

# GHOST WHISPERS

Physical Memory and the Self in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*

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May 2020

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In *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* director Kenji Kamiyama tells the story of Motoko Kusanagi, a young woman who has inhabited a prosthetic body from the age of six. Through her life and the lives of her team, Kamiyama presents how items of sentimental value can become the embodiment of memories. These items can help preserve self-identity in the face of existential doubt in the truthfulness of memory and the unknown body. In the two seasons of *Stand Alone Complex*, Kamiyama challenges Motoko by raising up two figures to serve as mirrors for her own life and choices and presents to the viewer the decisions that Motoko faces and why she chooses to reject them. In a franchise like *Ghost in the Shell* where the prosthetic cyborg interface easily becomes the focus, Kamiyama instead presents the humanity of Motoko Kusanagi and what she does to maintain herself despite the challenges she faces.



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PHYSICAL MEMORY AND THE SELF IN *GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE*  
*COMPLEX*

A Thesis

Presented To the Faculty of the Department of English

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in English

By

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May, 2020



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## Motoko Kusanagi and the History of *Ghost in the Shell*

Motoko Kusanagi is the protagonist of *Kōkaku Kidōtai: The Ghost in the Shell*, a manga series created by Shirow Masamune and first serialized from 1989 to 1990. *Kōkaku Kidōtai* is translated into English as *Armored Mobile Riot Police* and reflects the series' initial target audience of young men and boys. The series' tone shifted in 1995 from one of an action-comedy laced with moments of fanservice to one dealing with existential questions that helped appeal to a much broader audience. This tonal shift was constructed by film director Mamoru Oshii when he brought the franchise to the screen in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004). According to the book *Ghost in the Shell Readme: 1995-2017*,<sup>i</sup> one shift between 1989 and 1995 is that “the Internet was finally coming into its own, and high-technology words like *cyborg*, *cybercrime*, *false memories*, and *info-organisms* were on everyone’s lips” and because of this resonance with the cultural zeitgeist of the day the film reached outside of Japan, becoming the first Japanese movie to top the American *Billboard* video rental charts (*Readme* 21). Oshii modelled the locations after Hong Kong and filled in the background with traditional Japanese folk songs. This combination gives the city an “unmistakably Asian impression, but one that can’t quite be linked to any specific country” and creates a mirror of the world found on the Internet due to the profusion of digital billboards (*Readme* 21). In his review of Oshii’s 1995 film David Chute writes that “*Ghost in the Shell* is a carefully worked-out set of variations on the theme of what’s human and what isn’t” and that Oshii chose a more cosmopolitan cityscape for his version than Masamune’s original, which was clearly set in Tokyo down to the street names (Chute 88). Oshii’s film is “about how life can emerge from the sea of information, and to support this theme he

wanted a city overflowing with data” in order to represent the city as its own character, acting as a network in a physical manner similar to the digital network of the Internet (*Readme* 35). The anime *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* returns to the distinctly Japanese roots but shifts from Tokyo to the areas around Kobe and Nagasaki in the south. The author of *Readme* writes that “the art style also brought the setting closer to real-world Japan,” foregoing the overabundance of billboards. This artistic choice is meant to connect this fictional Japan with something familiar to the audience.

The series’ original subtitle and English translated franchise name introduces two important concepts that are foundational to the entire series – the “ghost” and the “shell.” Mirt Komel describes one’s ghost as “an individual’s consciousness that differentiates a human from a robot. Even if someone replaces his own biological body with a fully cyborgized prosthetic one, including a cyberbrain as the locus of the ghost, one can still be considered human as long as one retains one’s own ghost” (922). In the franchise the ghost has the connotation of both the mind and the soul; and in the case of AIs having ghosts, the word also signifies self-awareness. The shell can be defined as a body, although the definition of the body is vastly expanded in the world of *Ghost in the Shell* to include what Gerald Miller refers to as the “technologically penetrated body” of the cyborg and bodies that are wholly machine as can be found in several examples within *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (Miller 152). The cyborg is defined by Donna Haraway as “a hybrid of machine and organism” (Haraway 149), and Motoko is considered a cyborg due to her retaining her organic brain. Oshii’s Motoko is said to only have remnants of her original brain matter, whereas Kamiyama’s version is never specified. While this difference isn’t important to either version, the fact that such a detail is noted by Oshii

reflects the importance he placed on the evolution away from the organic. Cyberbrain technology is the key to many of the events found in the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise. A cyberbrain is any person's brain that has been merged to some extent with technology that allows for the brain to connect directly to the Net. This technology allows for the transmission of memories and potentially even ghosts for the purpose of saving them for themselves or their posterity. The downfall to this technology is that it can be a two-way street; the connection to the Net allows others to take control of the individual through a method called ghost-hacking. David Chute defines the abilities of "ghost hackers" saying that they "are perfectly willing to implant false memories – 'synthetic experiences' – into innocent citizens and manipulate them like puppets when it suits their purposes" (86). That ability plays a significant role in the plot of the entire franchise (86).

In his review of the film David Chute writes that Mamoru Oshii's translation of Shirow Masamune's *Ghost in the Shell* shifts the focus from the "political and technological" concerns Shirow loved to present in the manga and instead emphasizes the "human and philosophical" interest in the "challenge the technology presents to one individual's sense of her own humanity" (Chute 85). Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* presents Motoko as both a capable field commander of her team and someone who struggles with her own identity. She is identified in *Readme* as wondering "whether someone with a completely artificial body can even be called human, and the case of the Puppet Master causes her to doubt just how certain her own memories and ghost really are," which drives her towards her choice to merge with the Puppet Master and leave her physical body (*Readme* 24). Oshii's Motoko follows the utopic theory of the cyborg posited by Donna Haraway in her essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991) that because the "cyborg is a creature

in a post-gender world” such a creature could resolve oppositional binaries by rendering them obsolete (Haraway 150). Haraway writes that “certain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature, workers, animals – in short, domination of all constituted as others” and these dualisms are challenged when high technology is introduced to the equation (Haraway 178). In this utopia the dualisms of race, gender, creed, and others are done away with because the nature of humanity would become hybridized. Oshii’s Motoko struggles with her identity due to her early transition to a prosthetic body and she questions the validity of her own memories because those memories do not include her origin beyond the cybernetic. Oshii’s Motoko mirrors the existential fear found in his version of *Ghost in the Shell*, and “the terror is relatively easy to understand” according to N. Katherine Hayles in the book *How We Became Posthuman* (283). Hayles writes that the “‘Post,’ with its dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it, hints that the days of ‘the human’ may be numbered” (283), and combatting this fear is why Motoko merges with the sentient AI of the Puppet Master and becomes some new form of humanity who has abandoned the need of a physical anchor.

The *Ghost in the Shell* franchise, post Oshii’s film, and its scholarship is focused on how the cyborg nature of Motoko Kusanagi enables her to access a sort of next step to human evolution. Carl Silvio defines the next step, writing that the cyborg “serves as a representational figure that embodies the capacity for information technologies to erase gender and racial boundaries and the structures of oppression which have historically accompanied them” (54). Oshii’s vision of the future of humanity is heavily ghost centered, presented through Motoko’s willingness to leave behind the remnants of her organic

nature and the body that housed it. In 2002 Production I.G., the production house for all animated versions of the franchise, tapped Kenji Kamiyama to direct a 26-episode adaptation of Shirow's manga. The initial season was so successful that the production company decided to greenlight a second season. Kamiyama decided to take a different approach to world-building than Oshii, grounding the series in the familiarity of location and making elements like cyborgs and cyber brains more accessible to a general audience. His portrayal of Motoko is also grounded in this familiarity, focusing on her humanity to make her story of memory resonate with a more diverse audience.

*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, directed by Kenji Kamiyama, is an animated television series that aired from 2002-2005. Kamiyama chose to set the story in 2030 and to “depict a world in which the Puppet Master never appeared” in addition to his version of Motoko being much different than Oshii's (*Readme* 61). Kamiyama's Motoko is both the capable mission commander of Public Security Section 9 and someone who is sure of herself despite having few memories of her origin. *Stand Alone Complex*, hereafter referred to as SAC, is set in New Port City off the coast of Kobe, Japan. Some time prior to the events of the series<sup>ii</sup>, enough time for memorials to have been constructed but not enough that the political strife was in any way settled, World War III led to the nuclear bombing of Tokyo, Okinawa, and Berlin. The destruction of the capital led the Japanese to move the capital to Fukuoka on the island of Kyushu. The destruction of Beijing due to a meteor led to the fall of the Communist Party and the reunification of mainland China and Taiwan. The American Empire rose from the ashes of World War III and tried to establish itself as a world power through conquering new areas of North and South America and through a security pact with the Japanese

government. This pact and the relationship of the Japanese and the American Empire plays a major role in many of the events of both seasons of the anime, directly resulting in Kuze's murder and their agents' involvement in the events of Episode Ten of the first season which established the existence of a conflict referred to as the South American Campaign. Many of the members of Section 9, such as Motoko and her team members Batou and Saito are confirmed to have taken part in this conflict due to events mentioned in the series. Two other conflicts: World War IV, also called the Second Vietnam War, and the Second Korean War both occurred between 2015 and 2024; however, not much is revealed about these conflicts other than that World War IV led the Japanese to establish isolationist policies that directly influence the plot of the second season of the show. The Japanese were able to recover from the war more rapidly than the other world powers due to the creation of micromachine scrubbers able to clean up the nuclear fallout. The invention and subsequent recovery were dubbed the Japanese miracle. These major conflicts, as well as the Japanese miracle, lead to many Asian refugees coming to Japan. The Japanese welcomed them, initially with open arms because they provided cheap labor for the massive rebuilding project across the country and in the establishment of the new capital in Fukuoka. Season One takes place from 2030 to 2031 and Season Two begins in 2032.

