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ORIENTING THE FUTURE

The future remains unwritten, though not from lack of trying.

—*Bruce Sterling, Preface to* Mirrorshades

Japan is the future.

—*David Morley and Kevin Robins, "Techno-Orientalism"*

Cyberspace is a literary invention.

William Gibson first coined the term in his 1982 short story "Burning Chrome" and fleshed it out in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer* (typewritten to a sound track of late 1970s–early 1980s' punk). Preceding the conversion of the Internet into a mass medium, Gibson's Sprawl trilogy (*Neuromancer*, *Count Zero*, and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*), in conjunction with Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* and *Diamond Age*, would help shape computer and communications technology and ideology during the 1980s and 1990s. *Neuromancer* in particular inspired dreams of and exploits in virtual reality, mind "uploading," and e-commerce, for its console-cowboy protagonist's (Case's) description of cyberspace as a consensual hallucination dominated by *zaibatsu* and marauding U.S. console cowboys portrayed high-speed computer networks as a commercially viable frontier of the mind.[1] In this novel, Case hustles information for money and pleasure, "liv[ing] for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace." His "elite stance involve[s] a certain

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1.   For instance, Marc Pesce's Ono Sendai, one of the first companies working on developing Virtual Reality Markup Language, took its name from a fictional brand name in *Neuromancer*.

relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat."[2] This trilogy, separated by seven-year gaps, is loosely held together by a few recurring characters and an edgy world picture, in which technology and biology have fused together, the United States of America has disappeared, zaitbatsu and *Yakuza* rule, and cyberspace, "a graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system," stands as the last frontier.

Cyberpunk's previsioning of cyberspace—or to be more accurate, Gibson's and Stephenson's previsioning of a global information matrix that has never and will never be realized, but that was nonetheless conflated with the Internet at the turn of the century (at a time when the future was reported to have arrived)—is not extraordinary for a literary genre celebrated for first imagining satellites and space shuttles.[3] Most scholars, however, view the practice of evaluating science fiction based on its predictive capabilities as apologist rather than critical. Most significantly, Fredric Jameson, himself building on Darko Suvin's influential contention that science fiction enables a subversive "*interaction of* [Brechtian] *estrangement and cognition*," has argued that science fiction uniquely defamiliarizes and restructures our experience of the present by converting it into "some future's remote past," thus enabling us to finally *experience* it.[4] Rather than simply celebrating this distilling of our present, though, Jameson contends that science fiction's inability to imagine the future reveals the "atrophy in our time of what [Herbert] Marcuse has called the *utopian imagination*, the imagination of otherness and radical difference."[5] In terms of cyberpunk, Jameson claims (in a footnote) that it is "for many of us, the supreme *literary* expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself." Presumably, it is *the expression* because it combines "autoreferentiality"—

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2. William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Ace Books, 1984), 6.

3. For a celebration of utopian science fiction and a condemnation of recent science fiction's "dark" vision, see Newt Gingrich, *To Renew America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).

4. Darko Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," *College English* 34 (1972): 375; and Fredric Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?" *Science Fiction Studies* 9, no. 2 (July 1982): 151–152.

5. Jameson, "Progress," 153.

in the form of a "play with reproductive technology—film, tapes, video, computers, and the like" (which is, to Jameson, "a degraded figure of the great multinational space that remains to be cognitively mapped")—with paranoia, "the poor person's cognitive mapping in the postmodern age."[6]

Following Jameson, many critics have debated the value of cyberpunk's cognitive mapping of global capital. In particular, they have focused on whether or not its descriptions of global information networks and geographic conglomerations that dance with "biz" chart the totality of global capitalism—a totality that we cannot usually "experience." Some, such as Pam Rosenthal, argue that although cyberpunk does not offer "an adequate analysis of post-Fordist dilemmas of work and social life," it does articulate "these dilemmas in dense and intelligent ways. And its lesson is that the ideal of a final/original uncontaminated humanness is, at bottom, what is most clumsy, old-fashioned and naive about outmoded images of technological society, be they Gernsbackian, Fordist, or Marxist."[7] Others, such as Tom Moylan, assert that Gibson's fiction may insightfully map capitalism, but it produces resignation rather than subversion, for it does not offer oppositional figures and rewards individual entrepreneurship.[8] Still others, such as David Brande and Sharon Stockton, see Gibson's map itself as complicit with capitalism, since his projection of cyberspace as a frontier effectively "renders the extremely complicated flow of multinational capital both 'intelligible and commodifiable'; complexity is thus reined back to comprehensibility, and the symbolic playing field of capitalism becomes spacious again, available again for colonization."[9] The key critical debates have thus centered on the questions,

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6. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 419, 356.

7. Pam Rosenthal, "Jacked-In: Fordism, Cyberspace, and Cyberpunk," *Socialist Review* (Spring 1991): 99.

8. Tom Moylan, "Global Economy, Local Texts: Utopian/Dystopian Tension in William Gibson's Cyberpunk Trilogy," *Minnesota Review* 43–44 (1995): 54.

9. Sharon Stockton, "'The Self Regained': Cyberpunk's Retreat to the Imperium," *Contemporary Literature* 36, no. 4 (1995): 589. See also David Brande, "The Business of Cyberpunk: Symbolic Economy and Ideology in William Gibson," in *Virtual Realities and Their Dicontents*, edited by Robert Markley (Baltimore,

To what extent is cyberpunk a symptom of or diagnosis for our "present" condition, and to what extent is *Neuromancer* really postmodern?[10]

These debates remarkably assume that science fiction is always read in or tethered to the "present"—an assumption Gibson himself supports. As he explains in his 1996 interview with *Addicted to Noise*, "I'm really not in the business of inventing imaginary futures.... [W]hat I really do is look

MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 79–106. For more on the accuracy/ worth of Gibson's cognitive mapping, see Moylan, "Global Economy, Local Texts"; Tony Fabijancic, "Space and Power: Nineteenth-Century Urban Practice and Gibson's Cyberworld," *Mosaic* 32, no. 1 (March 1999): 105–139; M. Keith Booker, "Technology, History, and the Postmodern Imagination: The Cyberpunk Fiction of William Gibson," *Arizona Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 63–87; Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., "Antimancer: Cybernetics and Art in Gibson's *Count Zero*," *Science Fiction Studies* 22 (1995): 63–86; Ronald Schmitt, "Mythology and Technology: The Novels of William Gibson," *Extrapolation* 34, no. 1 (1993): 64–78; Lance Olsen, "Virtual Termites: A Hypotextual Technomutant Explo(it)ration of William Gibson and the Electronic Beyond(s)," *Style* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 287–313; John Johnston, "Computer Fictions: Narratives of Machinic Phylum," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 8, no. 4: 443–463; Inge Eriksen, "The Aesthetics of Cyberpunk," *Foundation* 53 (Fall 1991): 36–46; and Ross Farnell, "Posthuman Topologies: William Gibson's 'Architexture' in *Virtual Light* and *Idoru*," *Science Fiction Studies* 25, no. 3 (1998): 459–480. Whether or not cyberpunk is a symptom or a diagnosis—is in the end good or bad, conformist or subversive—however, is ultimately undecidable, since such a decision demands a definitive distinction between descriptive and prescriptive language, between citation and dissemination, as well as a definitive calculation of the overall message of a text based on subtracting the "bad" from the "good" strains of a text's "message."

10.   See Veronica Hollinger, "Cybernetic Deconstructions: Cyberpunk and Postmodernism," *Mosaic* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 29–43; Kathyne V. Lindberg, "Prosthetic Mnemonics and Prophylactic Politics: William Gibson among the Subjectivity Mechanisms," *boundary* 2 (Summer 1996): 45–83; Randy Schroeder, "Neu-Criticizing William Gibson," *Extrapolation* 35, no. 4 (1994): 330–341, and "Determinacy, Indeterminacy, and the Romantic in William Gibson," *Science Fiction Studies* 21 (1994): 155–163; Claire Sponsler, "William Gibson and the Death of Cyberpunk," in *Modes of the Fantastic*, ed. Robert A. Latham and Robert A. Collins (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1991), and "Cyberpunk and the Dilemmas of Postmodern Narrative: The Example of William Gibson," *Contemporary Literature* 33, no. 4 (1992): 624–644; and Victoria de Zwann, "Rethinking the Slipstream: Kathy Acker Reads *Neuromancer*," *Science Fiction Studies* 24 (1997): 459–470.

at what passes for contemporary reality and select the bits that are most useful to me in terms of inducing cognitive dissonance." Specifically, Gibson sees his fiction as breaking through our ten-year buffer:

If it was 1986, we could cope. I think we have like a 10 year buffer and the buffer gets telescoped occasionally in one of those horrendous CNN moments. Like you turn on the TV and there's a building blown to shit. And it says Oklahoma City. And you can feel your brain stretch around this and the world's never going to be the same. That's now. But when we hit now, we get slammed into it like bugs on a windshield. Then we pull back and we see things are just proceeding in a normal fashion. "I can understand the world. I'm not going to freak out." I think we have to do that to survive. So I think probably what I do as an artist is I mess with that. I mess with that buffer and bring people right up close to the windshield and then pull them back and keep doing that. I suspect that's the real pleasure of the text in the sort of thing I do. I suspect that's what the people are actually paying for is having that experience. If they think they're paying for a hot ticket glimpse of the future, then they're kind of naïve.[11]

According to Gibson, his text's impact—described in visual terms— depends on its relation to its "moment" of creation (which also coincides with the moment of reading). If the work is still relevant, these moments are decontextualized as "now." Science fiction thus often has a short shelf life since it is dismissed as "misguided" once its vision of our present as its past no longer makes sense—unless it is rescued as a "classic" or conflated with ethnography (Gibson in fact dreams of being studied as a "naturalist" writer by future critics). Many sci-fi writers and critics dismiss cyberpunk as a 1980s' thing: Samuel R. Delany, for instance, argues that the destruction of technology during the Los Angeles uprising discredited Gibson's optimistic mantra, "The street finds its own uses for things."[12] Despite

11.   William Gibson, interview with *Addicted to Noise*, 2.10 (1996) ⟨http://www .addict.com/issues/2.10/html/hifi/Cover_Story⟩ (accessed February 1, 2000).

