

Movie Corpus 1 LIT 4550-40  
Analysis given to: Stéphane Leclerc

Description of the narrative structure of the film  
[Ghost in the Shell]  
directed by Mamoru Oshii.

Theoretical frame  
[The meaning of life]  
from Alfred Adler

End of session work  
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The theoretical framework chosen to analyze the film is based on the theories set out in the book, *The Meaning of Life* by author Alfred Adler. According to these theories, we will study the individual psychology of the main character by identifying the moments when she expresses a feeling of inferiority, superiority, a level of hamartia and hybris.

This film is set in a fictitious future, in 2029. It depicts the life of a cyborg woman, leader of an elite police group, on a mission to arrest a high-level hacker. More personally she is looking for her humanity as well as the understanding of it. This Japanese animated film, released in 1995, is inspired by the political and architectural situation of the city of Hong Kong. The storyline was influenced by the tension and apprehension experienced by the population for the impending return of their colony to China in 1997. The film presents the symbolism of the ghost or spirit seeking to maintain its identity after a transition to another level of existence.

The film begins with a virtual view of the city. (0 h 30 s) There is no music, no room for aesthetics, just a cold vision of a machine that sees the world in geometric form and individuals in the form of identification numbers. We are in the head of Major Kusanagi who shows us her perception of the real world with her virtual vision. She is immersed in a continuous stream of digital information. The Major perched on the roof of a building, like a bird of prey, watches the arrival of the police while listening to her target. (0 h 53 s) The fact that she is in place before the arrival of the police gives us an idea of her resources and level of access to information about the police's movements and those of her target.

In an exhibition gesture, the Major undresses and plunges naked in the air like an acrobatic diver. (0 h 2 min 20 s) The city is her element and she dives with pleasure. (0 h 2 min 24 s) No mooring is visible until the last moment where we see an anchorage that is not secured properly. (0 h 2 min 27 s) This type of jump is reminiscent of the rite of Vanuatu people throwing themselves into the void at the end of a liana to prove their courage and virility. The name Kusanagi itself refers

to a legendary sword of Japanese folklore that symbolizes the value of courage. Many of Major Kusanagi's qualities are typically reserved for the archetypal male hero, especially those of the Asian male hero. Such traits as authority, stoicism, a bad character, a talent for violence, an interest in weapons as well as fighting. Kusanagi casually puts her life in danger as if it does not matter and acts as if she is indestructible, which demonstrates a very high regard for her abilities.

For her attack, Major Kusanagi is positioned behind an opaque holographic window that presents a school of arowana fish. (0 h 3 min 13 s) The popular belief and symbolism of this choice of fish makes it possible to identify the owners as wealthy people. Popular belief is that these fish are a guarantee of luck and prosperity. Their behaviors reinforce the idea of a privileged class since they feed only on the surface, which means that they eat before the bottom fish.

The Major fires through the window and reaches a defenceless diplomat and kills him in front of police witnesses. (0 h 3 min 40 s) Due to the lack of weapons for the suspect and a police-controlled situation, the Major had no apparent reason to kill him. She does it anyway using a defense-fire technique called "Mozambique Drill", a technique used by the police to guarantee the immediate stop of a suspect who is resistant to their assaults. This technique consists of two quick shots to the chest followed by a shot to the head. The question then arises about the motives of the Major who was present on the scene before everyone and had the opportunity to find an optimal position for a distance shooting guaranteeing anonymity. It then appears that the situation has a personal aspect. The Major gets a certain pleasure from being close to her targets and using extreme violence. She does not mind being identified while her mimetic camouflage slowly covers her body, leaving her face visible as long as possible..

The scene of Kusanagi's rebirth begins with a traditional Japanese wedding song. (0: 4: 6) It symbolizes a union of two elements and serves to ward off evil spirits. This song gives a supernatural and religious aspect to the process and guarantees the insertion of a good spirit into the artificial body. The first element necessary for this union is the human spirit, "the Ghost" a term that represents a

disembodied spirit seeking a passage to another stage of its existence. The second element is a synthetic body shell, "the Shell", a shell offering physical protection, mimetic camouflage and increased physical capabilities.