Public Security Section 9 is described by Gerald Miller as “an elite group of police officers who function as a hyper-militarized SWAT team that specializes in cyber crimes[sic]” (152) and by Mirt Komel as “a special operation task force dedicated to fighting cyberterrorism” (921). The organization is led by Chief Daisuke Aramaki and the field team is led by Major Motoko Kusanagi. Motoko is given full control over recruitment

for the team and has constructed a team in various levels of cyberization. The team comprises Batou, a former Ranger and the member with the second most cyberization after Motoko herself; Togusa, a former detective who is the newest member in Season One and the least cyberized; Saito, a sniper and the second most organic member of the team; Ishikawa, an electronic information gathering specialist and former soldier; Paz, an investigation and reconnaissance specialist; and Borma, an explosives expert and support for Ishikawa on cyber-information gathering. The team also comprises several multi-ped AI think tanks called Tachikomas, who quickly grow more and more human as the season progresses, as well as a few others in Season Two who do not play a major role on the team.

Major Motoko Kusanagi is the protagonist of the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise. She is “exceptionally skilled in warfare both conventional and cyber” and her cyber warfare abilities are put on display multiple times throughout the anime (*Readme* 62). She can remotely control other cybernetic bodies for reconnaissance and to hack the bodies of others to protect innocents and gain intelligence as can be seen in multiple episodes, but most clearly in the first episode of the second season “Reembody.” Motoko has a fully cyberized body that does not share the semi-mechanical appearances of the cybernetic parts of the other members of her team, such as Batou and Borma’s eyes. She appears to be in her mid-to-late twenties, although the nature of her cybernetic body makes establishing her age rather difficult. Motoko was placed into a fully prosthetic body at the age of six following a horrific plane crash, the details of which will be covered in a later section, and not much is known about her life between cyberization and the formation of Section 9 except her involvement in the South American Campaign. Her private life is

shown in glimpses, and not much is known beyond her owning several safehouses and that she is in a relationship with her two girlfriends, named Lan and Kurutan, who make several appearances throughout the series. Kurutan is in the medical field and makes an appearance in the episode “Scandal” as the witness for Motoko’s prosthetic body transfer. In addition, “Scandal” and a later conversation with Batou reference Motoko’s continued choice for her current prosthetic body – pointing to her establishment of the identity Motoko Kusanagi; a later conversation with Kuze establishes that her name is only a pseudonym and that her given name had been lost. However, by the events of SAC she had been Motoko Kusanagi for far longer than she was not. Kamiyama’s Motoko is very different than Oshii’s in that she does not suffer from the same existential fear. The reason for the change in her character could be due to her choosing to rely on physical mnemonic devices such as her watch in Season One and the origami cranes from Season Two. Motoko in SAC is much surer of her identity. She continuously chooses to return to the same appearance whenever necessity dictates a prosthetic body swap, something for which she is called out by Batou in Episode 25 of the first season. After returning her watch, Batou asks why the item is important to her. She downplays the importance of the watch, “A wristwatch and weight training, huh? I guess both of us cling to bits of useless memories,” but her actions render her words false (Episode 25, *Stand Alone Complex*). The author of Kodansha’s *Readme* writes that “for cyborgs like Motoko and Batou, who have largely transcended physical bodies, a wristwatch or weight-training items with sentimental value are a sort of ‘external memory,’ a way of proving that they are still themselves,” which highlights Kamiyama’s push past the cyborg as the next step of

human evolution and a reconnection with what humanity is rather than what it could become (Readme 79).

Motoko Kusanagi is not her real name. Her given name was lost. She cannot remember who she was before a horrific plane crash failed to take her life at the age of six. With her body failing, the comatose young girl is given a new chance at life in a new man-made cybernetic and fully prosthetic body. However, such a gift is not given without a cost. She would have to learn how to walk, talk, write, and play all over again in a body not her own and one in which she had little control over her own hands and feet. In the anime series *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* Kenji Kamiyama chooses to give the viewer only hints of her past and focuses instead on Motoko, now twenty years older, and her encounters with two characters who mirror herself in many ways, but most importantly reflect the choices she does not make. In Season One, Motoko is contrasted with the character the Laughing Man. While Motoko chooses to cling to a visual identity, returning to the same body and holding onto a physical representation of memory instead of the digital storage commonplace throughout the series, the Laughing Man, also known as Aoi, chooses to hide his appearance both physically and digitally and uses his hacking skills to dig through the memory banks of the Net to expose corruption. In Season Two, Hideo Kuze serves as Motoko's foil. Kuze views his prosthetic body as a symbol of his brokenness and seeks to rid himself of that feeling by abandoning his body in favor of a purely digital existence on the Net, whereas Motoko chooses herself and the ambiguous nature of continued human existence instead of the promised transcendence her cyborg nature could offer. Rather than fleeing from the suffering, she chooses to meet it head on, helping those who couldn't help themselves.

Most studies of the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise are limited to Oshii's films *Ghost in the Shell* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* and primarily focus on Motoko's evolution beyond the shell of her prosthetic body. Kamiyama's abandoning of the desire for evolution through the choices made by Motoko throughout the series has left *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* almost untapped from a research standpoint. *Stand Alone Complex* and Kamiyama's focus on what makes Motoko human, and not simply a vehicle for the next stage of human evolution, has yielded incredible insight on the power of the body in regard to self-identity and the equal importance of memory in the construction of the self. In *Writing Machines*, Hayles speaks about the downside of the posthuman evolution, saying that "the future ceases to have meaning; the future is precious for mortals because they understand their lives have finite horizons" (Hayles 103). Because of the tendency to look beyond the human in cyborg and posthuman theory, I believe that we lose sight of our humanity found in the processes of time upon a body that can decay. In *SAC*, Kamiyama returns the cyborg future to a more human present and creates a more accessible Motoko Kusanagi. *SAC* is divided into two seasons, with the first being created as a standalone project without a second season being planned. The first season was produced simultaneously with Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, and the slight difference in tone between the two seasons can be at least partially attributed to Oshii's influence during the overall story writing phase. Remnants of Oshii's Motoko and her evolution are found in the goal of the character Hideo Kuze, who shares a very similar origin story with her. The following chapters follow Kamiyama's partitioning of the story. A close reading of several crucial scenes and episodes provide the framework for a dive into the Net of memories, both in digital form and their physical counterparts. Built on that

framework and adapting the work that has been done on Oshii's films, Kamiyama's Motoko will stand out as the human counterpart to Oshii's version. Kamiyama's Motoko rejects the existential fear of her film version and chooses to forge ahead despite the struggles that come with being alive in a post-war, posthuman future. The ambiguity of the future is not something Motoko fears, nor does she fear her past. Oshii's Motoko fears the past she does not know, and this fear makes her question her identity. Kamiyama's Motoko seems to revel in this ambiguity. One example of this is how she chose to persevere through the struggles her new body produced during her youth; she strives to make herself better. Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, the two editors of *The Japanese Mind*, write that "ambiguity, or *aimai*, is defined as a state in which there is more than one intended meaning, resulting in obscurity, indistinctness, and uncertainty," but that instead of the fear and worry uncertainty usually promotes, *aimai* "is regarded as a virtue in Japan" and is especially prevalent in Japanese communication (Davies and Ikeno 9). Motoko Kusanagi can be considered the protagonist of Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*; however, Oshii's focus is primarily bound in how she can transcend the worry and doubt through a form of evolution through a merger with the Puppet Master. Gerald Miller describes the climactic merger scene in Oshii's film writing that in her connection with the sentient AI, Motoko enters a new world where she is no longer simply connected to the Net but is part of it. The fact that Oshii chooses to render this scene as a "blinding, heavenly light" furthers the transcendent imagery Oshii connects to the cybernetic future (Miller 155). In contrast, Kamiyama chooses to present Motoko in a more realistic fashion; her cybernetic nature is almost secondary to her humanity. Kamiyama removes the world of digital billboards set in a vaguely Asian city and restores *Ghost in the Shell* to Shirow

Masamune's more realistic future Japan, which "features many familiar sights of Japanese life, from forests to rice paddies" and recognizable cityscapes (*Readme* 71). Kamiyama's Motoko remains herself by connecting her memories to physical objects like the watch and the origami cranes. She doesn't experience the struggles with her identity or her faith in memory that her film counterpart does. The Motoko Kusanagi of Kamiyama's *Ghost in the Shell* is the human side of the cyborg that has been mostly ignored in examinations of the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise. In the following chapters I will analyze Kamiyama's presentation of Motoko and tease out the tension between cyberization and embodiment in SAC.

## The Laughing Man and the Shell of Motoko Kusanagi

Season One of *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*<sup>iii</sup>, written and directed by Kenji Kamiyama, focuses on the lives and missions of the members of Japanese Public Security Section 9 in the year 2030. Kamiyama centers the narrative on the embodiment of memory in the story of Motoko Kusanagi. The embodiment of memory is found in both Motoko's and Batou's stories in the items that remind them of their previous selves – a watch for Motoko and weight training machines for Batou. Neither of these items are useful for the care of their prosthetic bodies. The value of the items lies in the sentimental, or as Batou says, they “let you know that you're still you” and provide an external form of memory (Episode 25, *Stand Alone Complex*). Season One is centered on physical memory and the body, and Kamiyama devotes little time to the internal workings of his characters throughout the arc of the season. However, the lack of time does not indicate a lack of importance as can be seen throughout Season Two. Due to his desire to present the familiar to his audience and to build a connection between the viewer and the character, Kamiyama presents memory through sentimental items and chooses to focus on characterization through visible actions and the spoken word. Kamiyama gives Motoko a past she can rely upon through the watch, giving her something to connect to when her pseudo-immortality has removed time's effects upon her body.