12.   Mark Dery, "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose," *SAQ* 92, no. 4 (Fall 1993): 749.

this insistence that cyberpunk is over and done with, and Gibson's own irritation at being so "tagged," cyberpunk has continued to sell and to inspire Silicon Valley into the twenty-first century—a Silicon Valley that has consistently ignored cyberpunk's dystopian strains by conflating narrators with authors, description with prescription. Popular and academic interest in cyberpunk soared after Delany's best-before date of 1987 and Gibson's of 1994 (ten years after the publication of *Neuromancer*), propelled by the mid- to late 1990s' Internet boom. Or to be more precise, propelled by a desire to conflate *Neuromancer*'s envisioned future with our own present, propelled by a desire to see our present as the future-come-true. As such, the Internet resuscitated a text that supposedly encapsulated the 1980s' angst over post-Fordism, the Cold War, transnational corporations, and the rise of the Japanese economy. (Given the dot-bombs, Gibson will probably turn from visionary to overhyped sci-fi writer in the early twenty-first century, and those who believed or disseminated "cyberspace = the future as presently manifested" will be accused of mixing science fiction with reality. Either that, or people will begin to insist on the differences between Gibson's consensual hallucination as cyberspace versus consensual hallucination as new economy.)[13]

Debating cyberpunk's, or more often than not Gibson's, ability to express or engage the present assumes rather than examines cyberpunk's construction of past/present/future and indulges in unhelpful generalities. Debating whether or not cyberpunk's cognitive mapping supports or subverts power begs the question, What exactly makes cyberpunk a form of cognitive mapping in the first place? If cyberpunk is a form of cognitive dissonance (or following Robert Scholes's description of science fiction, if it "offers us a world clearly and radically discontinuous from the one we know, yet returns to confront that known world in some cognitive way"), what induces cognition and what estranges?[14] Importantly, cyberspace as a fiction itself relies on and constructs notions of cognition and mapping.

13. Gibson's turn to the present in *Pattern Recognition* (New York: Putnam, 2003) is an interesting symptom of this loss of the future as predictable.

14. Robert Scholes, *Structural Fabulation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 29.

Cyberpunk makes the invisible visible so that it can be navigated; it structurally parallels Jameson's quest to make invisible capital visible so it can be mapped. Information networks and capitalism are both invisible, and Hollywood movies from *Tron* to *Hackers* make information comprehensible through visualizations that draw parallels between humans and information bits, computer architecture and cities.[15] Therefore, rather than assume that cyberpunk offers a cognitive map, we need to analyze exactly what kind of "present" cyberpunk draws from and together—and what devices it uses to signify the past/future in order to establish "our" present as mappable. Further, given that there are little to no similarities between Gibson's matrix and the Internet, we must stop accepting cyberpunk as "originating" what we currently understand as cyberspace, and instead ask how such a conflation was accomplished and why such a conflation was/is desirable.

This chapter explores these questions through Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Mamoru Oshii's animated feature *Ghost in the Shell*, and argues that cyberpunk's tethering to the "now" stems from its high-tech Orientalism, which serves—and fails to serve—as a means of navigation. Briefly, high-tech Orientalism seeks to orient the reader to a technology-overloaded present/future (which is portrayed as belonging to Japan or other Far East countries) through the promise of readable difference, and through a conflation of information networks with an exotic urban landscape. Gibson's high-tech Orientalism has helped make his prevision of networks so influential and "originary." High-tech Orientalism offers the pleasure of exploring, the pleasure of "learning," and the pleasure of being somewhat overwhelmed, but ultimately jacked in. This pleasure usually compensates for a *lack* of mastery. High-tech Orientalism promises intimate knowledge, sexual concourse with the other, which it reduces to data or local details. It seeks to reorient—to steer the self—by making it unrepresentable and reducing everything else to images or locations (whose distances are measured temporally as well as spatially). High-tech Orientalism also enables a form of passing—invariably portrayed as the denial of a body rather than the donning of another—that relies on the other as

15. This also occurs within engineering itself. For instance, data is transported along "buses."

disembodied representation. This will to knowledge structures the plot of many cyberpunk novels as well as the reader's relation to the text; the reader is always learning, always trying to understand these narratives that confuse. The reader eventually emerges as a hero/ine for having figured out the landscape, for having navigated these fast-paced cyberpunk texts, since the many unrelated plots (almost) come together at the end and revelations abound. This readerly satisfaction generates desire for these vaguely dystopian futures. Thus, Silicon Valley readers are not simply "bad readers" for viewing these texts as utopian. They do not necessarily desire the future as described by these texts; rather, they long for the ultimately steerable and sexy cyberspace, which always seems within reach, even as it slips from the future to the past.[16]

High-tech Orientalism establishes information networks as a *global* (comprehensive, all-inclusive, unified, and total) navigable digital space—a conception that flies in the face of the network's current configuration. Gibson's Sprawl trilogy and *Ghost in the Shell* both compare digital landscapes to urban ones, which are exotic yet recognizable. But spatialization alone does not make cyberspace an attractive map, a desirable alternative, a place of biz; rather, the mixture of exoticism and spatialization thrills and addicts console cowboys and readers alike. Although *Neuromancer* and *Ghost in the Shell* both rely on "Far East" locations to (dis)orient their

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16. High-tech Orientalism may be a way to steer through the future, or more properly represent the future as something that can be negotiated, but it is not simply "A western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Edward Said, *Orientalism* [New York: Vintage Books, 1978], 3). If Said's groundbreaking interrogation of Orientalism examined it in a period of colonialism, high-tech Orientalism takes place in a period of anxiety and vulnerability. As David Morely and Kevin Robins argue in "Techno-Orientalism: Futures, Foreigners and Phobias" techno-Orientalism engages with the economic crises of the 1980s, which supposedly threatened to "emasculate" the United States and Europe (Japan became the world's largest creditor nation in 1985 and threatened to say no). Faced with a "Japanese future," high-tech Orientalism resurrects the frontier—in a virtual form—in order to open space for the United States. As opposed to the openly racist science fiction of the early to mid-twentieth century, which warned against the "yellow peril," cyberpunk fiction does not advocate white supremacy or the resurrection of a strong United States. It rather offers representations of survivors, of savvy navigators who can open closed spaces.

readers/viewers, they use different nation-states to do so, and they offer different versions of cyberspace as information map: the former portrays cyberspace as something we jack into, and the latter as something that jacks into us; *Neuromancer* takes Japan as its *Orientalis*, *Ghost in the Shell* takes Hong Kong. Both narratives, however, reorient (and hence produce) the self by turning economic threat into sexual opportunity, and although they do address the "fusion" of the technological the biological, they turn technology into biology by privileging sexual reproduction and evolution. This reorientation drives these texts' popularity and their perceived relevance to actual information technologies: if online communications threaten to submerge users in representation—if they threaten to turn users into media spectacles—high-tech Orientalism allows people to turn a blind eye to their own vulnerability and enjoy themselves while doing so. This vulnerability is economically as well as technologically induced. Both narratives were written during periods of economic duress, in which globalization seemed to equal domestic recession and loss (the 1980s for the United States and the 1990s for Japan); both portray as the site of information nations that seem to offer the greatest threats (Japan for the United States and China for Japan).

To be explicit, by reading these texts as different forms of high-tech Orientalism, I am resisting the logic that would see one, *Ghost in the Shell*, as the "native" and corrective response to the other, *Neuromancer*.[17] As Toshiya Ueno contends, the *anime* Japanoid image serves as an image machine through which "Western or other people misunderstand and fail to recognize an always illusory Japanese culture, but also is the mechanism through which Japanese misunderstand themselves."[18] This

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17. As Rey Chow has claimed, self-representations cannot get us out of the bind of representation since they can operate as "voluntary, intimate confessions" that buttress power ("Gender and Representation," in *Feminist Consequences*, ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kauka [New York: Columbia University Press, 2000], 43). Also, since "the self does not necessarily 'know' itself and cannot be reduced to the realm of rational cognition," and because one's experiences are not coterminous with the group one seeks to represent, self-representations do not simply correct misrepresentations (46).

18. Toshiyo Ueno, "Japanimation and Techno-Orientalism," ⟨http://www.t0.or.at/ueno/japan.htm⟩ (accessed May 1, 1999).

"misunderstanding" is itself the basis for identification—for another kind of orientation. The relation between U.S. and Japanese cyberpunk reveals a process of what George Yudice calls transculturation: a "dynamic whereby different cultural matrices impact reciprocally—though not from equal positions—on each other, not to produce a single syncretic culture but rather a heterogeneous ensemble."[19] In addition to Japanese renderings of U.S. obsessions with a Japanese future, this heterogeneous ensemble includes U.S. borrowings from anime (from the animated MTV series *Aeon Flux* to the Hollywood blockbuster *The Matrix*) and U.S. *otaku* enjoying anime such as *Lain*, which its creators Yasuyuki Ueda and Yoshitoshi Abe maintain is "a sort of cultural war against American culture and the American sense of values."[20] This complicated back and forth thus does not allow for a simple condemnation of *Neuromancer* and praise of *Ghost in the Shell* or vice versa but rather calls for a more rigorous engagement with these *global* visions. This transculturation assumes the existence of two original separate cultures, perpetuating what many scholars see as the tired and mainly rhetorical East-West division, which erases much of Asia (in order for anime to emerge as a Japanese project, many other Asian nations must be erased).[21] It magnifies what Harry Harootunian has called

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19.   George Yudice, "We Are *Not* the World," *Social Text* 31–32 (1992): 209.

20.   Quoted in Kit Fox, "Interconnectivity: Three Interviews with the Staff of *Lain*," *Animerica* 7, no. 9 (October 1999): 29.

21.   Just as *Ghost in the Shell* offers a vision of Japan that expands its borders, anime furthers Japan's cultural influence. This is explicit in its other name: Japanimation. Japanimation usually subsumes all animation from the Far East, obscuring the fact that much drawing is done "offshore" in South Korea. U.S.-based sites such as geocities.com further this subimperialism: in this "neighborhood"-oriented site, anime and "all things Asian" are contained within the "Tokyo" sector, effecting in virtual space Japan's past colonial ambitions. Not surprisingly, U.S. animators such as Peter Chung, creator of MTV's Liquid Television program *Aeon Flux*, resist Japanimation, insisting that "Japanese animation simply means animation done in Japan. It's not a healthy thing for people to use general terms.... It's like saying U.S. animation is all funny, talking animals" (quoted in Eleftheria Parpis, "Anime Action: Japanimation Is Edgy and Cool—and Shops Love It," *Adweek*, December 14, 1998, 20). Indeed, the terms Japanimation and

"the bilateral narcissism of the United States and Japan."[22] This bilateral narcissism, which also gets written as East versus West, makes Japan *the* representative of all things Asian or Oriental (ironically fulfilling Japan's colonial aspirations)—at a time when such a distinction does not necessarily make sense.

Desperately Seeking the Matrix

What is the matrix?

