Language And Narrative In The Transhumanist Film Ghost In The Shell (2017)

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Abstract:

Ghost in the Shell, a Hollywood masterpiece of Japanese science fiction, raised the bar for intellectual content in animation and comics. Director Mamoru Oshii presents thought-provoking cinematic souls, philosophical themes, and introspective conflicts that explore the concept of humanity. This production quickly became a cultural phenomenon and then a successful franchise. But the Hollywood adaptation, a live-action production directed by director Rupert Sanders, stripped away the immersive elements and transformed *Ghost in the Shell (2017)* into a pale female version of Robocop. Sanders simplifies the original plot to the point that he treats the audience to be teenagers . The protagonist's deep concepts and identity crisis are here convincingly analysed through the film language enhance the audiences' intellectual involvement. As a result, this 2017 film in it's creative vision explore the futuristic world it depicts on the dynamics between the main characters. Sanders offers a superficial interpretation of the plot especially since the central mystery has become very predictable.

Keywords: Hollywood, Transhumanism, Films, Language, narrative.

INTRODUCTION

Sanders' story generate moments of suspense, and the action scenes are of a transcendent quality. Unlike the original animated film's 85-minute thriller, the Hollywood version has a seemingly interminable two-hour runtime. This work of Rupert Sanders is paradoxically the unalike of what the revolutionary work of Masamune Shirow represents: the living expression of the egocentrism of an aesthete. Among the countless interpretations that can be drawn from a story anchored in the present, this adaptation of Ghost in the Shell (2017)offers a spectacle of collected images, an exploration of the cybernetic evolution of the masses and a simplified approach.

Rupert Sanders seeked to push the boundaries of CGI, he values the integration of socio-technical analysis with questions. This concept is very relevant in today's society with futuristic visual representations and numerous augmented reality adaptations. If the goal was to integrate postmodern psychology into a cyberpunk storyline through a handful of characters, it is exactly in line with a movement that discusses the deterioration of human identity or dystopia. *Ghost in the Shell (2017)* goes for discreet action to transform Tokyo into a city of technological crime. However, Ghost in the Shell (2017) honours not only the source material but also the iconic elements of 20th century science fiction.

Within the cyberpunk genre, there is a wide catalog of works that look into an almost surprising future. However, few manage to captivate the audience with such complexity as the 1995 animated masterpiece Ghost in the Shell, directed by Mamoru Oshii and adapted from the manga by Masamune Shirou. In 2017, director Rupert Sanders, firmly committed to preserving the essence of the original content and successful features, presented the first live-action version of the series, known as "Ghost in the Shell."

Starring Scarlett Johansson the film tells the story of Major Mira Killian, a cyborg whose brain was transplanted into a fully synthetic body. Major is a dedicated member of Section 9, a special forces unit that fights cybercrime in a world where humans, robots and cyborgs coexist and the lines between them are increasingly blurred. The story essentially revolves around Major's struggle to understand her own identity, unravel her mysterious past, and find meaning in her existence as a ghost in a shell. Thompson says "In this new, mediated, cyborg realm of culture, there are no nonhuman animals, or plants, or any other natural forms of intelligence" (Thompson, 2019)

Although the deeper nuances of 'mind' and 'shell' are not explored with the same depth and ambiguity as in the original works, the adaptation emphasizes these concepts through personal struggles by Major. In this context, 'ghost' symbolizes the essence of the soul and consciousness that defines a person as a human, while 'shell' represents the container that houses the ghost. Both inside and outside the original container the ghost remains a flexible and uncertain being. Major's eternal struggle is to find a harmonious balance between her ghost and her shell so that she can fully enjoy her life as a transhumanist cyborg. Here is a dialogue between Major and Kuze

"Major: "Who made you?"

Kuze: "What have they told you, that you were the first? The first cerebral salvage? You were born of lessons took from my failure."

Major: "What are you talking about?"

Kuze: "I was conscious while they dismembered my body and discarded me like garbage. I was lying on a table listening to doctors talk about how my mind had not meshed with the shell that they had built. How Project 2571 had failed, and they had to move on…. To you. What a beauty you are. They have improved us so much, since they made me. They thought that we would be a part of their evolution, but they have created us to evolve alone. Beyond them."