Season One is divided by the two concepts of “Stand alone” and “complex,” representing episodes that provide backstory or character development and episodes that connect to the main story arc of the season respectively. In addition, the concept of a “stand alone complex” plays a major role in two storylines: the identity of the Laughing Man and in the Tachikomas' decision to sacrifice themselves in the penultimate episode.

A “stand alone complex” can be defined as a phenomenon where many individuals “all had the same idea independently; that is that they are a *Stand Alone Complex*” (ReadMe 77) or as a variation of the copycat phenomenon. The “complex” episodes follow the Section 9 case of the Laughing Man, presented as a cybercriminal who has reappeared after six years. The crimes associated with the figure involve corporate espionage and blackmail starting with the case of Ernest Serano, the CEO of a company called Serano Genomics. In connection to the story of Motoko and the embodied devices of memory, Kamiyama also presents the issues that arise when humanity dwells in a prosthetic shell: disconnected memories, lost identity, and body swaps. Throughout the case Section 9, led by the detective work of Togusa, uncover the identity of the Laughing Man and that the initial facts of the case were faulty. The truth of the Laughing Man is that the identity is a stand-alone complex, and that the original “Laughing Man” was a person named Aoi. Further, the only crime Aoi had committed was the initial kidnapping of Ernest Serano to uncover the truth about a government cover-up of the effectiveness of the Murai vaccine as opposed to micromachine therapy to combat a sickness known as cyberbrain sclerosis. Every other act of corporate blackmail and even the title of the Laughing Man had been done by other individuals. Aoi only resurfaces due to the Laughing Man identity being used to kill police officers and attempt assassinations of those connected to the initial investigation. The identity of the Laughing Man is shrouded in *aimai*, and Aoi’s cyber hacking abilities allow him to cloak himself through the real-time hacking of digital recording devices and the perceptions of those with cyber brains.

In her article “Reconfigured Bodies: The Problem of Ownership,” Leslie Maria Bowen describes the traditional conception of the body as limited: “The body has tended

to emerge as a fixed, absolute, corporeal entity” but that the influence of biotechnology, or by inference the combination of technology and the human body in the cyborg, “demands reconfiguration” because the “forces acting on our bodies clearly exceed our ability to contain them within any sort of fixed and stable formulation” (Bowen 24). If, as Bowen postulates, it is growing exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to clearly define the body with our current technological levels, how much more so in the cyberized world of *Ghost in the Shell*. In his essay “Habeus Corpus: The Sense of Ownership of One’s Own Body,” Frederique De Vignemont writes, “The body has an ambiguous status, as it seems to be both what we are and what belongs to us,” and the concept of the body is made much more ambiguous when cybernetic bodies are introduced to the equation (De Vignemont 445). How then in *Ghost in the Shell* do the characters and the viewers establish what defines the self when the body can be changed, or in the situations where the body one inhabits does not belong to oneself? The shifting narrative of the body is made more complex when the prosthetic body of the cyborgs in *Ghost in the Shell* are introduced. As a result, assuming all other variables are the same, do racial, sexual, or gendered differences cease to exist in this new paradigm?

One answer is presented by Donna Haraway in her essay “A Cyborg Manifesto” when she writes about “creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted” separated from “the history of sexuality” and whose replication is “uncoupled from organic reproduction” (Haraway 150). This definition separates the cyborg from the human world in the cybernetic body’s racial, sexual, and cultural identity, for Haraway’s cyborg introduces the problem of the division of the identity from the physical markers we rely on to create our concept of self. Melissa Colleen

Stevenson defines Haraway's concept of this separation from humanity as "cybernetic transcendence" in her essay "Trying to Plug In: Posthuman Cyborgs and the Search for Connection" (Stevenson 87). I believe that Kenji Kamiyama's conceptualization of the cyborg in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* falls more in line with that found in N. Katherine Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman*. Stevenson thus summarizes Hayles's theory of the posthuman: "Hayles's fully realized (post)human beings depend upon their embodied experiences and upon their interaction with their complex and shifting environments to define a subjectivity that extends through their bodies and out into the larger world" (Stevenson 88). For Stevenson the posthuman is "not independent of their worlds of flesh and experience, but inextricably bound to them and defined by them" (88).

Understanding Hayles's "fully realized (post)human" and how such a being is bound by "their worlds of flesh and experience" is essential to understanding Kamiyama's characterization of Motoko and Batou. Both Motoko Kusanagi and Batou are revealed to be bound by the mnemonic devices of memory and attachment to a specific physical identity. For Batou these devices are represented by his attachment to weightlifting, something his cybernetic body doesn't need because it is incapable of being improved upon through physical exercise – and in the natural oil he services the AI-driven Tachikoma multi-ped mini-tanks with during the season. In the case of Major Kusanagi it is her appearance - a particular hair color and eye color during youth, her choice to return to the same body if she needs to replace it due to damage, and her connection to a slim, dainty-looking watch that identifies as the one thing that "let you know that you're still you" (Episode 25, *Stand Alone Complex*).

Motoko's prosthetic body is central to her concept of who she is. Due to growing up in bodies that did not grow with her, she had to transfer bodies at regular intervals in order to simulate growth during her childhood and adolescence. The body's importance is only hinted at through stand-alone episodes and in several short sequences found in Episode 25 ("Barrage"). Only in Season Two when Kamiyama shifts his focus from the physical representations of memory to the memories themselves are we presented with more of her backstory. From the age of six, following a horrific plane crash that killed all but her and a young boy, Motoko's brain was transferred into a fully prosthetic body in order to save her life. The shift into the body of a machine forced Motoko to have to relearn how to walk in a body she had very little capacity to control the fine motor functions of. She had to relearn how to write and play, working on controlling the strength of her new body so she wouldn't rip the paper she was writing on or crush the doll she was playing with as foreshadowed in the opening sequence of each of Season One's episodes. Before unpacking the Major's story and her relationship with the physical manifestations of her memories, I believe that there are several stand-alone episodes that are important to define the Kamiyama version of the cyborg story. The futuristic vision of Motoko Kusanagi as a posthuman cybernetic organism in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* can be used to reveal many insights into the human condition of today.

Episode 2, titled "Testation" (*Stand Alone Complex*), is a stand-alone episode that is important in establishing the mythos of the shell/body within the *Ghost in the Shell* universe. The story of Takeshi Kago introduces the concept of religious reasoning to disapprove of prosthetic bodies. Kago, a young weapons designer dies at the age of 28 due to a degenerative condition that caused his body to degrade. His friend, Toshio Oba

tells Section 9's Togusa that the young man's parents had refused to allow their son to become cyberized, something the young man disapproves of but never takes the situation into his own control when he reaches the age of majority. Vowing to create himself a "steel body," Kago pushes himself deeper into his work on AI multi-ped tanks, even outliving the estimate the doctors had given him in youth by 8 years before his condition claimed his life. Oba is tasked with Kago's last will, his testation, that he wanted to have his brain taken from his dying body and placed in the multi-ped tank he had created. Kago believed that the control of his parents' religious beliefs would cease to control him once the body that they clung so hard to would perish. The desire for freedom from the body that bound him to his illness and to the religious beliefs of his parents lead Kago to create the plan to inhabit a new body after death. He could only make the switch after death because even though he resented his parents' beliefs, he was still a dutiful son.

Episode 2 opens with the multi-ped seemingly going rogue at the training and demonstration facility for Kenbishi Heavy Industries. The tank leaves the facility and begins to make its way towards New Port City, the city that provides the backdrop for the events of SAC. Section 9 is called in to stop the tank and prevent the destruction of property, lives, and the reputation of Kenbishi. Motoko and Batou, along with 6 Tachikomas<sup>iv</sup>, are assigned to follow the multi-ped and to stop it should the need arise. During the investigation Togusa unveils Kago and Oba's plans and the eventual destination of the rogue multi-ped – the home of the parents who refused to better his life due to their religious opposition to prosthetic bodies. Batou, Motoko, and the Tachikomas aided by Chief Aramaki and Ishikawa, manage to stop the tank before it arrives at Kago's parents' house until they reveal themselves as defying the evacuation order and the tank

seemingly resumes its mission. Motoko in a last-ditch effort puts herself at risk and hacks Kago's brain, short circuiting it, and causing herself to experience the moment of the young man's life flashing before her eyes. With Kago's brain destroyed, the tank is brought under control, but many internal questions are raised for Motoko. She tells Batou that the feelings and memories she viewed were not ones of hatred but seemed to be that of a child wanting to show his mom his new body. "Well mom, what do you think of my new steel body?" The question raised in his dying moment returns to an argument the young man had with his parents about their religious beliefs and his promise that he would create for himself a new steel body to show them that they were wrong in their beliefs.

If, as De Vignemont writes, the body is both "what we are and what belongs to us," how does the concept of identity change when the body can be physically taken (427)? Episodes 1 ("Section 9") and 7 ("Idolater") introduce the concept of identity theft through seizing ownership of the body. The cyberization prevalent in *SAC* presents a twist to this narrative by allowing for both the theft of the body through the ghost or to control a body through hacking or cyber brain transfer. Because of this possibility, the importance of external memories, bound in the physical manifestations of a watch and weight training machines, is made clear. These episodes are important to establishing the need for such devices in order to build a foundation for one's identity based outside of an increasingly untrustworthy body. In both episodes a powerful political figure is used against their will – in the form of the Foreign Affairs Minister of Japan in "Section 9" and the South American political revolutionary Marcelo Jarti<sup>v</sup>. In the first episode the Foreign Affairs Minister has his body stolen by the spy of a foreign government under the guise of a foiled attempted assassination. The method used by the spy involve switching his cyber-brain

case with the Foreign Affairs minister's and tries to use this control to create the appearance of a major player in the Japanese government defecting to another power to sow confusion in the post-war world. Episode 7 "Idolater" opens with the news story of the assassination of a South American democratic revolutionary figure, which the episode immediately debunks as Motoko and an unnamed identity investigator watch the same man disembark from a plane in New Port City. Jarti is later revealed to have survived six other assassination attempts previously and has been flying to Japan every five months.