This question occupies both Gibson's readers and characters, since the matrix's "nature" changes through the Sprawl trilogy, and since Gibson's descriptions of cyberspace assume much and explain little. As mentioned in chapter 1, the well-known depiction of cyberspace as a consensual hallucination comes from an explanatory screen provided by Case's Hosaka, which Case cuts short and dismisses as a "kid's show."[23] In contrast to vague descriptions of cyberspace as comprising glowing, differently colored, and differently shaped geometric shapes (perhaps high-tech public spheres?) are copious descriptions of Case's *desire* for cyberspace. For instance, the first reference to cyberspace in the novel portrays it as an impossible dream:

A year here and he [Case] still dreamed of cyberspace, hope fading nightly. All the speed he took, all the turns he'd taken and the corners he'd cut in Night City, and still he'd see the matrix in his sleep, bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colorless void.... The Sprawl was a long strange way home over the Pacific now, and he was no console man, no cyberspace cowboy. Just another hustler, trying to make it through. But in his dreams he'd cry for it, cry in his sleep, and wake alone in the dark, curled in his capsule in some coffin

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anime came into common parlance in the United States in order to distinguish it from the fuzzy Disney-influenced style associated with "animation" within the United States. The need to distinguish West from East thus enables a Japanification of the entire Far East.

22.   Quoted in Naoki Sakai, "'You Asians': On the Historical Role of the West and Asia Binary," *SAQ* 99, no. 4 (2000): 804.

23.   Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 52.

hotel, his hands clawed into the bedslab, temperfoam bunched between his fingers, trying to reach the console that wasn't there.[24] By portraying Case's desire for cyberspace as sexual, Gibson naturalizes cyberspace's appeal.[25] The reference to drugs, repeated throughout the novel, also establishes cyberspace as a form of addiction so powerful that one turns to drugs to "get" over it.[26]

As the cited passages reveal, in *Neuromaneer* neither the readers nor the main characters entirely "know" what is happening, although they are not entirely "lost" either. The basic plotline of *Neuromancer* is this: As punishment for stealing from one of his employers, Case is injected by the Yakuza (the mythic Japanese Mafia) with a myotoxin that makes it impossible for him to jack into cyberspace. He then travels to Night City (a subsidiary of Chiba City, Japan) in order to find a cure in its infamous nerve shops. Unable to repair the damage and out of money, Case becomes "just another hustler" on a suicidal arc. Before he manages to get himself killed, he's picked up by Molly (a female "street samurai" razorgirl/cyborg) who collects him for a mission directed by Armitage, Gibson's version of a masked man (whose standard, handsome, plastic features serve as his mask). Armitage fixes Case's nerve damage in exchange for his cooperation, and to ensure his loyalty, he lines Case's main arteries with toxin sacs. In order to prevent his nerve damage from returning, Case must be injected with an enzyme possessed by Armitage. The team first breaks into Sense/Net to steal a ROM construct (a program that mimics the mind) of Dixie (Case's now dead mentor), who will help Case break into a Tessier-Ashpool (T-A) artificial intelligence called Rio or Neuro-

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24. Ibid., 4–5.

25. Gibson furthers this effect by reciprocally describing the sexual as cyberspatial: Case's orgasm is depicted (visually) as "flaring blue in a timeless space, a vastness like the matrix, where the faces were shredded and blown away down hurricane corridors, and her inner thighs were strong and wet against his hips." Ibid., 33.

26. Ann Weinstone, in "Welcome to the Pharmacy: Addiction, Transcendence, and Virtual Reality" (*diacritics* 27, no. 3 [1997]: 77–89), has argued that the conflation of jacking in with getting high serves as a means of transcendence.

mancer. Molly physically steals the construct while Case, jacked into her sense sensorium via simstim, staffs the virtual operation and keeps time. The real boss turns out to be Wintermute, another T-A artificial intelligence who wishes to merge with Neuromancer in order to form a sentient being: Wintermute is improvisation; Neuromancer is personality. To merge, Molly must enter Villa Straylight—the T-A's mansion in Freeside (outer space)—and extract the "word" from 3Jane (Tessier's and Ashpool's daughter), while Case hacks into Neuromancer in cyberspace with the help of a Chinese virus program. Things get complicated, but the ending is somewhat happy: Wintermute and Neuromancer merge to become the matrix; Case gets his blood changed; Molly leaves him to pursue further adventures. Throughout, Case flips between reality, cyberspace, and simstim.

As Pam Rosenthal remarks, "The future in the cyberpunk world, no matter how astonishing its technological detailing, is always shockingly recognizable—it is our world, gotten worse, gotten more uncomfortable, inhospitable, dangerous, and thrilling."[27] This thrilling danger is partly produced by the complete erasure of the noncriminal working class.[28] This shocking recognizability is produced through confusing yet decipherable references (such as "BAMA"—the Boston Atlanta Metropolitan Axis—and "the war"—the two-week World War III), gratuitous phrases, and specialized language.[29] It is also produced through visual references: in many ways, *Neuromancer* refuses the "interiority" of language and reads like an impossible screenplay rather than a novel (as mentioned in chapter 1, Gibson considers *Neuromancer* a form of nonliterary popular culture). Consider, for instance, its opening paragraphs:

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27. Rosenthal, "Jacked-In," 85.

28. For more on the disappearance of a noncriminal working class in global narratives, see Roger Rouse, "Thinking through Transnationalism: Notes on the Cultural Politics of Class Relations in the Contemporary United States," *Public Culture* 7 (Winter 1995): 353–402.

29. As Gibson explains in an interview, "It was the *gratuitous* moves, the odd, quirky, irrelevant details, that provided a sense of strangeness" (McCaffrey, *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Fiction* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991], 141).

The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.

"It's not like I'm using," Case heard someone say, as he shouldered his way through the crowd around the door of the Cat. "It's like my body's developed this massive drug deficiency." It was a Sprawl voice and a Sprawl joke. The Chatsubo was a bar for professional expatriates; you could drink there for a week and never hear two words in Japanese.

Ratz was tending bar, his prosthetic arm jerking monotonously as he filled a tray of glasses with draft Kirin. He saw Case and smiled, his teeth a webwork of East European steel and brown decay. Case found a place at the bar, between the unlikely tan of one of Lonny Zone's whores and the crisp naval uniform of a tall African whose cheekbones were ridged with precise rows of tribal scars. "Wage was in here early, with two joeboys," Ratz said, shoving a draft across the bar with his good hand. "Maybe some business with you, Case?"[30]

In these three opening paragraphs, Gibson matter-of-factly juxtaposes the natural and the technological, the primitive and the high-tech—all in *visual* yet jarring terms. He also uses foreign (mainly Japanese) brand names, such as Kirin, in the place of more familiar U.S. ones, such as Bud (later, he introduces odder names, such as the Mitsubishi Bank of America, Ono-Sendai, Tessier-Ashpool, Maas-Neotek). Corporate names as modifiers are essential: it is never a coffeemaker, but a "Braun coffeemaker" (and later a "Braun robot device"). *Neuromancer* also proliferates unfamiliar proper names, such as Lonny Zone and the Sprawl. These descriptors are appropriate in a series all about information: they are noninformative, but written in such a way that one thinks they should relay information. Jargon, such as "joeboy," furthers this informatic effect, for presumably such jargon makes sense to someone. This combination of jargon and foreign and made-up brand names gives the impression that this world should be knowable, or that some reader who knows should exist or emerge.

Significantly, the most important markers are racial and ethnic. Although Gibson argues that nation-states in his new world have mainly disappeared or become reconfigured, nationality or continentality (when it comes to nonwhite characters) has become all the stronger, for geography determines type: Ratz's teeth are a webwork of East European steel and brown decay, and Case's fellow bar inhabitant is a tall African whose cheekbones are ridged with precise rows of tribal scars. The Zionites are constantly high, always touching each other and everyone else, and are generally incomprehensible.[31] Istanbul—that classically "Oriental" space—is described as a sluggish city that "never changes," seeped in history and prejudice (juxtaposing Turkey's open sexism with Molly's badass coolness makes "our" sexy technological elite appear sexism-/racism-free and makes technological enhancements seem empowering, while still adhering to a logic of the survival of the fittest). These "dark" others in *Neuromancer* are marked as technologically outside, as involved in an alternative past, a past/present/future of tribal scars and age-old ethnic hatreds, whose familiar primitivism, juxtaposed against "our future," shocks the reader. These proliferating "natives" are markers of authenticity. As Lisa Nakamura, drawing from Rey Chow's essay "Where Have All the Natives Gone?" argues, racial stereotypes serve as an auratic presence for us.[32] In an age of technical reproducibility, the never-changing native enables distance and uniqueness.[33] The constant pinning or conflation of race with location and/or time period reveals the ways in which *Neuromancer*'s global or cosmopolitan future depends on stereotypical descriptions of raced others who serve as "orienting points" for the readers and the protagonist (Case too is hardly a "complicated" character, but his

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30.   Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 3.

31.   Maelcum, Case's Zionite sidekick, also serves as an erotic object: Case constantly stares at Maelcum's muscular back and describes him as he would Molly.

32.   Lisa Nakamura, *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 6.

33.   This denial of coevalness, as Johannes Fabian has asserted in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), is how anthropology constitutes its object: native others are treated consistently as though their existence does not take place in the same time as the ethnographer's. Cyberpunk magnifies anthropology's "time machine" effect by literally transporting the reader into the "near" future—a future made shockingly recognizable through the juxtaposition of primitive (non-Western) pasts with present (Western) ones.

character develops and surprises). Cyberpunk's much-lauded ability to make us finally "experience" our present depends on the "primitive"; this inability to move outside what Naoki Sakai has called the cartographic logic of the West versus the rest is a greater "failure" than the inability to imagine a future utopia.