Sequences of digital codes scroll before our eyes, they represent a binary version of the names of the creators of the film. (0 h 4 min 21 s) Their presences allow the inscription of their collaborations from the beginning of the film and they create a narrative link with the numerical simulation in progress during the union of the Major in her biomechanical body. The Major's consciousness is transferred to an artificial brain which itself is implanted in a robotic body. (0 h 4 min 18 s) (0 h 4 min 27 s) her mechanical body is humanized by hair and a covering of a thin layer of skin. (0 h 5 min 7 s) which leaves the Major with a semblance of humanity to which to relate. She is in a fetal position before leaving a tunnel-like passage, which is clearly the depiction of an artificial birthing canal. (0 h 6 min 6 s) (0 h 6 min 19 s)

The major wakes up in her room. (0 h 7 min 13 s) Because of the editing of the film, this scene gives the impression that she dreamed about her birth which reveals a certain trauma or at least a significant event. She is immersed in darkness and offers an expressionist cut of light. (0 h 7 min 41 s) The room is functional and has no decoration. The fact that the outside light does not enter the room offers an unreal and artificial appearance. This window allows us to see how she monitors the city as a whole and suggests that her life and identity have no definition and visibility outside her apartment.

Kusanagi's gaze is static and cold in most scenes of the film. It can be interpreted in many ways. First of all the limitation of facial movement can represent a way to cut down on the work for the animators of the film, but the constant level of attention to the details and the quality of the technical means applied tend to make us put aside that hypothesis. There is also the typical behavior of the Japanese hero who is stoic and in control of his emotions. Given the introspective side of the film, it is more accurate to think that if the gaze is the mirror of the soul, then it is a direct reflection of the static aspect of Kusanagi's soul.

The Major will never be complete according to her criteria or more advanced than she is in her personal evolution. She cannot resign from the police without losing her biomechanical body since it does not belong to her, this restitution would therefore be a regression in her physical evolution. (0 h 31 min 33 s) She cannot move forward either at the personal level because of her impressions of confinement and limitations in the cycle of her evolution (0 h 32 min 11 s). The Major is therefore static and limited in her physique and her mind. Like all cyborgs, she experiences the fantasies of childhood by living a second birth when she joins her human spirit in her artificial body. Cyborgs are unable to repair themselves and maintain their bodies, which makes them vulnerable to failures and depends on people who are more qualified than they are for their periodic interviews. (0 h 31 min 19 s)

Kusanagi has a feeling of inferiority about her humanity, her identity and her soul. Her mind is constantly bathed in a flood of ideas and multiple conversations that are not her own, but occupy her thoughts. (0 h 32 min) She wonders if she's still the same person. Her identity is fragmented between what she is, an artificial being with the memory of her humanity and what she was, an ordinary human being with a soul. Faced with the possibility that a "ghost" can be created artificially, it casts doubt on the need to be a human. (0 h 42 min 48 s) She values uniqueness, honesty, opinions and different points of view (0 h 12 min 50 s) except for the judgment of other about her choices or activities. (0 h 29 min 30 s)

Kusanagi's body is perfect, but her mind is a source of questioning and doubt. She compensates for these insecurities by highlighting what is best. She does not hesitate to show her naked body in public. She is very athletic and does not miss any opportunity to demonstrate her extraordinary physical abilities. She overcompensates in the physical with violence applied in her unarmed fights and in the use of firearm, two fields where she is very competent. Even in the face of a tank she uses her physical rather than her mind. Her defeat being assured by her arrogance, she will make the ultimate sacrifice of her body and mind. Her general overcompensation led her to a pathological need to put herself in danger, to micromanage and control her team by imposing her choice of weapon for her

comrade despite his preference (0 h 12 min 23 s) and to dominate or destroy her enemies.

She shows many proofs of her vanity by exposing her body when she strips herself in public, to use her visual camouflage. She make sure she is identified to be sure of being recognized for her exploits before disappearing. (0 h 3 min 49 s) She believes herself above the law and retaliation. She makes another proof of excess in a fight with an adversary clearly inferior physically and for which she makes a superfluous use of her invisibility. (0 h 22 min 29 s) This moment is also an opportunity to use excessive force to have fun with an individual who despite his violence is still a victim controlled by the Puppet Master. (0 h 23 min 18 s) She questions her humanity and acts as a cold and emotionless machine with a lack of empathy for the victims of the Puppet Master.