Section 9 is tasked with discovering Jarti's reasons for visiting Japan so regularly but to let him travel freely otherwise until he was to leave the country again. The team follows Jarti to the New Port City Hotel where he meets up with Gondo the underboss of the Korinkai organization, a cartel/gang that is a major player in the cyberdrug market, something which Motoko notes is counter to the man's character. After a botched police raid on Gondo, which led to the deaths of everyone involved except for Gondo and Jarti, Jarti used the chaos as an opportunity to escape. Batou, Motoko, and Togusa follow the revolutionary to a warehouse on the outskirts of the city, a place that experiences a vast surge in power usage that Ishikawa notes is tied to the timeline of each Jarti visit. The three discover that there are multiple copies of Jarti due to each being able to subdue one of them, or two in the case of Motoko. Motoko uncovers the reason that the three members were each able to subdue Jarti – a large chamber full of prosthetic copies of Jarti's body connected to a large machine that houses the real body of Jarti. The Korinkai group had been using the copies to prevent the world from knowing that Jarti had died several years before and that they had been the cause. In the effort to protect themselves from retribution and to keep themselves in the graces of those connected to the powerful

political revolutionary the Korinkai used what Motoko refers to as a “ghost dubbing device” to create these seemingly undetectable copies

Episode 18, titled “Lost Heritage,” takes the concepts of identity theft raised in the three episodes I have covered previously and combines them into the story of a family and the young son of a dead father. The story of the Tsujizaki family twists the narrative of body theft, presenting the specter of possession by the ghost of the father. The memories of the father merge with the ghost of the son, who had nothing to hold onto other than his intense desire for revenge. Because the son has no external mnemonic device to rely on, he cannot preserve his own identity once his body and brain are inhabited by both the father and the son. In “Lost Heritage” Kamiyama presents what could go wrong if the memories or ghost of one person is added to a second within one cyberbrain. Kamiyama shows that neither ghost will retain their individual identity and that both will attempt to overwrite the other in a sort of haphazard merger. The episode opens on the anniversary of an unnamed war at the Japanese memorial site.<sup>vi</sup> Central to Kamiyama’s plot is the political upheaval that began with the Japanese government agreeing to allow the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister named Jin into the country for the ceremony for the first time since the conflict to represent the Chinese government paying respect for the Chinese lives lost in the war. Chief Aramaki takes a step back from his leadership role to attend to the grave site of “an old war buddy” (Episode 18, *Stand Alone Complex*). Aramaki’s personal story and his meeting with the war buddy’s daughter, Saori intersect with the investigation Section 9 is coordinating into the death threats directed towards the Vice-Foreign Minister. The death threats seem to stem from Yu, the younger brother of Saori, and her request of Aramaki to investigate why her brother had become

so much like their father in such a short span begin to make sense. Aramaki had initially refused to help, saying it was out of his power to do anything, but seeing the pictures that revealed Yu as the suspect forced his hand.

At the age of 16, Yu Tsujizaki received his father's terminal, a device used by people with non-prosthetic bodies to connect to the Net, or by those with bodies to provide an extra layer of shielding from being hacked. His sister noted that his personality changed after receiving the terminal and that he became increasingly like his late father. He was also overheard having arguments with himself. A phone call to Aramaki reveals the true extent of Yu's change – the Colonel has downloaded his memories and training into his son through the terminal that was given to Yu. The Colonel explains that his intent was only to preserve the truth about the war and his memories of it; however, he did not anticipate his son's overwhelming desire to avenge his mother's death – a “murder” for which Yu blames the Vice-Foreign Minister (Episode 18, *Stand Alone Complex*). The result of this merger between father and son is a vengeful young man with the skills and tactics of the man who had been tasked with training the current generations of the Japanese Self-Defense Force. Motoko stops Yu and protects the Vice-Foreign Minister by implanting the memories of a successful mission and bringing him to receive treatment to try and restore his original self, preserving her and Aramaki's promise to Saori to protect her brother.

The title “Lost Heritage” raises two possible interpretations about what heritage is being lost. Are the Colonel's memories that are destroyed in Motoko's attempt to save the boy the lost heritage? Or does that phrase refer to the Colonel's plans and miscalculations that have potentially led to the destruction of the young man Yu Tsujizaki was becoming?

I think that the Colonel believes his heritage to be the memories he so desired to save, even if the cost was his own son – his true legacy. Also, throughout the entire affair neither Yu nor the Colonel considered Saori, the sister and eldest daughter. Saori was the one with the desire to protect the true legacy her father had forgotten about, his physical legacy found in his daughter and son. In his efforts to preserve the legacy of his memories and skills, the Colonel has ended up destroying both his mental and physical legacy.

Throughout the stand-alone episodes Kamiyama focuses on the bodies and memories of those characters other than Motoko. These stories are crucial to understanding Kamiyama's vision of *Ghost in the Shell* and the relationship between the human and prosthetic found within the cyborg body. Kamiyama suggests that the body alone cannot be the source of identity because the body can be taken and controlled through the means presented in the stand-alone episodes. Because of the untrustworthy nature of the body, one would assume that proves the need to transcend the physical, as Haraway states the cyborg can do; however, why does Motoko believe so firmly in her own body, returning to it again and again? Motoko feels that she can trust her body because her identity is partially anchored in the mnemonic device of her watch. The "Stand Alone" episodes can only provide a small part of the story, outside of the story of Motoko Kusanagi. Motoko's story is instead interwoven through the "Complex" episodes and her interactions with the Laughing Man.

Despite many crimes being attributed to The Laughing Man, all investigations have pointed to the figure being an expert hacker with the ability to hack people's eyes and any recording device to hide his identity in real-time. He can also control the bodies of others, something shared with Motoko, who is also a highly regarded hacker. This ability to

control the perceptions of others is what links him to the stand-alone episodes I have previously examined; instead of stealing the body he steals the body's ability to perceive. If a person has their ability to see and know something taken from them, then they lose the capacity to choose; in this way, the theft of perception can be equated to loss of agency. Each of the three aforementioned episodes' plot returns to De Vignemont's definition of the body, that "it seems to be both what we are and what belongs to us" (427). In each of the three episodes analyzed above, the control of the body is taken through physical means – through a brain swap or by seizing control through the manufacture of copies in the story of Marcelo Jarti. The theft of image raises doubt as to whether our bodies are wholly owned by us, especially in the *Ghost in the Shell* universe where those with prosthetic bodies reside in and build their identities from a man-made shell. Instead of De Vignemont's definition of the body, the story of Motoko Kusanagi falls more in line with Bowen's "reconfiguration" of the body/self. Motoko's identity is found in her ghost, her memories housed in the watch and the body she inhabits.

The Laughing Man title is simply a moniker for the mysterious hacker which is based heavily on the writings of J.D. Salinger, particularly the 1949 short story "The Laughing Man" and to some extent the 1951 novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. Togusa makes the connection between Salinger's work and the case in episode 20 ("Review") using the logo that would always appear when The Laughing Man would appear in public. The logo The Laughing Man used appears to be a youth wearing a sideways hat and is surrounded by a quotation from *The Catcher in the Rye* – "I thought what I'd do was, I'd pretend I was one of those deaf-mutes" and from this phrase and its misquotation in episode 11 Togusa

begins to suspect a young man only known as Aoi as being the real identity of The Laughing Man.

Control of the body and the threat of its loss reaches Section 9 in the final four episodes of Season One. The ease with which the body can be controlled for even the skilled members of Section 9 further emphasizes the need for the mnemonic devices Motoko chooses to cling to. In episode 22 (“Scandal”) Aramaki and Motoko both have control of their bodies taken from them. Aramaki loses control of his body due to drugs being forced into his system and Motoko has her prosthetic body swap almost sabotaged. Both characters are attacked by the governmental organization NSS, the Narcotics Suppression Squad, in response to their disavowal by the government due to the Laughing Man case and Section 9’s uncovering of massive corruption by the ruling party and Secretary-General Kaoru Yakushima. The NSS attempts to discredit Aramaki by luring him with the specter of his brother, whom he had long thought dead or at least missing since the last war, injecting him with drugs with the intent that the police would find and arrest him. Motoko, as a result of the battle in episode 21 (“Missing Traces”), had received massive damage to her prosthetic body – “overheating” is what Batou says, including the loss of her arm, and was preparing to receive a new prosthetic body. The NSS infiltrated the facility and placed one of their operatives, a woman named Sano, in the place of the technician/doctor who would oversee the procedure. The procedure for exchanging prosthetic bodies places Motoko at the mercy of the operative, despite bringing her girlfriend Kurutan to operate as her witness during the exchange<sup>vii</sup>. Unbeknownst to Motoko, Kurutan is drugged presumably by the coffee she was drinking and was rendered unconscious. She willingly gives up her ability to connect to the net,

standard procedure in transferring to a new body without interference or potential of hacking. Motoko steps into the transfer machine and is laid down, her head opened, and brain case exposed. Sano uses this opportunity to take away Motoko's ability to speak – a direct response to the slight verbal sparring they had been having, before playing with her visual capabilities and removing the ability to see individual colors before shutting down her ability to see entirely. Only the interference of Aoi, the Laughing Man, stops Sano from completing her mission. Before her eyesight is taken, Motoko sees a hooded figure walk into the procedure room. The Laughing Man makes himself invisible to everyone but Motoko and can remove the needles that Sano had placed to shut down those parts of her brain. Just as in episode 1, where the spy swaps the brain of the Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister, the defenseless nature of the cyberbrain is made apparent here in Motoko's case and it renders her unable to protect herself as she has been capable of throughout the series.