Not all natives are equal: Japan plays a critical role in the cyberpunk present, for the future world "gotten worse, gotten more uncomfortable, inhospitable, dangerous, and thrilling" invariably translates into the world gotten more Japanese.[34] As Joshua La Bare claims, "The Japanese have somehow wrapped up the future, hemmed it in, taken control of it; or rather, from our perspective, Western science fiction writers have wrapped it up for them in words."[35] This Japanese future (paradoxically) depends on emblems of the Japanese past: as Lisa Nakamura notes, "Anachronistic signs of Japaneseness are made, in the conventions of cyberpunk, to signify the future rather than the past."[36] But these anachronistic signs of Japaneseness are not randomly chosen: samurais, ninjas, and shonen draw from Japan's Edo period. They confine the Japanese past to the period of first contact between the West and Japan. Cyberpunk mixes images of the mysterious yet-to-be-opened Japan (which eventually did submit to the West) with the conquering corporate Japan of the future. In addition, *Neuromancer* portrays the "near" Japanese past (that is, the present) as a technological badlands produced through contact with the West. Describing Night City, Case conjectures, "The Yakuza might be preserving the place [Night City] as a kind of historical park, a reminder of humble origins."[37] But Night City, as the opening page of

Neuromancer makes clear, is filled with gaijin paradises, places where "you could drink ... for a week and never hear two words in Japanese." Night City—"a deliberately unsupervised playground for technology itself"—preserves the moment of fusion between East and West, the moment that the Japanese take over the development of "Western" technology. Or more pointedly, the "origin" of Japanese success is gaijin. So if as Rey Chow observes in her reading of contemporary Chinese cinema's use of the primitive, the primitive "signifies not a longing for a past and a culture that can no longer be" but wishful thinking that the primitive is the prime, *Neuromancer*'s, high-tech Orientalist primitivism does not make Japan primary.[38]

Within this grim Japanified future, cyberspace appears to be a Western frontier in which U.S. ingenuity wins over Japanese corporate assimilation, for cyberspace allows for piracy and autonomy. In stark contrast to those working for seemingly omnipotent zaitbatsu, for whom power is gained through "gradual and willing accommodation of the machine, the system, the parent organism," the meatless console cowboy stands as an individual talent.[39] Zaitbatsu, which need the console cowboy to steal data by manipulating ICEbreakers (intrusion countermeasures electronics), permit him economic autonomy (thus making him effectively zaitbatsu's dark side). The console cowboy escapes this machine-organism fusion by escaping his body—by becoming a disembodied mind—when he merges with technology, and his celebrity/success depends on his anonymity. As Pam Rosenthal argues, "The hacker mystique posits power through anonymity. One does not log on to the system through authorized paths of entry; one sneaks in, dropping through trap doors in the security program, hiding one's tracks, immune to the audit trails that were put there to make the perceiver part of the data perceived. It is a dream of recovering power and wholeness by seeing wonders and by not being seen."[40] Thus, cyberspace allows the hacker to assume the privilege of

34. For other "Japanicized" futures, see Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner* (1982, 35 mm, 117 minutes); William Gibson, *Count Zero* (New York: Ace Books, 1986), *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988), and *Idoru* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996); and Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992).

35. Joshua La Bare, "The Future: 'Wrapped ... in That Mysterious Japanese Way,'" *Science Fiction Studies* 17, no. 1 (March 2000): 23.

36. Nakamura, *Cybertypes*, 63.

37. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 11.

38. Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 37.

39. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 203.

40. Rosenthal, "Jacked-In," 99.

the imperial subject—"to see without being seen."[41] This recovery of wholeness and imperialism also recovers U.S. ideals. As Frederick Buell maintains, through the console cowboy, "a cowboy on the new frontier of cyberspace, he [Gibson] brings a pre–Frederick Jackson Turner excitement into a postmodern, hyperdeveloped world; if the old frontier has been built out thoroughly and its excitements become guilty ones in the wake of contemporary multicultural/postcolonial rewritings of Western history, try, then, cyberspace in an apparently polycultural, globalized era." More succinctly, Buell claims that "cyberspace becomes the new U.S. Frontier, accessible to the privileged insider who happens to be a reconfigured version of the American pulp hero."[42]

Perhaps, but not because cyberspace is outside the Japanification of the world; cyberspace in *Neuromancer* is not a U.S. frontier, and good old American cowboys cannot survive without things Japanese. First, cowboys cannot access cyberspace without Japanese equipment (Case needs his Ono-Sendai in order to jack in). Second, cyberspace is filled with Asian trademarks and corporations; however, cyberspace—unlike the physical landscape—can be conquered and made to submit: entering cyberspace is analogous to opening up the Orient. *Neuromancer* counters U.S. anxieties about "exposure to, and penetration by, Japanese culture" through cyberspace, through a medium that enables U.S. penetration.[43] Cyberspace as disembodied representation rehearses themes of Oriental exoticism and Western penetration. Consider, for instance, the moment Case reunites with cyberspace:

A gray disk, the color of Chiba sky.

Now—

Disk beginning to rotate, faster, becoming a sphere of paler gray.

Expanding—

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41. Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 149.

42. Frederick Buell, "Nationalist Postnationalism: Globalist Discourse in Contemporary American Culture," *American Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (September 1998): 503, 566.

43. Morley and Robins, "Techno-Orientalism," 139.

And it flowed, flowered for him, fluid neon origami trick, the unfolding of his distanceless home, his country, transparent 3D chessboard extending to infinity. Inner eye opening to the stepped scarlet pyramid of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority burning beyond the green cubes of the Mitsubishi Bank of America, and high and very far away he saw the spiral arms of military systems, forever beyond his reach.

And somewhere he was laughing, in a white-painted loft, distant fingers caressing the deck, tears of release streaking his face.[44]

Cyberspace opens up, flowers for him—a "fluid neon origami trick." Reuniting with cyberspace is sexual: he has tears of release as he enters once more his distanceless home. Molly notes, "I saw you stroking that Sendai; man, it was pornographic."[45] This flowering cyberspace draws on the same pornographic Orientalist fantasies of opening Asian beauties as mainstream cyberporn. To repeat the description of asiannudes.com cited in chapter 3:

You are welcome to our dojo! Look no further, traveler. You have found the Clan of Asian Nudes, filled with gorgeous Asian women in complete submission. Take them by becoming a samurai. Our dojo houses the most incredible supermodels from Japan, Vietnam, China, Laos, and San Francisco's Chinatown! Their authentic, divine beauty will have you entranced nightly. New girls are added almost every day, their gifts blossoming before you on the screen.[46]

Not only does cyberspace blossom for the console cowboy, so too do Oriental ICEbreakers. When Case breaks into the T-A Rio artificial intelligence Neuromancer, he uses a Chinese Kuang Grade Eleven ICEbreaker and this "big mother" "unfold[s] around them. Polychrome shadow, countless translucent layers shifting and recombining. Protean, enormous, it tower[s] above them, blotting out the void."[47] The translucent shifting

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44. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 52.

45. Ibid., 47.

46. ⟨http://www.asiannudes.com/tour1.html⟩ (accessed April 1, 1999).

47. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 168.

layers surround them, evoking images of Oriental mystery and penetrability.[48] This Oriental big mother blots out the void, filling it with its shadow, revealing its secret to the Occidental male who maneuvers it to perform his will. This link between cyberspace and blossoming Oriental female positions the Western viewer as samurai, and contains the "modern" threat of Japan by remapping Japan as feudal and premodern. If, as David Morley and Kevin Robins assert, Japan "has destabilized the neat correlation between West/East and modern/premodern," this feudal portrayal reorients the Western viewer (here cowboy) by re-Orientalizing Japan.[49] Hence the allusions to the Edo and Meiji eras, which undermine the future global power of Japan.

Entering cyberspace allows one to conquer a vaguely threatening Oriental landscape. If the Yakuza—the "sons of the neon chrysanthemum"—have altered his body so that Case can no longer jack in to cyberspace, by reentering it, he takes over their territory by uniting with their flowering mother.[50] As Stephen Beard in his reading of *Blade Runner* suggests, "Through the projection of exotic (and erotic) fantasies onto this high-tech delirium, anxieties about the 'impotence' of Western culture can be, momentarily, screened out. High-tech Orientalism makes possible 'cultural amnesia, ecstatic alienation, serial self-erasure.'"[51] In *Neuromancer*, high-tech Orientalism allows one to erase one's body in orgasmic ecstasy. Or to be more precise, high-tech Orientalism allows one to *enjoy* anxieties about Western impotence. It allows one, as Gibson puts it, "to try [ ] to *come* to terms with the awe and terror inspired … by the world in which we live" (emphasis added).[52]

Although this call to *enjoy* one's emasculation—and in this emasculated state to "jack into" another—depends on the ability to jack off and in at one's pleasure, it nevertheless offers an alternative "nerd-cool" form

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48. For more on Orientalism and translucent layers, see David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (New York: Penguin, 1989).

49. Morley and Robins, "Techno-Orientalism," 146.

50. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 35.

51. Quoted in Morley and Robins, "Techno-Orientalism," 154.

52. Quoted in Rosenthal, "Jacked-In," 85.

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of masculinity that contrasts sharply with the Arnold Schwarzenegger type also popular in the 1980s.[53] Case is an emasculated cowboy. Although Case does save the day, Molly leaves him because happiness takes the edge off her game, and Case marries a girl named Frank. Case is often described as passive, as navigated. Feelings and insights "come to him" or "hit him," making Case the inert recipient of impulses that collide with him and that he sometimes senses earlier.[54] Case, jacking into Molly, is forced to follow her gaze and feel how tight her jeans are; when Molly and Case make love, Case is ridden. When hustling in Night City, he is "driven by a cold intensity that seems to belong to someone else." At the close of the novel, a self-loathing that makes him move "beyond ego, beyond personality, beyond awareness" fuels his victory over Neuromancer's ICE. When Molly suggests they become partners, Case replies, "I gotta lotta choice, huh?"[55] Thus, this ecstasy does not obliterate the impotence of the cowboy but rather allows him to live with it. It also reveals the limitations of such sexual fantasies and conquest, for this orgasmic ecstasy constructs cyberspace—the supposed consensual hallucination—as a solipsistic space.

In cyberspace, Case runs into no other people—or perhaps more precisely, no other disembodied minds. In the matrix, Case communicates with artificial intelligences, computer viruses, and computer constructs. These others—these codes—that Case encounters are mimics. The Chinese ICEbreaker does the methodical hacking work, going "Siamese" on the computer-defense systems. Glowing and colorful cubes in cyberspace represent Japanese corporations such as the Mitsubishi Bank of America. The closest things to sentient beings Case encounters online are Dixie (the ROM construct of his deceased hacker mentor), Linda Lee (whose

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53. It is as different from the pumped-up male as "sneaky fuckers" are from gorillas. "Sneaky fuckers" are male gorillas who rather than becoming silverbacks, are almost indistinguishable from females. Rather than fighting with other males over territory, they live among the female gorillas and have sex "undetected" (hence the name). As well, although nerd-cool in cyberpunk fiction is aggressively heterosexual, computer programmers are not always so.

54. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 36.