The hobby of Kusanagi is to gently ascend in water during scuba diving session. (0 h 27 min 51 s) The first hypothesis for the attraction of this activity is to be in sensory isolation which offers a reduction of stress and blocks the multitude of communication signals that usually assail her mind. The second hypothesis is to relive one's birth and to find there the security of the original matrix. When she comes out she acquires a sense of renewal and imagines herself to be a new person. (0 h 30 min 27 s)

The major shows hamartia when she receives an epiphany, a revelation during her conversation with Batu on the boat. This place is reminiscent of the philosophical thought of the "Boat of Theseus" which raises the question of the final identity of a boat that receives new spare parts until there is no more original pieces. Despite the fact that her original consciousness is unique, the action of transposing it into a totally different artificial body makes her think about who she really is. Kusanagi's body remains unchanged over time and this is reflected on her mind that she believes is stagnant in her evolutionary development. At the moment when the Puppet Master hacks their conversations, she will become aware of her weakness, the fragility of her mind in the face of hacking. (0 h 32 min 27 s)

The major is showing hybris in her interactions with others. She holds a position of power as leader of an elite police team, she has a bad temper and believes herself above formalities. (0 h 40 min 43 s) She is physically stronger, more agile and masters several fighting techniques which makes her believe that she can overcome everything with her physical strength. Kusanagi and Batu, his second, are arrogant when they denigrates a vanquished opponent, victim of the Puppet Master, while he does not even know who he really is. (0 h 23 min 40 s) Kusanagi has the arrogance to believe that she can do her missions alone and believes that she should be the only danger. (0 h 59 min 34 s) (1 h 4 s) She thinks she is omnipotent about what she is personally capable of doing. She is proud and overestimates her abilities when attacking a spider tank, it does not come to her mind to ask for help unless she is trapped. (1 h 25 min) (1 hr 1 min 25 sec)

Her loss of contact with reality is at the level of her perceptions of the world and people. The virtual network allows her to have a perspective out of her body, an aerial view of the whole city with her targets in real time. (0 h 16 min 24 s) This elevated level gives her the opportunity to judge in a superior way what she is observing. She is a judge and an executor of the people she targets. She does her research as a predatory bird in search of prey. She also experiences seeing herself through the eyes of the Puppet Master. (1 h 7 min 54 s) Her body is manufactured in series and she knows she is not completely unique, she identifies with mannequins in shop windows. (0 h 34 min 39 s) She recognizes herself in a passerby (0 h 33 min 47 s) and she doubts her singularity. She doubts that there are other people with the same type of body, which multiplies doubles, blurs her identity and perception of reality. The Puppet Master makes use of a body of the same series as Kusanagi and mentions that they both have the same psyche, which makes them a double of each other on both the mental and physical aspect. (1 hr 12 min 27 sec)

The third act of the film sees the major face a tank-spider that destroys, piece by piece, the structures of the building in which they are. (1 h 1 min 2 s) This tank tries to reach the Major in motion and shoots along the way a mural containing some fossils. (1 h 3 min 51 s) The tank records its trace, while

questioning the existence of these primitive life forms. In the end it destroys a genetic tree going up along the groups of species that in this case represent bottom fishes. (1 h 4 min 1 s) Species that are practically living fossils in their forms, which creates a parallel with the Major and her idea of evolutionary stagnation. The tank ends its shooting just before reaching the top position of man. (1 hr 4 min 4 s) This position lacks many species groups between man and fish, suggesting a jump in evolution. The arrangement of group names leaves room only above humans to inscribe a new species, suggesting the future place of human hybrids and machines. The type of fish presented in this scene, bottom fish, symbolizes a class of society feeding last at the bottom of their environment. The use of fish as a substitute for classes of society creates a direct link with the scene of holographic arowanas at the beginning of the film with its representation of the upper strata of the humans position.

The final argument of the Puppet Master who will convince Kusanagi for their union is that her efforts to want to stay herself, not to lose the last vestiges of what she is are the obstacles that prevent her from evolving. (1 h 12 min 4 s) In the final, the major accepts the offer of the Puppet Master to move to another stage of their respective developments by uniting their two minds. Despite the many benefits of her current body that could be repaired, this protective shell will have to be left behind like a crustacean shedding its skin after growth and become something new. (1:13:15) The union of their mind is reminiscent of the sexual union of two bodies to produce a new entity. The "newborn" awakens in the body of a robot child, demonstrating a physical and mental birth of a new unique being. (1 h 14 min 5 sec)