The watch and the weight-training equipment are meant to lead the audience to a better understanding of the ambiguous nature of memories, especially in a world growing increasingly digital, and the desire to cling to something physical lead Batou and Motoko to maintain routines to help stabilize their sense of identity. Batou refers to these items or routines as types of mnemonic devices, or some proverbial anchor to place their sense of identity. In the world of SAC people would often have their memories downloaded externally in the place of remembrance. Motoko and Batou choose instead to keep "scraps of memories" as physical manifestations of who they are and who they used to be. Lisa Nakamura writes about this paradoxical way of thinking exhibited by Motoko and Batou, saying that "In order to think rigorously, humanely, and imaginatively about

virtuality and the “posthuman,” it is absolutely necessary to ground critique in the lived realities of the human” (Nakamura 7). With this definition applied to the actions of the two characters, I believe that the very human tendency towards nostalgia is their way of holding on to the physical in the increasingly virtualized world and runs counter to the digital memory download the general public relied upon. In this case the digitized memories will remain stored in the virtual ether, the cloud, unchanging, whereas Motoko’s watch represents the physical unchanging item that memory and nostalgia shape the meaning of differently based upon the lived experience of time. The watch embodies Motoko’s memories of herself as she was and as she is at the time of the series. The shift to a digital medium for memory storage has the potential to destroy the individuality of lived memory, turning them into numbers and rendering them virtually the same – a shift towards what Haraway calls “cyborg unities” which are something she refers to as “monstrous and illegitimate” because “from one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet” – a destruction of the individual (Haraway 153).

Throughout the rising action of the final episodes of Season One, Kamiyama takes the time to zero in on the item Motoko holds most dear, a simple watch. Despite the existential threat to their lives, Kamiyama chooses to focus instead on the nature of the mnemonic devices which his characters hold dear. The existence of Section 9 and the lives of its members is threatened in the season’s penultimate episode. In Episode 25 (“Barrage”) because of the fruits of the Laughing Man investigation uncovering corrupt connections to the government, Section 9’s existence has been leaked to the media. The powers-that-be in the government have chosen to disavow them and leave them to the

mercy of other governmental forces such as the Narcotics Suppression Squad (NSS)<sup>viii</sup> and the “Sea Dogs” of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (SDF). Only during this time of extreme instability is the audience shown what Motoko truly holds dear. Batou makes his way to one of Motoko’s safe houses to find some type of weapon to defend himself from the Maritime SDF. In the search he finds a small watch, which he returns to her later in the episode. Motoko brings Batou back to her city safe house, and when he returns the timepiece to her, he asks her why she had always kept that watch, paralleling him asking her in a previous episode why she chose to keep the same feminine body, despite being one of the toughest members of the team. Her response is meant to both tease Batou and reveal a bit of nostalgia for the usually stoic Motoko – “A wristwatch and weight training huh? I guess both of us cling to bits of useless memories...” (Episode 25, *Stand Alone Complex*). Batou mentions that Motoko has held on to the watch through the many prosthetic changes she has gone through over the years and that it was the one thing that continued to tick to “let you know that you’re still you,” in some ways replacing the human heart which a full prosthetic body has rendered obsolete (Episode 25, *Stand Alone Complex*). In the official summary book of the *Ghost in the Shell* series up to 2017’s release of the Scarlett Johansson remake titled *Ghost in the Shell: Read Me 1985-2017* the unnamed author or editor<sup>ix</sup> wrote

Batou gives Motoko her precious wristwatch, which he got from her safe house. For cyborgs like Motoko and Batou, who have largely transcended physical bodies, a wristwatch or weight-training items with sentimental value are a sort of “external memory,” a way of proving that they are still themselves. (*Read Me 79*)

Kenji Kamiyama presents in *SAC* a theory of the cyborg that moves away from a utopic vision of the merger of human and machine, one where the machine fixes the problems of the human condition surrounding the other, racism, sexism, war and colonialism. Haraway describes these problems in a usefully succinct way, writing that “Gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism” (Haraway 153). Haraway describes the cyborg as a solution to these problems: “the cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity,” but that the semblance of freedom is in reality a double-edged sword (Haraway 149). Kamiyama’s theory is that the cyborg/prosthetic body creates its own problems, those described by Bowen and Nakamura, and that the solutions can be found by clinging to our humanity and those mnemonic devices of nostalgia we use to craft our identity. Memory and the past take on an even greater role in *SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*, the second season which delves further into the problems of identity in a hypermodern world.

## Cybernetic Transcendence and the Ghost of Motoko Kusanagi

Kamiyama's focus in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* shifts from a focus on the physical manifestation of memories to include the memories themselves. *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* opens small portions of Motoko's past that are connected to the figure of Hideo Kuze and their shared memories of origami cranes. Kamiyama introduces Kuze as a second foil to Motoko, connected by their shared origin stories, and establishes a second set of choices that Motoko did not make. Kuze desires transcendence because he views his own cybernetic body as broken and because he views the world as a broken system that cannot be fixed. Motoko, unlike her film counterpart, has remained grounded in her own memories due to her connecting them to physical objects. She does not accept Kuze's goal except as a last resort, and then only to save the lives of others. Where Season One focused on the outer manifestations of memory and the body, Season Two focuses on the inner life of Motoko in connection to the case of the Individual Eleven and Hideo Kuze. Both seasons make the argument that neither the ghost nor the shell nor some combination of the two are what make Motoko herself; it is her ability to choose that matters. Choice, or agency, connects the cyborg Motoko Kusanagi's story to the stories of women and cultural minorities throughout history. I believe that Kamiyama makes the argument that it is Motoko's ability to choose, her agency, that is the most important element of her story – not the body or questions of her ghost.

*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* is divided much like the first season with standalone episodes, called "dividual," and complex episodes. The complex episodes are further split into "Individual" and "Dual," which focus on the characters of

Hideo Kuze and Kazundo Goto respectively. While Goto is the main antagonist that Motoko and Section 9 must face throughout the second season, it is Kuze who serves as a foil for her. Goto's importance is illustrated through his goal to seek control over other people through political and military strategies, as well as being the origin of the Individual Eleven virus and its ability to control the cyberbrain of another person, including Kuze. Kuze is Motoko's mirror due to their shared origins as revealed in "Affection," but represents someone who has chosen a different path from the body she returned to again and again as referenced by Batou several times in the first season. Kuze's vision of the future can be summarized by the phrase "cybernetic transcendence," coined by Stevenson (87). Pushed by the plight of the refugees displaced by World Wars III and IV and disgusted with his own "crippled body," Kuze seeks the transcendence a cyborg body cannot offer – an escape from "shackles of the flesh and bonds of mortality" – a freedom from the oppression against the refugees perpetrated by those in power like Goto (87).

Motoko's origin is a key struggle in Oshii's film. Kamiyama's Motoko knows that her given name is still a mystery to her, but her connection to the identity she has established since cyberization is strong, being anchored in physical memories such as the watch and the origami crane in Season Two. Not much is known about Motoko's early life, and Kamiyama only hints at her past with items such as the watch in Season One. Memories presented in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig episode "Affection" reveal at least a part of her backstory. Those memories reveal that Motoko has inhabited her prosthetic body from a young age, following a plane crash that left her in a coma before doctors transferred her ghost into prosthetics without her consent. The episode begins as a training mission for new recruits to Section 9 – with Motoko as the target and Batou and Togusa as the test

instructors. During one of her escapes the world seems to shift, and the previously busy street and food stalls are left deserted and she is unable to connect herself to the Net. The only activity in this silent world emanates from a colorful door at the end of an alleyway. Inside she finds a shop of sorts, filled with numerous items, two prosthetic bodies of children, and an older lady proprietor who reveals to Motoko that what she keeps in the shop are memories and a promise to tell her about the two children at some other time. Motoko leaves, re-entering the real world and in a short monologue that the odd feeling she had from the moment she entered the silent world was represented by the word – nostalgia.

The rest of the episode follows Motoko on an off day, first sitting down to a meal/drink with her girlfriend Lan. Motoko asks Lan whether she had ever experienced a memory or feeling when touching or being near an object, showing that she trusts her companion enough to ask those sorts of questions. Unfortunately, the conversation dies because the other woman is unable to relate to the question. Motoko makes her apologies to Lan for not being able to partake in further plans for the evening and heads back to the alleyway from the test mission – losing Batou, who had been following her in the same way she had the recruits. This scene, along with the otherworldly feel of the silent world makes me think that Motoko is not evading her followers but is instead “transported” into the silent world again and that the shop may or may not be real – the haunting of nostalgia/memory. In the shop the older woman begins to tell the story of the two children – one boy and one girl – with the girl sharing the same hair and eye color of Motoko – a foreshadowing of the end of the scene where it is revealed that the body of the young girl had been her first prosthetic body.

The story of the boy begins with a horrific plane crash where eventually only a boy and a young girl – who was comatose – were the survivors. The boy was left paralyzed except for his left arm which he used to fold origami - paper cranes - for the young girl next to him. Life continued for him in this way until the girl's body began to fail and she was taken away. No one told him that she was not dead and in mourning he continued to fold paper cranes as a memorial to her. He refused to speak to anyone except to request more paper for folding, even ignoring distant relatives who tried to take him in, and the offer from the doctor of a way to regain a semblance of his former life through a full body prosthetic. In a final effort the boy was introduced to a young girl who had been through the prosthetic transfer to encourage him. He shows no interest until one day he blurts out that the only way he would do the surgery is if his prosthetic body would still be able to fold the cranes. The girl took it upon herself to try and accomplish the fine motor control necessary to do so, and almost completely impossible to do in the prosthetic bodies of the time. She failed. However, the determination she showed him and the promise she made that she would one day be able to fold cranes led him to choose to complete the procedure. He lost contact with the girl, only finding the shell of her former body in the college lab, being used for study after the girl had transferred to a more mature body as she grew up. The woman completes her story, telling Motoko that the young man had been sent off to war and that she had not seen him since. Motoko references herself as the girl to the woman by using the paper that had wrapped the sugar cube to fold an origami crane while the woman had talked. Folding the origami crane, Motoko reveals that she had kept her promise to "the first boy she ever loved." The episode ends with Motoko and Batou talking about the trainees and him thinking about retesting them.