55. Ibid., 7, 262, 51.

ROM construct he encounters when Neuromancer attempts to trap him), and the T-A artificial intelligences Wintermute and Neuromancer. Thus, cyberspace is "a drastic simplification" that not only limits sensual bandwidth; it also literally reduces others to code.[56]

This empty high-tech Orientalist space parallels the textual construction of the Orient in early scholarly studies that focused on ancient civilizations. These studies, as Said has argued, treated the Orient as empty; the "real" Egyptians that Orientalist scholars encountered—if these scholars traveled to Egypt at all—were treated as background relics, or as proof of the Oriental race's degeneration.[57] In cyberspace, then, as in all Orientalist spaces, there are disembodied minds, on the one hand, and disembodied representations, on the other. There are those who can reason online and those who are reduced to information. In cyberspace, there is disembodiment, and then there is disembodiment. Via high-tech Orientalism, the window of cyberspace becomes a mirror that reflects Case's mind and reduces others to background, or reflects his mind via these others. High-tech Orientalism, like its nontech version, "defines the Orient as that which can never be a subject."[58] In order to preserve the U.S. cowboy, it reinforces stereotypes of the Japanese as mechanical mimics (imitators of technology). This is not to say that in order to portray a more "fair" version of cyberspace, Gibson should have included Japanese cowboys within *Neuromancer* (or even more Japanese characters), nor is it to say that Gibson celebrates cyberspace as Orientalist. It is to say that this influential version of cyberspace mixes together frontier dreams with sexual conquest: it reveals the objectification of others to be key to the construction of any "cowboy." This is, perhaps, a brilliant critique of Orientalism in general. Perhaps.

Significantly, the Orient is first and foremost a virtual space. Said contends that the Orient is not a "real" space but rather a textual universe (that is, created by supposedly descriptive Orientalist texts). Descriptions of Case navigating both spaces make explicit the parallel between Japanese urban space and cyberspace. When he and Molly play a cat-and-mouse game through Night City, Case says,

In some weird and very approximate way, it was like a run in the matrix. Get just wasted enough, find yourself in some desperate but strangely arbitrary kind of trouble, and it was possible to see Ninsei as a field of data, the way the matrix had once reminded him of proteins linking to distinguish cell specialties. Then you could throw yourself into a highspeed drift and skid, totally engaged but set apart from it all, and all around you the dance of biz, information interacting, data made flesh, in the mazes of the black market.[59]

When one becomes slightly disoriented (and in *Neuromancer*, Case is almost always high or in some strangely arbitrary trouble), Ninsei becomes the matrix, a world in which others are reduced to information or data. Like in cyberspace, these reductions enable a certain self-direction; they enable you to "throw yourself into a highspeed drift and skid." Parallels between cyberspace and Ninsei sprinkle *Neuromancer*. The gray disk that marks Case's entry into cyberspace is the color of the Chiba sky (the color of television tuned to a dead channel). When Case remembers Ninsei, he remembers "faces and Ninsei neon," a neon that is replicated in the bright red-and-green cyberspatial representations of corporations. Ninsei people are reduced to light and code. Case always remembers his former lover Linda Lee as "bathed in restless laser light, features reduced to a code."[60] The easy codification of things and people breaks down when Case confronts his other "home," BAMA; hence, when he is in the metropolis again and everything no longer mimics him, Case notes, "Ninsei had been a lot simpler."[61] Ninsei had been a lot simpler because this Oriental space always existed as information, as code for Case. Just as the Japanese

56. Ibid., 55.

57. Said, *Orientalism*, 52.

58. Naoki Sakai, quoted in Morley and Robins, "Techno-Orientalism," 146.

59. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 16.

60. Ibid., 18. In his 1996 novel *Idoru*, Gibson takes this datafication of Asians to the extreme: Rei Teio is a virtual construct. She "grows"—that is, becomes more complicated—by absorbing information and mimicking others. People "see" her as a hologram.

61. Gibson, *Neuromancer*, 69.

language reduces to Sony and Kirin, Ninsei as a whole—not just Chiba City—reduces to data.

Importantly, Case reveals himself to be a *bad* navigator at times. In the high-speed chase cited earlier, he correctly assesses that Molly is following him, but incorrectly assumes that she is doing so on Wage's behalf (based on misleading information given to him by Linda Lee). As Molly puts it, Case just fit her into his reality picture.[62] Linda Lee also moves from being an easily codified character to a woman (albeit as a ROM construct) who embodies the complex patterns of the human body, and although Case eventually wins in cyberspace, he flatlines several times, and Neuromancer almost seduces Case into dying there. Lastly, the neat separation between cyberspace and the physical world collapses at the end, when Wintermute's plans go astray and Case must enter the T-A villa to help Molly. In other words, the cowboy and the datafication of others do not always work; Case's rehearsing of Orientalism as a means of navigation and understanding does not always succeed. (Arguably cyberspace as a frontier and Case as a cowboy are produced through the contrast between cyberspace and simstim: simstim enables one to feel the physical sensations of another. When Case "rides" Molly via simstim, he is irritated by the fact that he cannot control Molly's gaze or her action, and he dismisses it as a "meat toy.")

Regardless, *Neuromancer* insists on the navigability and noninvasiveness of such communications, as though a consensual hallucination would not be disorienting.[63] The strains of Dashiell Hammett and a traditional

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62. Ibid., 24.

63. Gibson does explore the ways in which this type of communication could lead to a suffocating intimacy in *Count Zero*, but only when considering artificial intelligence-to-human relations, not human-to-human. In contrast as noted later, Octavia Butler's *Patternmaster* series deals with the damaging and disconcerting effects of mind-to-mind communication through its psychotic empaths. She also emphasizes the physical costs of a consensual hallucination in her *Parable* series, in which "sharers"—children born of drug-addicted mothers—feel the pain and joy of others (more precisely, that they imagine others to be suffering). This is not to say that *Neuromancer* completely disregards the physical—cowboys can die in cyberspace, but its vision is very different from Pat Cadigan's world in *Synners*, in which a stroke advances into a network and travels from person to person.

detective story plot reinforce this navigability, this epistemophilia, this desire to seek out and understand. The narrative lures the reader along through the promise of learning: we are given more and more clues as the novel progresses so that we too can figure out the "mystery" (although not enough to figure out Neuromancer's "true name"). And this epistemophilia is tied intimately to the promise of finally getting to know the other, who is never banal and who always has a secret to be revealed (in *Count Zero*, Bobby finally visits the projects and sees what exotic secret world these concrete buildings hide).

Thus, cyberpunk's twin obsessions with cyberspace and Japan as the Orient are not accidental, and cannot be reduced to endless citations of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. Rather, the Japanese Orient is a privileged example of the virtual. It orients the reader/viewer, enabling him or her to envision the world as data. This twinning sustains—barely—the dream of self-erasure and pure subjectivity. Most simply, others must be reduced to information in order for the console cowboy to emerge and penetrate. The dream of bodiless subjectivity must be accompanied by bodiless representivity. This high-tech Orientalism also renders Gibson's text something other than mere text. Through these visual spectacles and through prose that works visually, Gibson, typing to the beat of late 1970s and early 1980s' punk, responds to the disorientation around him through an imaginary Orientalist world.[64] Gibson writes what realist visual technologies could not and cannot yet represent (either as a film or a reality), and thus establishes the "originary" desire for cyberspace.

Looking Back

Cyberpunk is not simply Orientalist fiction produced to come to terms with U.S. economic "softness" and emasculation. Most significantly, cyberpunk has impacted and been impacted by a genre of anime called *mecha* (a Japanese transliteration and transformation of the word mechanical);

As well, rather than two artificial intelligences merging, a human and an artificial intelligence merge in Cadigan's *Synners*.

64. Orientalist spectacles were also key to the emergence of film spectatorship. For examples, see Georges Méliès's Oriental trick films and the many renditions of *Ali and the Magic Lantern*.

through mecha, anime in general has gained cult status in nations such as the United States and France.[65] Cyberpunk, I argue, enables profound, compromised, obfuscatory, and hopeful identification and misrecognition between U.S. and Japanese otaku.[66] Anime's relation to cyberspace is not simply thematic: as Thomas Lamarre has observed, anime's use of limited animation makes it analogous to scanning information—to the experience of informatization.[67] As well, both cyberspace and anime offer an escape from indexicality: in both spaces, the impossible can be represented and "seen."

In the following sections I turn to Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (*Kôkaku kidôtai*) in order to investigate what happens to cyberpunk when it travels *home*, so to speak, for *Ghost in the Shell* and mecha more broadly insist on the Japanese as *primary* by displacing "primitiveness" onto the Chinese. The high-tech Oriental is always in flux, always identified as the denizen of the nation-state most threatening economic and technological superiority.

Ghosts in the Shell
Ghost in the Shell, released simultaneously in Europe, the United States, and Japan in 1995 (during Japan's seemingly never-ceasing recession), was the most Westernized anime (in terms of its animation style and foreign-market outlook) produced to date. It marked anime's U.S. debut in major movie theatres (although it is still mainly aired on television in the United States). *Ghost in the Shell* reached number one on *Billboard* magazine's video sales chart and earned the rather limited title of New York City's highest-grossing film shown exclusively on a single screen in one theater.[68] Oshii's work was a hallmark in anime production for both aesthetic and corporate reasons: *Ghost in the Shell* was "the most expensive and technically advanced Japanese animated feature yet made," although it still only cost $10 million—one-tenth of the cost of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.[69] It was also cofinanced and produced by Japan's Bandai and Kodansha and Chicago-based Manga Entertainment.

This anime is based on the 1989–1990 *manga* (Japanese comic book) series of the same name created by Shirow Masamune. According to Shirow, *Ghost in the Shell* is a relatively international work that transcends national boundaries, and includes multiple references to English and Japanese popular culture and literature.[70] As with *Neuromancer*, the particular type of globalization, rather than the mere fact of it, matters: in these narratives and almost all mecha, Japan is both primary and universal, donning the universalism it was forced to abandon after World War II. According to Naoki Sakai:

As the Japanese Empire expanded territorially, annexing Hokkaido, Okinawa, Taiwan, Korea, the Pacific Islands, and finally large parts of East and Southeast Asia under the umbrella of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, the emperor was increasingly associated with the universalistic principle of the Japanese reign under which people of different ethnic backgrounds, of different languages and cultures, and of different residences were entitled to be integrated into the imperial nation and treated as equal subjects (the equality of which must be thoroughly scrutinized, indeed). Japan being an imperial

65. Although popular Japanese mecha series such as *Robotech* and *Astroboy* predate cyberpunk, mecha is now most often translated as cyberpunk, with posters for popular series such as *The Bubblegum Crisis* prominently featuring the English word cyberpunk. For the "global" popularity of mecha, see ⟨http://www.anipike.com⟩; and Laurence Lerman, "Anime Vids Get Euro-Friendly," *Variety*, June 24, 1996, 103. Also, anime directed toward a girl audience in Japan is popular among U.S. otaku.