Major: "Evolution, that's what you call — killing everyone who made you?"(Sanders, 2017, 0:57:03)

It has long been feared that we are willingly submitting to the domination of machines. The little automatons that populate our daily lives insidiously invade our autonomy and question the heart of our identity. In the context of dystopian science fiction, the desire for omnipotence encompasses this concept in the same way as the amen of the Church: these creations are often beyond the control of their creators. However, cyborgs also serve as a mirror image. When Scarlett Johansson in Ghost in the Shell sees the world as an amalgamation of man and machine and says that everyone around her seems connected in some way. Connected to something that is not she herself. So Major was in a dilemma thinking whose cyborg solitude, whose artificial body and mind are trapped in an artificial biocapsule.

Major is the result of a series of experiments conducted by Hanka Robotics, a company that claims to have saved him from a catastrophic accident and saved his life by transferring his consciousness into a synthetic body. Dr. Ouellet (played by Juliette Binoche), one of the scientists on the project, still considers Mira to be human, even though society created her as the Major's weapon, giving her more mobility and less physical vulnerability. Major later becomes an agent of Section 9, a security organization led by Daisuke Aramaki (played by Takeshi Kitano) that fights cybercrime. Batou (played by Pilou Asbæk), another member of the team, is Major's closest confidant and always tries to help him deal with his inner conflicts.

The opening moments of Ghost in the Shell are breathtaking, perfectly showcasing the key elements of the film: a fascinating futuristic world full of oddities like the robot geisha; Starring performances from Kitano, Johansson and Asbæk; and masterfully choreographed action scenes. These qualities are maintained throughout the film, as Major's internal struggle is exacerbated by improbable twists and turns. The deep philosophical debates and themes of cyberterrorism that are integral to the 1995 animated version are presented more superficially, with an emphasis on Major's journey of self-discovery. Mark Coeckelbergh comments that "in Japan, there is also an interest in the presence, soul, and ghost of the robot—without negative gothic connotations and more in line with nature religion." (Coeckelbergh, 2017)

The lack of complex depth that characterized the original Ghost in the Shell does not disappoint, as the film is essentially a blockbuster that aims to simplify the story for a new audience without underplaying its intelligence. Although Major offers a more mature portrayal, the film is still full of carefully recreated iconic scenes from the animated classic, such as Major's creation and the fight against Spider-Tank. The story raises questions as it highlights twists and turns surrounding the origins of the antagonist Kuze (played by Michael Pitt) and the Major herself, which lack compelling clarity. Like Mira, Kuze is a cyborg, but he carries out cyberattacks out of revenge.

The protagonist 'Major' Scarlett Johansson's storyline doesn't give her much room to shine as herself as she is a hybrid being. Yet we see her dexterity in *Ghost in the Shell (2017)* in the graphics, where the director's attention is clearly visible. The creation of the cyberpunk world is perfectly done and the special effects are impeccable. Brian Ruh says the in *Ghost in the Shell (2017)* the "visual narrative, which is now a global media success, also standardized the structure of a Japanese female hero and a male figure (or figures) who is weaker and more human" (Ruh, 2019)

However, this Hollywood adaptation does not show as did the Japanese productions of the animated saga that goes by the same name. Viewers unfamiliar with Ghost in the Shell (2017)will find that gender is irrelevant in this version. Ultimately, an unforgettable sci-fi film that has nothing to offer other than precise visual presentation.

The acting and the excitement surrounding the casting of the oriental character played by Scarlett Johansson contains a little twist, but I won't go into details of it as the character herself also presents a challenge, as she straddles the line between human and machine, resulting in a complex portrayal that Johansson handles deftly. However, it is important to emphasize that it is not possible to completely sympathize with our own character. The character of Juliette Binoche in particular is disturbing and seems out of place but it is a strange casting choice, given a talented actress a role which she might be completely uncomfortable with yet so important to be placed in the technological landscape of a future Tokyo.

People and ratings usually talk of a time when blockbusters blazed the trail for alternative pop cinema, with a mature tone that retained its distinctive character and occasionally ventured into spectacular spectacle, all in the service of a deep story. And despite countless slow-motion scenes trying to emphasize this point, we still hear the same old refrain. Hollywood, within its borders, seems particularly concerned with the ego of the aesthete, which hinders any potential progress.