Motoko, normally the stern mission commander, agrees with Batou that people when they first start something need to be given the time to learn and grow before they can be expected to be experts.

The notion of a disconnect between the cyberized body and the human brain is returned to in a conversation Kuze has with Motoko in *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*'s penultimate episode "This Side of Justice." After being trapped underground due to American Empire military airstrikes on the Asian refugee population on Dejima Island, Kuze reveals a bit of his history to Motoko when he describes his own body and his connection with the refugees. Kuze says to Motoko,

"I've had a totally prosthetic body ever since I was a child, so I've constantly felt a sense of disparity between the mental and the physical. I wanted to abandon this crippled body and paddle out onto the sea of the net if such a thing could be done. The Asian refugees gave a man like me a reason to live. They told me that my artificial face was handsome and flattered me by saying that my ghost could be seen in it. That was the first time I realized that spirit and body might be inseparable, and I was able to think of myself as an actual human being as if I were made of flesh, but when they come across information that suits them, they get swept along the path of least resistance, just like everyone else. I suppose that in the end humans are designed to follow the path that is easiest to them." (19:00, Episode 25, *SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*)

His end goal is very much like the end of Mamoru Oshii's movie version of *Ghost in the Shell*, "paddling out onto the sea of the Net" and the evolution he describes as his method

of providing salvation to the mistreated refugees. His desire to escape the shell that he cannot fully control is what drives his belief that the refugees will be better served by being removed from the body which has been subjugated. Kuze desires “bodilessness” because he views the body as a limitation and in the case of the refugees, something to be subjugated (Stevenson 87).

The story about being placed into a cybernetic body mirrors the story told to Motoko by the woman in the antique shop in “Affection” describing both the difficulty of the young Motoko that the young boy witnesses while in the hospital and the continued difficulty with his current “crippled body” (Episode 25, *SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*). In the episode “Make Up” Kuze is revealed to have difficulty moving his mouth, even when speaking and could be suffering from other unspoken issues as well. Identification of the self, the ghost, through something as fluid as an artificial body is a possibility given to Kuze through his connection to the refugees, whose protection has become his central mission in life. Kuze says that he had died long before the events of the series, but that the words and kindness of the refugees “gave a man like [him] a reason to live” and that he was able to think of himself “as an actual human being” as if being “made of flesh” (Episode 25, *SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*). This kindness could also be called humanity, and it was this humanity that gave Kuze the ability to free himself from the control of the Individual Eleven virus that dominated the plot of the first half of the season. However, despite this realization Kuze shows that such memories do not sway his goal and tells Motoko that he still desires to go through with his revolution. She only chooses to assist him in order to save the refugees from the existential threat of the American Empire, their military barrage, and the impending nuclear missile.

A side-story to whether humanity can be saved digitally, i.e. whether ghosts can be uploaded and stored or transferred, is similar to the question raised by Mamoru Oshii in his movie adaptation of the *Ghost in the Shell* manga – can something that has been created, such as artificial intelligence, obtain a ghost? The story of the Tachikoma AI tanks continues from Season One, represented in *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* by their willingness to sacrifice themselves to save Motoko, Batou, and the rest of the team, in addition to the refugees from the threat of the nuclear warhead. Ignoring Motoko's orders to find space to digitally save the refugees, the Tachikomas hatch a plan to drop satellites into the path of the missile and decide that it is worth it to drop the satellite that contains the place where each of their AI's have been stored in a sort of kamikaze mission that each knew would destroy all their memories. One of the characters, Proto, says "I bet all of you have ghosts," as each of the members of Section 9 listen to the haunting melody of what sounds like a children's song the Tachikomas sing as they willingly go to their deaths once again. The story of the Tachikomas mirrors the story of Motoko in her willingness to die physically, if necessary, to save the refugees. Motoko's question "Do you believe the ghost will be salvaged by saving the memories?" – which she raises to Kuze after learning of his plan to digitize the refugee's memories and ghosts, can be answered by the Tachikomas themselves. If Proto's words are to be believed in "Endless Gig", Kamiyama presents the idea that data stored in memory banks had over time separated into the individual personalities and ghosts of each Tachikoma, all of whom chose to sacrifice their own lives to save their friends.

Kuze's connection, both as a leader and through his hub-cyberbrain, with the Asian refugee population displaced by World Wars III and IV across Japan and wherever else

would take them, is what gives him the ability to see that the goals and actions perpetrated by those infected with the Individual Eleven virus did not mesh. Episode 25 (“This Side of Justice”) answers a question raised throughout the season – how did Kuze free himself from the Individual Eleven virus that led eleven other people to willingly commit the brutal murder – suicide of one another that everyone witnesses on Episode 12 (“Selecon”). “This Side of Justice” along with the final episode “Endless Gig” finally establish what the exact nature of the connection is between Motoko and Kuze that was hinted at by her words in Episode 19 “Chain Reaction,” when she said “I know him dammit” upon connecting to his cyberbrain (SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig). Kuze asks Motoko when the two finally cross paths “who are you?” and if this was “the third or fourth time” they had met (Episode 25, SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig). His questions toward Motoko raise a new question for the audience about his own memory when he then protects her from harm when the military barrage strikes a little close to home. “Endless Gig” has the threat of nuclear strike bring the two into a sort of understanding to protect the refugees by working to transfer their ghosts onto the Net. Despite their earlier adversarial stance Motoko and Kuze seem to connect on an emotional level upon discovery of their shared origin story. Both knew the trauma of not feeling at home within their own bodies due to an inability to control their new bodies. Motoko raises the question that Kamiyama hinted at in “Affection” and asks Kuze if he could fold origami cranes with only his left hand; however, Kuze leaves the question unanswered in front of Motoko. His identity as the young boy is only hinted at by the presence of a folded origami crane which falls from his hands after a successful assassination attempt by the American Empire. An important scene hinting at Motoko’s character and perseverance appears in “Affection” where the young Motoko tries and fails

to fold the paper into a crane – failing also to encourage the young boy to follow her example. Kuze’s final words “I’ll go on ahead” appear to be directed toward Motoko or they could be to the refugees that were still linked to his hub-cyberbrain, or some degree of both; however, based upon how quickly the two seemed to connect once they met, I would lean towards the first option (Episode 26, *SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*). His words reference his plan to save the refugees by uploading their memories and ghosts onto the Net and potentially point to a theory that Kuze had done so for himself before his physical body perished.

Kuze’s connection to the refugees aided his escape from the Individual Eleven virus and helped him to maintain his own goals; however, the connection to them did not serve for his benefit only. The refugees were also influenced by the man, both through direct contact and through his influence. During the search for Kuze, following the murder/suicide of the rest of the members of the Individual Eleven, Motoko continually raises the question as to why the refugees and others follow Kuze so strongly. Her first assumption is that they are all connected and controlled from his cyberbrain, but this theory is dismissed each time she finds another follower who had not undergone cyberization. The discovery of more un-cyberized followers raises the question of whether the relationship between Kuze and the refugees is not direct leadership, but another stand alone complex and that they all chose to follow his example of each individual’s accord. However, Motoko hears from many people that they each chose to follow Kuze, or Ro to use the pseudonym the refugees gave him, because they simply listened to his words and believed him. Motoko finds the origin of the moniker “Ro” in Episode 17 (“Red Data”) as well as the reasons for Kuze’s deep connection with the refugee population across

Asia. “Ro” is said to be short for *ronin*, a Japanese term for a samurai without a master, which is how many of the refugees describe him in the episode “Red Data” in which we find Motoko hunting for Kuze’s whereabouts in Taiwan. In “Red Data” Motoko meets with a member of the Taiwanese police in charge of investigating Ro and discovers the depths of his connection with the refugees throughout Asia, due to there being reports of him from even mainland China. This stand-alone episode introduces some of the world outside the confines of Japan, where most of the first season was set, and introduce Kuze as some sort of leader to the refugees, seeking to protect them from organizations like the Yakuza – a mission seemingly counter to the accomplished missions of the Individual Eleven. While the stories told to Motoko by the police officer are enlightening in helping to determine some of Kuze’s motive, her encounter with a young refugee boy named Chai is what helps her understand the human side of Kuze’s connection with the refugees.

Kamiyama introduces Kuze’s origins and begins to hint at Motoko’s connection to him. The connection with Motoko and her past is what makes Kuze a foil for Motoko; however, instead of a perfect reflection, Kuze represents that which Motoko rejects. The first half of *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* follows the rise of the Individual Eleven virus and its creator Kazundo Goda, who was partially responsible for the creation of radiation-scrubbing micromachines, devices that helped Japan recover from the previous nuclear World Wars and the destruction of the former capital Tokyo. Goda is the primary antagonist in *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*, the instigator of the Individual Eleven, and the mastermind behind the attempt to create Kuze as a “hero” for the Japanese people in his effort to drive out the refugees who had been instrumental in providing cheap labor for the quick rebuild of Japan after the wars ended. Interestingly, Goda’s attempts to control Kuze fail due to their shared viewpoint

about the nature of humanity – from Goda’s point-of-view “as water flows to the lowest point, so do human hearts...” and his desire to use that nature to his own advantage and those willing to pay him for his expertise (*Readme* 87). Kuze’s statement to Motoko in “This Side of Justice” also include his statements about his shared view of the nature of humanity, referring to the perceived failings of the refugees “when they come across information that suits them, they get swept along the path of least resistance, just like everyone else. I suppose that in the end humans are just designed to follow the path that is easiest to them.” However, Kuze desires a revolution or forced evolution of humanity into a merging of man and net. Kuze desired this combination of man and net because he believed that the continued cycle of race and class issues were bound to the physical form. His goal echoes Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto,” as explicated by Stevenson in her examination of one of the most important works in cyborg theory (Stevenson 87).