66. Significantly, the first cover of *Wired* magazine featured the Japanese word otaku.

67. See Thomas Lamarre, "From Animation to *Anime*: Drawing Movements and Moving Drawings," *Japan Forum* 14, no. 2 (2002): 329–367.

68. Elizabeth Lazarowitz. "COLUMN ONE: Beyond 'Speed Racer': Japanese Animation Has Exploded in Popularity Worldwide; Creators of Such New-Generation Superheroes as a Female Cyber-Cop Hope to Cash in on TV Shows, Videos, and Comic Books," *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1996, 1.

69. Ibid.

70. Trish Ledoux, "Interview with Masamune Shirow," in *Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of ANIMERICA, ANIME, AND MANGA MONTHLY (1992–1997)*, ed. Trish Ledoux (San Francisco: Cadence Books, 1997), 39.

nation, the prewar emperor was rarely made to represent the unity of a particular ethnicity or national culture.[71]

After the war, Sakai argues, the United States encouraged Japanese nationalism in order to curtail Japanese imperialism (and thus make the United States the sole source of universalism). Significantly, both the manga and anime versions of *Ghost in the Shell* depict the Japanese as globally affluent and—in stark contrast to U.S. cyberpunk—militarily active. This near future is filled with high-tech tanks and weapons, and devoid of ninjas and kimonos. Without explaining how article 9 of the Japanese Constitution forbidding Japanese military buildup had been circumvented, they portray a people who have moved away from what 1990s' Japanese nationalists have called a "masochistic" or maternal-centered society.[72] This move, however, is not represented via hypermasculine Japanese male protagonists but rather (and consistently in many mecha from *The Bubblegum Crisis* to *The Dirty Pair*) through representations of strong, nonmaternal but well-endowed cyborg women. These "women" represent a fantasy of equality in which women—who are not quite women—are as aggressive and puerile as men (perhaps machinic men with breasts). This representation is not unique to mecha—Molly in *Neuromancer* is a case in point. Significantly, though, these women are *protagonists* rather than sidekicks. The audience both identifies with and desires them—and this cross-gender and cross-cultural identification/desire is key to the "foreign" appeal of anime.

Although the anime and the manga both portray a globally affluent and militarily active Japan, they differ greatly in their depictions of globalization. The anime and the manga open with an introductory text, explaining that we are in the near future, that information networks pulse through the world, and that nation-states and ethnic groups still survive; yet the manga makes more explicit which nations and which ethnic groups matter. The manga is set in a mythic place "on the edge of Asia, in a strange corporate conglomerate-state called 'Japan,'" whereas the anime is set in an unspecified place that resembles, and is indeed modeled after, Hong Kong (even though all the characters speak Japanese and the heads of state have Japanese surnames). The more conservative manga deals with "global" issues: from a "slave" socialist nation (presumably China) that provides the "master" nation (Japan) with cheap labor to Filipina girls who are dubbed and destroyed in order to create love dolls for the Japanese elite, from the disputed Northern Islands (which the Japanese win back from the Russians during World War IV) to Israeli manipulation of Japanese domestic politics. It refers to shifty Korean informants, ungrateful nations that demand aid in compensation for past exploitation, and robots (a prominent "ethnic" group with its own lobbying groups) that go berserk because rampant consumer capitalism discards them on a regular basis. Shirow's protagonists are profoundly antilabor: corporations and governments may be corrupt—and Section 9 (a secret intelligence agency filled with cyborgs) pursues corrupt politicians as well as terrorists—but corrupt labor and lazy workers have ruined society. In the manga's second issue, "Super Spartan," cyborg Major Motoko Kusanagi attacks a David Copperfieldesque government orphanage that illegally uses a ghost-erasing device. When a young boy approaches the Major as his savoir, the Major replies, "What do you want? Do you just want to eat and contribute nothing, to be brainwashed by media trash? To sacrifice the nation's future for your own selfishness? . . . Listen, kid—You've got a ghost, and a brain . . . and you can access a cyber-brain. Create your own future."[73]

The manga blames the media, in particular television, for the future's problems. The public is an annoyance: a videotape of the Major killing a boy seemingly without provocation causes an outrage that forces her to fake her own death. Driving away from an angry mob, the Major and her section head say,

71. Sakai, "You Asians," 802.

72. For more on Japan as masochistic or maternal, see Marilyn Ivy, "Revenge and Recapitation in Recessionary Japan," *SAQ* 99, no. 4 (2000): 819–840; Tomiko Yoda, "The Rise and Fall of Maternal Society: Gender, Labor, and Capital in Contemporary Japan," *SAQ* 99, no. 4 (2000): 865–902; and Andrea G. Arai, "The 'Wild Child' of 1990s Japan," *SAQ* 99, no. 4 (2000): 841–863.

73. Masamune Shirow, *Ghost in the Shell*, trans. Frederik Schodt and Toren Smith (Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, 1995), 45.

description

Major: "If those peace activists would just deal with reality a little more effectively we wouldn't be placed in these situations."
Aramaki: "They're just like us. They hate violence …"
Major: "They're so hypocritical. Emphasizing a lifestyle based on consumption is the *ultimate* violence against poor countries."[74]

The Major usually voices the profoundly anticonsumerist, promilitary lines in the manga (presumably, the message is more palatable coming from a woman—even one conceived and drawn by a male author—than a man).

Unlike the manga and like *Neuromancer*, the anime is set in a foreign city—this time Hong Kong. Whether or not Japan is still a nation-state is unclear, just as the status of the United States is unclear in *Neuromancer*. One can interpret this move away from overt Japanese nationalism as progressive, but such a reading ignores the importance of Orientalism to the anime. The plot of the *Ghost in the Shell* anime parallels *Neuromancer*—except that rather than an artificial intelligence seeking to be free by merging with its better half, an artificial life-form (the Puppet Master) seeks to free itself by merging with the Major. Set in Hong Kong in 2029, *Ghost in the Shell* follows the adventures of the Major, who leads Section 9 as she pursues the Puppet Master, a dangerous criminal who ghost-hacks people, inserting false memories, controlling their actions, and reducing them to puppets. The Major's entire body, or "shell," has been replaced by a titanium "Megatech Body." The human essence is encapsulated in one's "ghost," which holds one's memories.

Throughout the anime, a far more mature Major Motoko than her counterpart in the manga anxiously contemplates her humanity and hears voices, presumably her own ghost's, but as we find out later, the Puppet Master's as well. The Puppet Master and Major Motoko finally meet when the Puppet Master, lured into a buxom blond Megatech Body, is hit by a truck and brought to Section 9. That the Puppet Master has no organic brain yet contains traces of a burgeoning synthetic one disturbs the Section 9 cyborgs because it troubles the (already-compromised) dis-

tinction between humans and machines. When Nakamura, the head of Section 6 (the diplomatic unit) and an unknown American come to claim the body, they identify it as the Puppet Master (they claim the Puppet Master is a human programmer whose ghost has been lured into a Megatech Body). In the middle of their explanation, the Puppet Master, who by this time is a badly mutilated blond torso, speaks the truth: the diplomatic corps hired a U.S. artificial intelligence company to develop the Puppet Master—an artificial life program—in order to assist diplomacy via espionage and other illegal activities. The Puppet Master then appeals for asylum, claiming he is a life-form: moving through the Net, he has become sentient, and since Japan has no death penalty, he cannot be terminated. In the meantime, Togusa (a Japanese and almost fully human member of Section 9) has deduced that Section 6 has illegally brought with it attack personnel wearing thermoneutic camouflage. Just as the Puppet Master pleads for diplomatic immunity, Section 6 attacks and steals the Puppet Master, with Section 9 in hot pursuit. When Major Motoko—alone—finally catches up with the men who have taken the Puppet Master, she too becomes a mutilated torso. Her close comrade/inferior officer, Batou, saves her from complete annihilation, and at her request, connects her and the Puppet Master. During this "dive," the Puppet Master takes over the Major's body and proposes that they merge. By merging, the Puppet Master can achieve death and diversify his program—he will live on through their offspring; Major Motoko can break through the boundaries that limit her as a person and access the vast expanse of the Net, which their offspring will populate. They merge just before Section 6 planes destroy the Puppet Master. Major Motoko survives, and Batou transplants her newly merged brain into a little girl's body. The anime ends with her leaving Batou's "safe house" to explore the expanse of the Net before her. Although she asks herself, "Where shall I go now? / The net is vast and limitless," the "camera" pans through the landscape of Hong Kong (see figures 4.1–4.3).

According to Toshiyo Ueno, "the choice of Hong Kong represents an unconscious criticism of Japan's role as sub-empire: by choosing Hong Kong as the setting of this film, and trying to visualize the information net and capitalism, the director of this film, Oshii Mamoru, unconsciously tried to criticize the sub-imperialism of Japan (and other Asian

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74. Ibid., 307.

The net is vast and limitless.
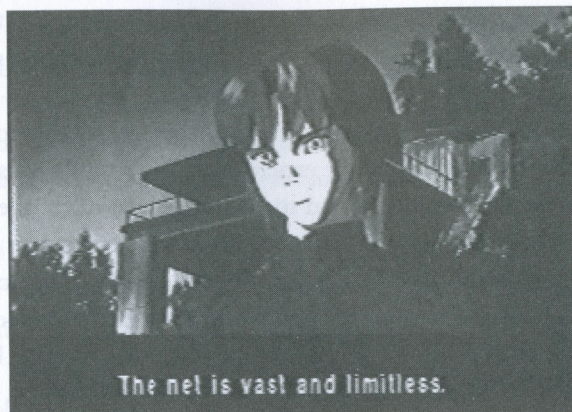
| Figure 4.1 |
The "new Major" leaving Batou's safe house

| Figure 4.2 |
The Major overlooking the city

| Figure 4.3 |
The last frame: Hong Kong as a vast Net

nations)."[75] Rather than signaling an unconscious critique of Japan, however, the choice of Hong Kong Orientalizes, representing the world as data. Faced with the task of representing invisible networks of information, Oshii chose a location he believed easily reduces to information:

In "Ghost in the Shell," I wanted to create a present flooded with information, and it [Japan's multilayered world] wouldn't have lent itself to that. For this reason, I thought of using exoticism as an approach to a city of the future. In other words, I believe that a basic feeling people get perhaps when imagining a city of the near future is that while there is an element of the unknown, standing there they'll get used to this feeling of being an alien. Therefore, when I went to look for locations in Hong Kong, I felt that this was it. A city without past or future. Just a flood of information.[76]

As the last anime sequence reveals, rather than inherently having no past or no future, Hong Kong's landscape is *made* into a flood of information in order to represent the vast expanse of the Net. In order to "explain" cyberspace, the city becomes data, and in order to function as data, the city must be unknown yet readable. The "basic feeling" Hong Kong delivers, then, is the tourist's oriented disorientation, for tourists, not residents, *stand* in a public space in order to get used to the feeling of being alien. In other words, it is not simply that Tokyo is more multilayered than Hong Kong but rather that Oshii's Japanese audience is too familiar with Tokyo to be adequately disoriented. What city to the tourist, after all, is not a flood of information? By this, I do not mean to imply that all cities are alike; indeed, some are more "disorienting" than others. Yet the tourist's attempts to navigate reveal both the necessity and the inadequacy of maps.