The color palette, elaborate design of retro-futuristic city centers and Rupert Sanders' obsession with lingering on certain scenes make "Ghost in the Shell" his personal playground. The film succeeded in understanding Majora's existential

dilemma and in nurturing a technological love when most of the time it is hated. As Rebecca Scott mentions "that the earth is in love with you and when you die and get buried she finally gets to go on your first date." (Scott, 2017). It's worth noting that Scarlett Johansson's flat character is largely due to her stellar performance, a quality that can be extended to the rest of the cast with minimal effort. As Rafael Miranda Huereca speaks in dystopian films "technocracies and transhumanism usually mingle with cyberterrorism, dystopian scenarios, disembodiment or enhanced cyborgs, thus including, if not departing from, cyberpunk premises, then evolving into complex settings." (Huereca, 2010). These elements we find in *Ghost in the Shell (2017).*

Screenwriter William Wheeler's exploration of the concept of identity becomes tangled in the complexities of facing the ambiguity of a distorted sociopolitical message in the midst of alternative realities. Sanders and Wheeler distill the profound search for human identity in a world where racial diversity is in decline and globalization has become the tool of choice for corporations seeking to become half- gods of impersonality. In Ghost in the Shell, Sanders blurs the message so much that all we can see is the visual aesthetic and the breathtaking panorama in a world blurred by familiarity. There are indeed commendable choices in the dark corners of genre immersion. Sanders used a recycled narrative template: corporations mistreating innocent citizens, the dark return of survivors, a machine discovering its nature, then a saga. In a film that seeks to be the first to adapt Shirow's terminology to cinematic language, to reflect contemporary social disappointments and to convey a fatalistic message: that the soul counts for little although it's importance is for everything. Rupert Sanders appears to have kept the goal to delve into postmodern psychology through a handful of characters in the cyberpunk landscape, to solely align with the movement discussing the degradation of human identity, it calls for a more restrained reliance on action, gunfire, and the transformation of Tokyo into a technological sin city. In the words of Wong Kin Yuen "Ghost in the Shell (2017), and Hong Kong's Cityscape Colonial cities can be viewed as the forerunners of what the contemporary capitalist world city would eventually become." (Yuen, 2000). In *Ghost in the Shell (2017)* we see an era of alternative pop cinema, one with a mature tone that preserved its distinct character while occasionally venturing into grand spectacles, all in service of storytelling with profound substance.

Nevertheless, Hollywood, with its fair share of limitations, appears to be primarily preoccupied with the ego of the aesthete, dampening the potential progress that could have been made. In the story we have Batou, who was Major Kusanagi's companion in the first part of the story. Along with his partner Togusa, Batou investigates a series of murders committed by android prototypes. What begins as a search for a murderer quickly turns into a desperate fight to retain these transhumans' humanity.

The visual presentation is significant in any transhumanist film and here the timing is neatly outlined. It is a time when technological development has succeeded in integrating traditional livelihood giving rise to spectacular sequences. The story reintroduces certain recurring themes, such as the loneliness of the individual, the gradual introduction of technology into human life and the loss of identity.

The language used in the film are short, to the point sentences and spoken in a manner that today's AI would converse. Ghost in the Shell (2017)contains pedantic language, but the main character reduces the dramatic effect with sarcasm. Although they seem far-fetched, these expressions fit perfectly with the tone of the film and are neither obvious nor unnecessary. One of the film's strengths, while not an entirely original science fiction concept, is its exploration of society as a colossal information transmission system. This concept is based on information theory, its links with artificial intelligence and its extensions with theoretical physics, all adequately illustrated by the images in the film. Evaluating whether a statement is a lofty cliché or an intriguing concept requires a basic understanding of the subject, something critics often lack. As Yang says "sf meanings become adapted to the language of art cinema." (Yang, 2013). What really sets this film apart from current trends in mainstream science fiction is the depth and rigor with which it explores the concept of artificial intelligence. The film also conveys a sense of nostalgia and tenderness, exploring the longing for lost nature in a futuristic cyberpunk setting and showcasing the atmosphere of modern urban metropolises.

Innocence has a complex and complex plot that goes beyond simple action scenes and delves into a somewhat superficial investigation. The film questions the concept of intelligent life in a world where a humanoid robot is little more than a calculator and a computer-like machine is being capable of reason and emotion. The lines between artificial intelligence and natural intelligence are blurring and all that remains is a thin thread of 'soul', often referred to in cinematic terms as a ghost or 'spirit.' This soul can navigate the digital web and grow without a physical body.

Characters, backgrounds and general atmosphere were cut or omitted, leaving many elements unexplained and preventing full immersion. This enriches and deepens the cinematic experience. Some of the most impressive moments are a pause, an interlude, like in the charming Asian carnival, which we can admire with enthusiasm.

Thus the thought of the film is whether an inanimate object is actually viable. For this reason, robot toys made in the image of a human being, and sometimes treated as such, are deeply disturbing. What really scares people is the confrontation with themselves and the possibility that they are nothing more than a collection of simple mechanisms and perfectly coordinated materials. In other words, this abomination means that almost all of humanity belongs to the Void.

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