The Individual Eleven Virus mimics the body control narrative of Season One but changes the nature of the control in the same way the focus of Motoko’s story has changed. Instead of controlling the body against the will of the owner, the virus seeks to change the will by altering the beliefs of the owner. This control is what Kuze seeks to escape but what Motoko seeks to fight. The Individual Eleven virus was designed to take control of a person’s cyberbrain after the person appears to read an essay by the same title. The essay was supposed to have been written by the fictional author named Patrick Sylvester<sup>x</sup>. The twelfth episode of *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* (“Selecon”) opens on a representation of the Net. A team led by Motoko, Bouma, and Ishikawa dive into the hub cyberbrain of a man named Sho Kawashima in order to find the origins of the virus which could forcibly seize control of a person. The character of Sho Kawashima is important in establishing a

connection to the government official behind Gotou's attempt to control the populace and stir agitation against the post-war refugees. Kawashima was the man who Section 9 tried to take into custody in episode 8 ("Fake Food"); unfortunately he was killed due to false information given to them by the Cabinet Intelligence Agency under the direction of Chief Cabinet Secretary Takakura, the government official who was aligned with Goda and the American Empire. The American Empire sought to regain its pre-war power status by subjugating Japan. This structure of subjugation is what Kuze sought to help the refugees escape from. The three members of Section 9 believe that the hub cyberbrain will lead them to the origins of the virus and help them figure out a vaccine. Before she can connect herself and dive into the memories, Motoko is called away by Aramaki due to Kuze being spotted. Kuze, at this time, was known for being a member of the Individual Eleven and for the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Kayabuki. While Motoko is occupied with the mission to find Kuze, Bouma decides to dive into the memories, making sure to set up protections for himself should the virus strike, and there he finds the writings of Patrick Sylvester and finds an essay with the title "The Individual Eleven." The essay appears to be a false lead, however, because all Bouma can find is something so poorly written that he and Ishikawa believe it cannot be the catalyst to instigate infection.

While the search for a digital copy of the essay continues, Togusa is sent to meet with an old college professor by Aramaki. Simultaneously all the members of the Individual eleven, which is somewhat ironically a total of 12 people, discuss the missions they have each completed for their cause. During the conversation Kuze asks the other members for a copy of the essay, calling it their Bible, however no one can produce it. Similarly, the college professor Togusa is meeting with cannot find the copy on his

bookshelf. The seeming disappearance of the original Individual Eleven document leads the team to discover that the file they were looking for was always ever a virus, the essay had never existed in the first place despite everyone believing otherwise. While the ability to control people was part of the sinister nature of the virus, its true nefarious nature lay in its ability to make people believe something that had never existed. The true nature of the virus illustrates the power of memory over human life, just like Motoko's and Kuze's inability to recall their origins beyond cyberization, hinted at by Motoko telling Kuze she couldn't remember her own name that she had been born with in Episode 25.

If memory, which is already transient in nature, can be overwritten by virus or hack, how then can an identity someone claims be trusted? Like the watch and the weight machines from Season One, the paper origami cranes act as a mnemonic device for Motoko and, although not explicitly stated, for Kuze as well, due to the presence of a crane when he is killed by the American Empire. The young boy from the story told to Motoko in "Affection" folds paper cranes one-handed while he lays mostly paralyzed in a hospital bed. While it is never stated how many he intends to fold, it is safe to assume a connection with the Japanese legend of the senbazuru<sup>xi</sup>, which literally translates into one-thousand paper cranes that are folded and connected by strings as an offering to the gods in exchange for a wish. The cranes are also given to a person who is seriously ill representing a wish for their recovery. It is not known whether Kuze folded the cranes to wish for his own health or for the health of the young girl beside him, but it can be inferred that he stopped when he chose to receive a prosthetic body for the same reasons as Motoko struggled with in the beginning of her body cyberization - she couldn't due to lack of fine motor control. However, as both characters exhibited the ability, explicitly with

Motoko and implicitly with Kuze, they pushed through the struggles their new bodies presented them because of the verbal and nonverbal promises made to one another in that hospital room they both barely remember. The mnemonic device helped them remember the act of folding the paper crane and the little boy and little girl that were perched on the edge of memory.

Motoko's choice at the end of Season Two mirrors the choice made by the Prime Minister. Both have chosen to strike forward on a new path by remaining true to themselves instead of returning to the status quo. By casting off the connection with the American Empire, the Prime Minister has declared that Japan will step forward into the future true to its own interests and beliefs. Motoko's ending is simply a new beginning. Even though she leaves on her own, without Section 9, she has chosen to continue forward by remaining faithful to herself even if that means separating from her team for a while. *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* closes with a pair of mirrored scenes, one of geopolitical importance and one personal to Motoko. The first scene involves two fighter jets flying in close formation to conduct a fly-by of the American Empire's submarine – the same submarine that fired the nuclear missile toward Dejima. Paired with a phone call made by Prime Minister Kayabuki, the fly-by of the submarine indicates a new way forward for the country of Japan, which to this point had been caught between a cold war involving the American Empire and the Chinese. Kayabuki has chosen for Japan to set its own path forward, which mirrors the unspoken choice Motoko makes in the show's final scene, taking her multi-ped AI tank<sup>xii</sup> called an Uchikoma in a different direction from the rest of the team, telling Batou that "I'll meet up with you later" (Episode 26, *SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*). Motoko decides to set her own path forward; however, she does not cut her ties as Oshii's Motoko does

in the 1995 film. In the film, Oshii's Motoko is driven by a sense of not belonging, as if she were an impostor with a fake ghost. Kamiyama's Motoko retains her connection to the body she always returned to, continuing to live as Motoko Kusanagi even as she has separated herself from part of Section 9. Her story is not over; the evolution seen in Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* and dreamed of by Kuze is left a dream. Cyborg transcendence is abandoned for the sake of individuality, found in Motoko's question to Kuze from "This Side of Justice," in which she asks him, "What are the odd of them being able to retain their individuality?" and decides that for the present she will abandon the "salvation" offered by Kuze and continue to set her own path. Motoko chooses to remain Motoko Kusanagi, and that is all the ambiguous nature the ending can leave behind. Therefore, neither the ghost nor the shell nor some combination of the two are what make her herself; choice is what matters. Choosing to stand with the refugees is what sets Kuze apart from the rest of the Individual Eleven and choice is what frees him from the virus's control. Choice is what will lead Motoko to the path continued in the OVA *Solid State Society* and in the forthcoming series to be set 10 years after. Much can be assumed from what is left unsaid by Kamiyama in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*; however, based solely on the 52 episodes in the series the only determining factor that can set humans apart from the machine is choice. Because of her choice, the ideal of the transcendence of race, gender, or many other issues of human life cannot be attained through throwing off the body as Kuze desired. Motoko Kusanagi's story continues as it always has, working to better the self in order to help protect others.

## The Humanity of Motoko Kusanagi and the Next Step

The story of Motoko Kusanagi has not ended. Almost one decade after *SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* completed, the early life of Motoko was presented through the OVA<sup>xiii</sup> film series *Ghost in the Shell: Arise*. *Arise* is set before Motoko joins Section 9 in 2027. However, as with *SAC*, *Arise* is intended to be a “parallel story” while referencing both Oshii and Kamiyama (*Readme* 143). The universe of *SAC* is to be revisited in the upcoming series *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2045* and will be taking the franchise into the future. The most direct connection to the end of *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* is the OVA film *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex – Solid State Society*, which is set two years after the conclusion of the series. The film is built on a different plot with many similar characteristics to Oshii’s films, taking the Puppet Master from Oshii’s film and moving the life form created from the sea of data from a time before the internet had become ubiquitous into the Puppeteer of the *Ghost in the Shell* of 2006. Two major changes are presented by Kamiyama to the familiar narrative – one being the origin of the Puppeteer shifting from a sentient AI to a creation of Motoko’s own subconscious according to the *Readme* author. The second change from the original movie is Motoko’s choice in the end, both mirroring and differing from the ending of *SAC* – she chooses not to merge with the figure on the Net, much like she chooses not to join Kuze’s vision of the future of humanity. She also returns to Section 9, which is what the film establishes that she didn’t do at the end of *SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*.

The Motoko Kusanagi of Kenji Kamiyama’s *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* is a more complex character than that in Oshii’s adaptation. This difference is due partially to the expanded nature of a 52-episode television show versus a feature length film. The other more crucial difference is the fact that she continues to cling to her

humanity, both through physical items like the mnemonic devices found in Season One, and in choosing to remain in the uncertainty of physical life. Kamiyama's Motoko is the initial shift away from the transcendent cyborg found in Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*, pushing the series toward a more balanced approach towards humanity and cybernetics. Instead of abandoning the physical artifacts of life, as Oshii's Makoto did, Kamiyama's version chooses to remain tied to the shell. Motoko's connection to the watch in first season and her choice to consistently return to the same physical form are the characteristics which allow her to grow beyond the doubts of her youth. Unlike Oshii's Motoko, her fears are based not in existential crisis and utter self-doubt, but are housed in her ability to control the cyborg body she has been placed in. In the second season Motoko comes face-to-face with someone who shares a similar past, in the person of Hideo Kuze. Her encounters with Kuze, specifically based on his vision for a future where the refugees could no longer be exploited, raised questions about the potential digital future, but never her own identity. The Motoko Kusanagi of Kenji Kamiyama's *SAC* is an example of the nature of humanity not being the ghost or the shell, but instead able to be summed up in the word *aimai*, or ambiguity. In Japanese, *aimai* "is defined as a state in which there is more than one intended meaning, resulting in obscurity, indistinctness, and uncertainty" (Davies and Ikeno 9), and Motoko chooses the uncertainty housed in between the ghost and the shell.