In order to effect this familiar alienation, Oshii relies on street signs: "I thought that I could express networks which are invisible to all through drawing not electronic images but a most primitive low-tech group of

75. Ueno, "Japanimation."

76. "Interview with Mamoru Oshii," *ALLES*, ⟨http://www.express.co.jp/ALLES/6/oshii2.html⟩ (accessed May 1, 1999).
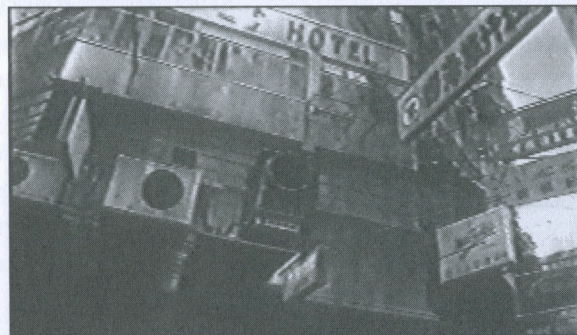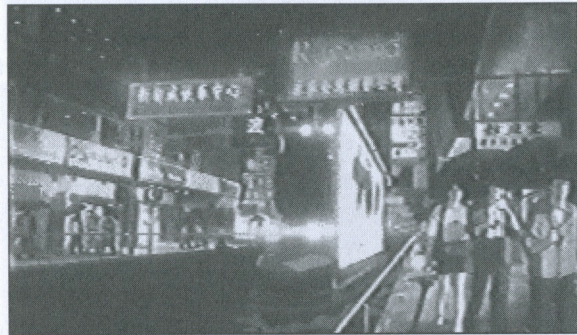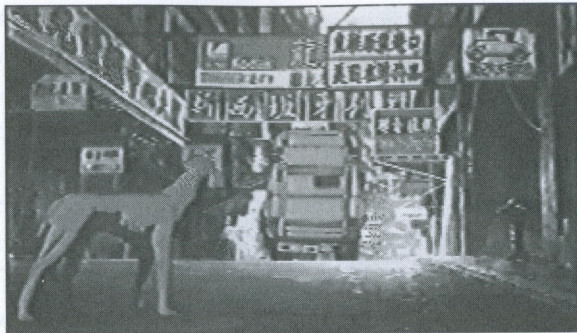
| Figure 4.4 |
Street scene in the first chase scene

| Figure 4.5 |
Hong Kong signs in the extended musical interlude

| Figure 4.6 |
Signs in English as well as Chinese characters

signboards piled like a mountain, that this would work well in drawing a world being submerged under information, in which people live like insects."[77] *Ghost in the Shell* relentlessly focuses on street signs that function as literal signposts for the foreign audience (see figures 4.4–4.6). Oshii glosses over the historical reasons for this informatic functioning: a Japanese audience can read these Chinese and English signs, even if they still look foreign, because of historical connections between East Asian countries via Confucian study and modernization.[78] Also, Oshii (paradoxically) juxtaposes the primitive and the modern in order to make Hong Kong a city without a history. As in *Blade Runner*, scenes of Oriental "teeming markets" punctuate *Ghost in the Shell*, and just as Gibson mixes together Edo images with high-tech equipment, Oshii mixes together traditional Chinese hats with high-tech office towers (see figures 4.7 and 4.8).[79] The Chinese "eternal present as past" serves as a low-tech future that orients the viewer to this high-tech one.

77.　Ibid. Ridley Scott previously used this technique in *Blade Runner*. There are numerous citations of *Blade Runner* in *Ghost*. For instance, the long musical scene in which the Major tours Hong Kong ends with manikins similar to those that appear in *Blade Runner* when Deckard tracks down the snake-stripping replicant Zhora (see figure 4.28).

78.　Ackbar Abbas argues that signs have the opposite effect on Hong Kong city dwellers: "Bilingual, neon-lit advertisement signs are not only almost everywhere; their often ingenious construction for maximum visibility deserves an architectural monograph in itself. The result of all this insistence is a turning off of the visual. As people in metropolitan centers tend to avoid eye contact with one another, so they now tend also to avoid eye contact with the city" (*Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997], 76).

79.　Japanese anime often use the Chinese to signify low-tech in a high-tech future. They feature a trip into "Chinatown," or Chinese tearooms that are marked as inferior or perpetrating bad employment practices. In *The Bubblegum Crisis* series, for example, the two women bond over a trip to Chinatown. In the prequel to *The Bubblegum Crisis*, the *AD Police Files*, bad labor practices at a Chinese tearoom marks the onset of a crisis with boomers. *Ranma 1/2* turns into a girl when splashed with cold water. The female Ranma has red hair, and the male Ranma has black hair. As Annalee Newitz contends, "Ranma is not only feminized, but also associated with China, a country invaded and occupied by Japanese imperialist forces several times during the 20th century. Ranma's 'curse' is in fact a Chinese
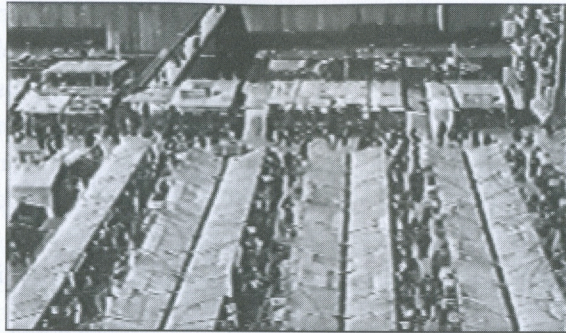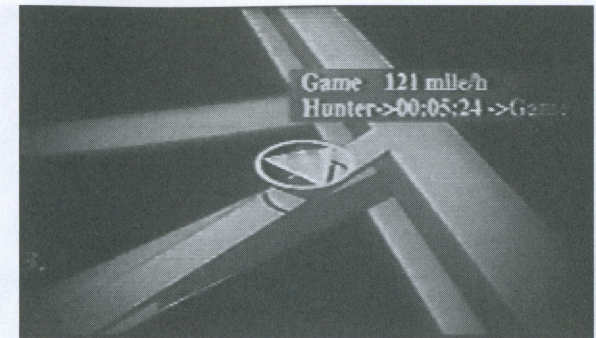
| Figure 4.7 |
Overhead view of the market

| Figure 4.8 |
The Hong Kong market, replete with stereotypical Chinese figures and technology

The exoticism of the near future city makes cyberspace a necessary, if visually sparse map. If at first the viewer is confused by the cyberspace views that begin the anime, the viewer soon relies on them to understand the action and the locale, as do the characters themselves. Featured prominently in the chase scenes—and in fact, only in the chase scenes—

curse, which he got during martial arts training with Genma in China. Moreover, Ranma wears his hair in a queue and his clothing is Chinese: at school, the students often refer to him as 'the one in Chinese clothing'" ("Magical Girls and Atomic Bomb Sperm: Japanese Animation in America," *Film Quarterly* 49, no. 1 [Fall 1995]: 11).

| Figure 4.9 |
Cyberspace view of a car chase

cyberspace reduces pursuit to a game of hunter and prey; it erases local particularities by translating locations into a universal video player screen (see figure 4.9). Moving from "real life" to cyberspace means moving from being inundated with information to being presented with the bare navigational details. Thus, cyberspace and the city of the near future combine differing forms of orientation/disorientation to form high-tech Orientalism; they play with both exotic dislocation and navigational desire. At the same time, Oshii's version of cyberspace reveals the paucity of such an orientation: the visual simplicity of this cyberspace implies that manageable information is poor information.

Oshii also uses the Major and the city to represent cyberspace. As he notes, "Networks are things that can't be seen with the eyes, and using computers, showing a gigantic computer, would definitely not do the trick. Showing something like a humongous mother computer would be scary."[80] In order to represent the network in a less "scary" fashion, Oshii uses a humongous mother figure (see figure 4.10). In this image, the Major's enormous mutilated form blots out the void in the same manner that the big mother virus program does in *Neuromancer*. The wires attached to her body highlight her network connections and her broken form reveals her cyborg construction. Even mutilated, her connected

80. "Interview with Mamoru Oshii."

| Figure 4.10 |
From a movie poster for *Ghost in the Shell*

form represents power: she dominates the cityscape. Her jacked-in bare body makes cyberspace sexy, and Oshii's rendering of cyberspace is both erotic and simplistic, or perhaps erotic in its simplicity.

Importantly, the choice of an "exotic" or Oriental city is neither accidental nor inconsequential. During the 1990s, as Ackbar Abbas remarks, there was a concerted and anxious effort within Hong Kong to define itself politically and culturally before the 1997 transfer of the city to China. These efforts sought to displace Hong Kong's reputation as a mere port without culture, as a city of transients or transience. According to Abbas, the imminent disappearance of Hong Kong moved its culture from a state of "reverse hallucination" (which saw Hong Kong as a desert and culture as something that always came from elsewhere) "to a culture of disappearance, whose appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance" —that is, to "love at last sight." This reaction was not unproblematically good, for as Abbas observes, "in making it [Hong Kong] appear, many representations in fact work to make it disappear, most perniciously through the use of old binaries like East-West differences.... Disappearance is not a matter of effacement, but of replacement and substitution, where the perceived danger is recontained through representations that

are familiar and plausible." As opposed to this resurrection of the East-West binary, Abbas favors "developing techniques of disappearance that respond to, without being absorbed by, a space of disappearance" and also favors "using disappearance to deal with disappearance."[81] Paul Virilio's conception of speed, which Virilio himself theorized in reaction to digitization, drives Abbas's vision of a new Hong Kong subjectivity— one that he sees developed most fully in Hong Kong's cinema's sense of elusiveness, slipperiness, and ambivalence. Virilio argues that because telecommunications networks work at the speed of light, speed becomes as important as, if not more than, time and space. Summarizing Virilio, Abbas asserts that speed creates a "breakdown of [the] analogical in favor of the digital ... [a] preference for the pixel over analogical line, plane, solid." This disappearance of the solid and the ubiquity of fast-moving images in turn leads to a "teleconquest of appearance."[82] Hence, Abbas implicitly sees Hong Kong as a digital space, but for very different reasons and in different ways than Oshii. If, for Oshii, Hong Kong personifies information, and if he parallels urban and computer infrastructure to render invisible networks visible and comprehensible, Abbas views Hong Kong's "natural" affinity with information networks as historically determined and argues it must not be responded to with Orientalizing techniques. And if *Ghost in the Shell* portrays the rampant consumerism within Hong Kong as a means to reduce people to ants and to induce identity crises for its heroine, others, such as Rey Chow, claim that we must not disparage but rather see as liberatory forms of Hong Kong culture deemed vulgar and consumerist. She calls on us to remember that most of Hong Kong's people came to it voluntarily as a way of avoiding "the violence that comes with living as 'nationals' and 'citizens' of independent countries."[83]

Regardless of the disagreement between Abbas or Chow over the value of transience, the erasure of Hong Kong and its folding into Japan resonates with Japanese imperialism. To put it bluntly, "turning Japanese"

81.   Abbas, *Hong Kong*, 7, 23, 8.

82.   Virilio quoted in ibid., 9.

83.   Rey Chow, *Ethics after Idealism: Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 186.

is hardly an answer to Hong Kong's turnover to China from Britain, and Japan's interest in Hong Kong is hardly accidental. In 1995, the four tigers seemed fit—and China set to become the nation with the largest gross domestic product in the world—whereas the Japanese economy was stuck in a seemingly permanent recession. Both *Neuromancer* and *Ghost in the Shell* therefore turn to old imperialist dreams and tropes in order to deal with and enjoy vulnerability.

