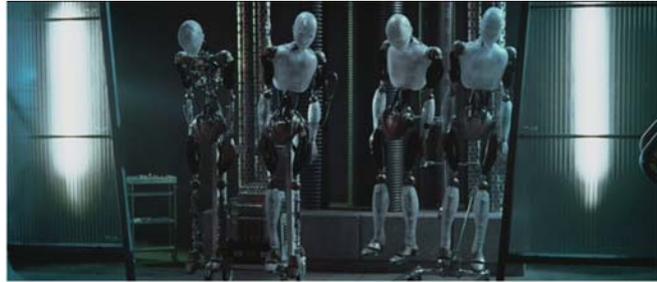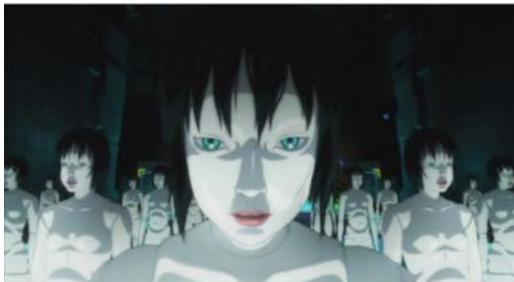
APPENDIX C - Visual Examples

Fig.01

Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell – Innocence vs Alex Proyas' I, Robot (2004)
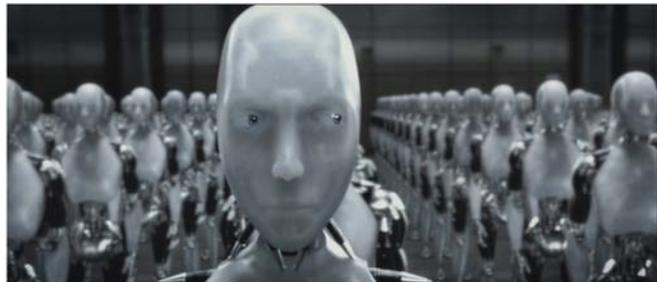

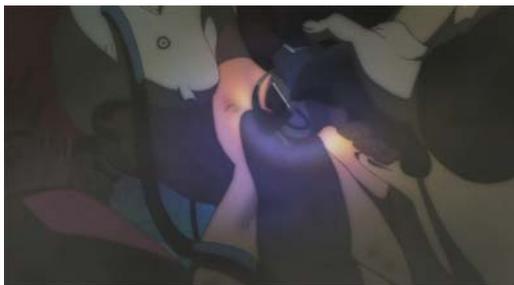Ghost in the Shell - Innocence - Robot Lab

I,Robot - Robot Lab

Ghost in the Shell - Robot Factory

I,Robot - Robot Factory

Fig.02

Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell – Innocence vs

Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski's The Matrix (1999)

Ghost in the Shell - Plug into network on the neck

Matrix - Plug into Matrix on the neck

Ghost in the Shell - Plug into network on the the chair

Matrix - Plug into Matrix on the the chair

Fig.03

Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell – Innocence vs Ridley Scott's Blade Runner(1982)

Ghost in the Shell - Innocence - A Polluted Futuristic Metropolis

Blade Runner - - A Polluted Futuristic Metropolis

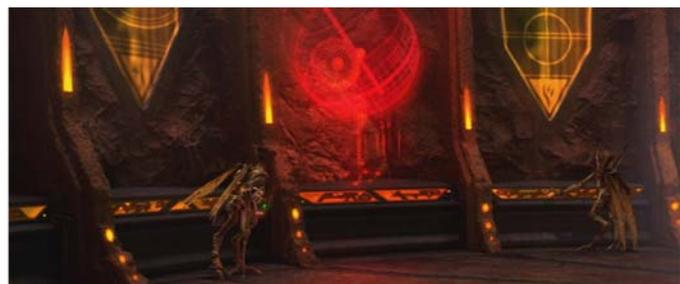Ghost in the Shell - Innocence - Aerial Shots - Dragon
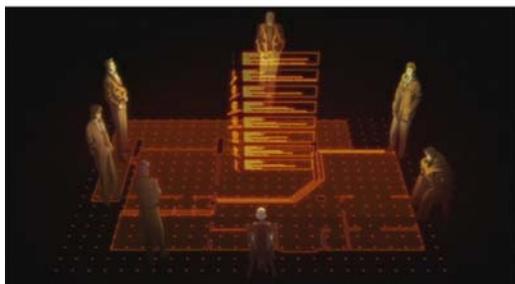
Blade Runner - Aerial Shots - Dragon

Fig.04

Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell – Innocence vs George Lucas' Star Wars(1977)

Ghost in the Shell - Halogram

Star Wars II - Halogram

Ghost in the Shell - Teleconferencing Using Halogram

Star Wars II - Teleconferencing Using Halogram

Fig.05

Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell – Innocence vs

Ridley Scott's Alien (1979)

Ghost in the Shell - Innocence - Rushing in Space Ship's Cooridor
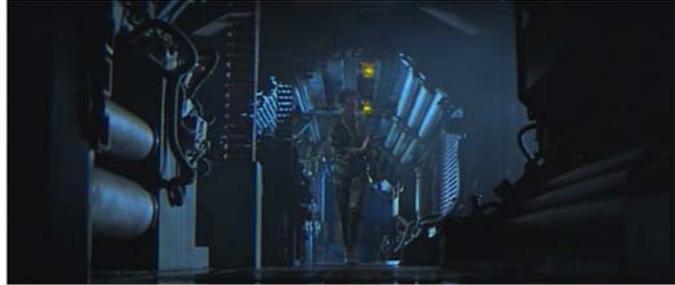
Alien - Rushing in Space Ship's Cooridor
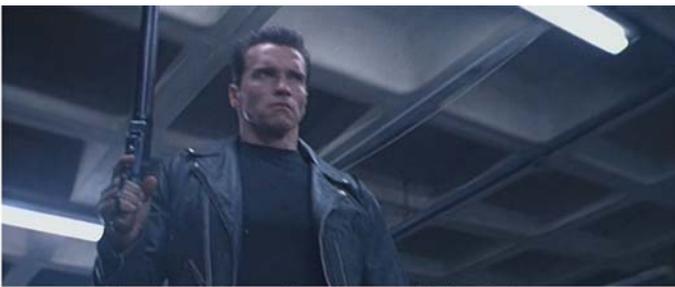
Ghost in the Shell - Set Design - Sculpture

Alien - Set Design - Sculpture

Fig.06

Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell – Innocence vs

James Cameron's The Terminator (1984)

Ghost in the Shell - Character Design - Cyborg

Terminator 2 Judgment Day - Character Design - Cyborg

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