Aoi, the Laughing Man, shrouds his identity in *aimai*, using his hacking abilities to control the senses of others. The initial appearance of the Laughing Man six years before the series is clouded in confusion. In his only confirmed appearance, Aoi, appears physically shrouded by his coat and hat, and digitally shrouded to all cameras and cyber

brain connected eyes through a real-time hack as a cartoon figure of a laughing man surrounded by a quotation from the J.D. Salinger story of the same title. Aoi never refers to himself as the Laughing Man; it is only the other copycat figures and the lore built up on the Net that creates such a title. *Aimai* is prevalent throughout the initial phase of the Laughing Man case, as Section 9 later discovers that each of the early instances were perpetrated by different individuals acting separately in a stand-alone complex. Further encounters with Aoi himself create further confusion until he reveals himself fully to Motoko when he saves her life in “Scandal” – again resorting to covering his tracks, this time a bit more thoroughly by completely erasing himself from cameras and eyes in real-time. Once Aoi reveals himself to Motoko, he turns over the mission to her and returns to his self-imposed *aimai* in a sort of digital library, turning down an offer from Aramaki and Motoko to come join Section 9 (Episode 26, *Stand Alone Complex*). For Aoi there is no need to join the group as his mission is complete. He has brought clarity to the Murai vaccine case, never intending to create the media and internet craze the copycats had created.

The stand-alone stories from Season One also reveals several other instances where physical control was seized from an individual to create confusion, such as the case of Marcelo Jarti and the use of a “ghost-dubbing” machine to create a series of clones. *Aimai* rules the episode until Motoko, Togusa, and Batou all encounter a copy at the same time and uncover the plot. The first episode of Season One reveals a plot by a foreign government to seize control of the physical identity of the Foreign Affairs by playing an uncanny shell game with switching cyber brains within the shell of the man. Identity takes on the nature of *aimai* through those two instances as well as the hidden

identity of the Laughing Man during the initial encounters with Section 9 and can only be solidified using physical mnemonic devices in the lives of Motoko and Batou. Several episodes in the first season also present an answer to the question of whether life continues after the death of the shell, and the answer seems to be an unequivocal yes, but not in full, as in the case of Takeshi Kago's brain being placed inside the massive military think tank he had worked on designing. The answer Motoko found after stopping the berserk tank is that life inside another shell can be difficult, just as in her own youth, but in the case of Kago his existence was relegated to nothing more than a form of vengeful spirit. The merger of father and son in the episode "Lost Heritage" pushes the locus of the identity into the framework of memory, due to the memories and experiences of the father being pulled into the vengeance of the son, again forming something akin to the vengeful spirit that could only be stopped by Motoko implanting a false memory into the young man to make him think his mission was a success. The most interesting case of the construction of identity is found in the evolution of the AI think tank Tachikomas. Each Tachikoma developed a distinct personality despite the memories of each being synched to one another, the lived memories of each overpowered the digitally provided memories they all shared. As each grew more distinct each still active Tachikoma chose to disobey their orders and go help the burned Section 9 team members, eventually choosing to sacrifice their own lives to try and save the life of Batou. The realization of the cost and choosing to go through with their objective anyway is distinctly human and they have shifted from machine into something more.

Hideo Kuze in *2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* introduces elements of Motoko's past that have long been shrouded in *aimai*. Appearing first as one of the twelve antagonist figures of the Individual

Eleven, Kuze gradually takes on a bigger importance as Motoko and the team work to track him. Motoko's past is first hinted at in the episode "Affection" which is subtitled "Grass Maze" in *Readme* (96). The episode follows the story of a young boy and young girl, whose former cybernetic bodies lie in an antique shop that serves as a repository of memories. The young girl's identity is hinted at through her similar appearance to Motoko and through Motoko's words to the woman running the shop at the end of the episode. The shroud of *aimai* that covered her past is pulled away again the moment Motoko connects with Kuze's cyber brain and declares that she knows him. Through their mirrored connection Kamiyama reveals the separate paths the two have chosen for themselves. Kuze views his prosthetic body as a symbol of his brokenness and seeks to rid himself of that feeling by abandoning his body in favor of a purely digital existence on the Net. Likewise, he seeks to save the refugees who have simultaneously been taken in and have taken him in. He hopes to remove them from their suffering at the hands of those in power by removing their bodies from the equation. Never does he ask the question Motoko asks him "Do you believe the ghost will be salvaged by saving the memories?" and even upon his death Kuze does not seem to question what the next step could lead to (Episode 25, *SAC: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*). Motoko chose, and again chooses after Kuze's death, to remain herself. She does not view her body as something broken, but as something to learn and grow with despite the initial trauma of going full prosthetic. She does not question her own reality because she has adopted the mnemonic devices like the watch to help ground her identity in something other than digital numbers.

Motoko's story in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* is one that shows the value of memories, especially in their physical forms. Her story is also one that lives in

the beauty of the human body, even if that body is a constructed machine. Her story is found in choosing *aimai*, the certainty in uncertainty. The ending of SAC is Kamiyama's presentation of *aimai* as a satisfactory ending; the unknown future that Motoko drives alone forward to is what gives the show its lasting power. Unlike the Motoko of Oshii's films, Kamiyama's Motoko hears the whispers in her ghost and takes the step forward as herself. She takes up both the ghost and the shell and decides that both aspects represent the whole of Motoko Kusanagi.

I chose the story of Motoko Kusanagi in Kenji Kamiyama's *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* because his version of her story resonated with me more than questions about the future evolution of humanity. I hope to continue looking at the human stories hidden beneath the science-fiction and the cyborg. This project is, I hope, a starting point for asking more questions about SAC and the humanity of the cyborg, especially in light of Kamiyama taking up her story again in the Netflix series *Ghost in the Shell: SAC\_2045* that is scheduled to be presented in the summer of 2020.

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<sup>i</sup> *Ghost in the Shell README: 1995-2017* is published by Kodansha who has been involved in publishing all Japanese and English language translation iterations of the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise. The only exception is the 2017 Paramount Remake film starring Scarlett Johansson.

<sup>ii</sup> Not much has been canonically established about the timeline of this war, but most place World War III as happening between the years 2000 and 2015. 2015 can be firmly established by the “Japanese Miracle” where the development of micromachine radiation scrubbers helped undo most of the damage suffered due to Nuclear fallout.

<sup>iii</sup> I will hereafter use the shorthand SAC to refer to Season One.

<sup>iv</sup> The Tachikomas are also considered multi-ped tanks but are only designed to carry one person as well as a standard compliment of arms, and as a result are much smaller than the tank that becomes the central antagonist for the episode. Also, the Tachikomas refer to Kenbishi as their birthplace, a foreshadowing of their later claim to sentience and capacity for self-sacrifice. The conversation ends when one Tachikoma says “The major gets mad when we chatter,” which foreshadows Motoko’s initial resistance towards the tanks Als gaining sentience.

<sup>v</sup> Kodansha’s *Ghost in the Shell: Read Me 1995-2017* refers to him as Jati, but most sources, as well as the official translation uses the surname Jarti. I have chosen the latter.

<sup>vi</sup> The episode only mentions that the ceremony Jin would be attending occurs 5 years after the end of the war, effectively placing it within the timeframe of World War IV (Also called the Second Vietnam War) or the Peninsular War (Also called the 2<sup>nd</sup> Korean War). Not much is specified about either conflict in *SAC. Ghost in the Shell: Arise* places the end of World War IV in 2026, as the OVA is explicitly set in 2027.

<sup>vii</sup> Motoko’s relationship with Kurutan is never explicitly stated, however based on their encounters over several episodes and on her comments towards the specifications of Motoko’s new body I believe it can be presumed that they are at least in a sexual relationship.

<sup>viii</sup> The Narcotics Suppression Squad that serves as an arm of the DEA – the Drug Enforcement Agency.

<sup>ix</sup> Kodansha has been the print and video media publisher for all the animated *Ghost in the Shell* series and movies.

<sup>x</sup> His name is spelled “Sylvestre” on a computer screen found in “SELECON”- episode 12 of 2<sup>nd</sup> *Gig*. Other sources spell it Sylvester, so I have chosen the typical English spelling.

<sup>xi</sup> *Senbazuru* literally means 1000 cranes, never referring to the wild birds, but only to the creature’s replication in origami. The story was popularized by the story of Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who survived the bombing of Hiroshima during World War II and

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later was diagnosed with leukemia. She began to fold the cranes, folding more than 1000 and donating them in strings to shrines when her wish was not granted, most frequently the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima.

<sup>xii</sup> Replacements for the Tachikomas which did not possess the capacity for learning and growth as the Tachikomas.

<sup>xiii</sup> OVA is an acronym for “Original Video Animation.” It can also be written as OAV which switches the last two words, but this form fell out of favor due to confusion with the acronym for adult videos, AV. According to the Anime News Network, OVAs “are generally higher quality than TV series because a larger budget is allocated to the production and more time is available for the work.” The closest equivalent are direct-to-TV or direct-to-digital movies based on feature films or television series. - “Original Animation Video (OAV/OVA)” *Anime News Network*. Accessed on February 14, 2020. <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/lexicon.php?id=35>.

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