Turning Japanese

Although both *Neuromancer* and *Ghost in the Shell* create an "East" in order to create cyberspace, *Ghost in the Shell* does not mark Japan as West. Anime enables neither a simple Japanization of its audience nor a simple rejection of high-tech Orientalism. Rather, anime's cyberpunk propagates images that Ueno calls "Japanoid" since they are "not actually Japanese . . . [and exist] neither inside nor outside Japan." According to Ueno, the stereotyped Japanoid image

functions as the surface or rather the interface controlling the relation between Japan and the other. Techno-Orientalism is a kind of mirror stage or an image machine whose effect influences Japanese as well as other people. This mirror in fact is a semi-transparent or two-way mirror. It is through this mirror stage and its cultural apparatus that Western or other people misunderstand and fail to recognize an always illusory Japanese culture, but it also is the mechanism through which Japanese misunderstand themselves.[84]

If U.S. cyberpunk reduces the Japanese to mimics to serve as mirror images for their protagonists, anime makes this mirror two-way—on the other side, the Japanese (or at least the Japanese otaku) similarly identify with and misrecognize themselves through this image. That is, the corrupted Japanoid images circulating in the United States (the Japanese as lacking individuality and as producing ideal family units; as perversely enjoying work and as ideal workers) recirculate to Japan and affect Japanese representations. If U.S. cyberpunk makes the future Japanese in order to effect cognitive dissonance, however—to register a "future

84.   Ueno, "Japanimation."

gotten worse, gotten more uncomfortable, inhospitable, dangerous, and thrilling"—cyberpunk anime perpetuate Japanoid images in order to preserve Japan as primary, and also place the blame for the future's problems back U.S. multinationals.

The portrayal of race in anime often confuses U.S. (and other) viewers, who read the anime protagonists' enormous eyes and seemingly fluid racial features as imagining a happy U.S.-style multicultural future (along the lines of "Anthem"), or as representing a Westernization of Japanese beauty standards.[85] To view anime as multicultural, though, one must reduce multiculturalism to minorities acting like the majority, for anime portrays a future world in which everyone has turned Japanese. As Annalee Newitz argues:

What these *anime* act out is a fantasy in which people of all races and Japanese people are interchangeable. . . . While this kind of ideology might seem satisfying and "right" to Americans raised in a multiculture, we must also remember that the Japanese are not multicultural. The ideological implications of these representations are more complex than something like "racial harmony." This multicultural fantasy takes place largely in Japan and all the races are speaking and being Japanese. . . . In a way, the *anime* want to imply that Americans are Japanese. If Americans are already Japanese, then it should be no surprise to any American that Japan, economically speaking, already owns a large portion of the United States.[86]

According to Newitz, anime's multicultural "cast" appropriates U.S. multiculturalism so as to naturalize Japanese economic dominance (this assumes that U.S. multiculturalism does not dream of everyone acting alike and speaking English). To make this argument, Newitz ignores the difference between the interchangeability of racial features and the interchangeability of races. Infrequent anime viewers may only recognize

85.   See Mark Binelli, "Large Eyes Blazing, Anime Offers Exotic Views," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 27, 1995, P10; and Jonathan Romney, "Manga for All Seasons: A Festival at the NFT Shows There Is More to Japan's Cult Anime Movies Than Misogyny and Apocalyptic Animation," *Guardian*, May 4, 1995, T.015.

86.   Newitz, "Magical Girls," 13.

| Figure 4.11 |
Japanese console operator and Chief Aramaki, head of Section 6

Japanese characters through their surnames, but these big-eyed characters usually hold positions of power. Although *Ghost in the Shell* features Japanese characters with smaller eyes than other anime, its Japanese characters do not look stereotypically Japanese, with the exception of the Chief, whose wisdom is marked by an almost Confucian countenance (see figures 4.11–4.14).[87] That Japanese anime and manga characters do not look stereotypically Japanese (the question being, Stereotypical to whom?) is not

87.   His appearance in the anime is a marked improvement over his appearance in the manga. In the manga, he is given apelike facial features and referred to as "ape face." More experienced anime viewers herald *Ghost in the Shell* as "a watershed in anime character design. The figures are drawn with truer anatomy: the heroine no longer has a 12-year-old's face and a pair of double D's and long legs. Her body (naked, of course, because, uh, her camouflage can't work with clothing) is rendered proportionally accurate with realistic body movement, as evidenced in a scene where she maneuvers a perfect roundhouse kick—crack—into the face of her opponent" (Edmund Lee, "Anime of the People," *Village Voice*, April 9, 1996, 15). First-time anime viewers' impressions of *Ghost in the Shell*, however, reveal the comparative nature of "truer anatomy." Laura Evenson, for instance, describes Major Motoko as sporting "the body of a Baywatch babe, the face of a beauty queen and the soul of a machine" Evenson ("Cyberbabe Takes on Tokyo in 'Ghost'; Tough, Topless Cartoon Heroine," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 12, 1996, D3). The female figures in particular retain the large eyes prevalent in portrayals of both genders in other anime.
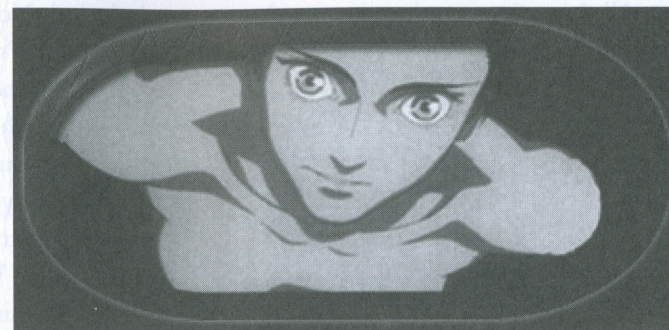
| Figure 4.12 |
Major Motoko Kusanagi

| Figure 4.13 |
Officer Togusa, noncyborg member of Section 9

| Figure 4.14 |
Ishikawa, member of Section 9

surprising. All animations produce images that are not indexical. Nonrealist drawings serve as the basis for most animation, and America's most famous animated big-eyed character, Mickey Mouse, certainly does not "represent" Americans indexically, even though he does as a trademark. The manner of distortion does matter, though, and the enormous eyes stem from post–World War II Japan. According to Mary Grigsby, "Before the Japanese came into contact with westerners, they drew themselves with Asian features. After contact with the west, particularly after World War II and the subsequent reconstruction of Japan under the domination of the United States, they began to depict characters that are supposed to be Japanese with western idealized physical characteristics: round eyes, blond, red or brown hair, long legs and thin bodies."[88]

These "Western" features, however, do not simply reflect "Western" beauty standards. Although these new bodies are not stereotypically "Japanese," they certainly are not "Western" either: "Westerners" (and I presume by this phrase Grigsby means white people) no more resemble these characters than do the Japanese (although rampant plastic surgery and hair coloring makes the resemblance to the Japanese more compelling). The enormous eye size arguably parodies the difference between so-called Westerners and Japanese, producing new images that would defy racial categorization, if they did not represent Japaneseness: even though Japanese characters may look less visibly Asian, Chinese characters are portrayed in a manner reminiscent of "yellow peril" propaganda (see figures 4.15 and 4.16). U.S. males are given a more "realistic" portrayal when they are marked as "Americans" as opposed to Japanified Americans. The U.S. programmer in *Ghost in the Shell*, for instance, has smaller eyes than Togusa and a large protruding nose (see figure 4.17). (The visual distinctiveness of the Japanese occurs in manga as well as anime. Frederik Schodt maintains that "in the topsy-turvy world of Japanese manga, although Japanese characters are frequently drawn with Caucasian features, when real Caucasians appear in manga they are sometimes shown as big hairy brutes. Chinese and Korean characters are frequently drawn with slant eyes and

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88.   Mary Grigsby, "Sailormoon: Manga (Comics) and Anime (Cartoon) Superheroine Meets Barbie; Global Entertainment Commodity Comes to the United States," *Journal of Popular Culture* 32, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 69.

| Figure 4.15 |
Kwan, puppet manipulated by the Puppet Master

| Figure 4.16 |
The "bad guys" who steal the Puppet Master's body

| Figure 4.17 |
U.S. artificial intelligence expert Dr. Willis

buckteeth, in much the same stereotyped fashion Japanese were depicted by American propagandists in World War II.")[89] Thus, these exaggerations, rather than making race more fluid, reinscribe racial difference.

Visual differences between those marked as Japanese versus Chinese and between those marked as Japanese versus American separates Japan from both the West and the East, making the Japanese singular and primary. These visual differences remind us that "in this cultural climate, a Japan imaginarily separated from both West and East is reproduced again and again in the political unconscious of Japanimation (subculture)."[90] As in *Neuromancer*, "others" must be conspicuously marked in order for the self to emerge as unmarked. As mentioned earlier, the popularity of Walt Disney is linked to Mickey Mouse and its cast of *animal* characters that can travel across cultures without being necessarily identified as American, while at the same time being heavily identified as such. Arguably, the large Japanese eyes are a citation of Mickey Mouse—or at the very least, an attempt at racial obscuring that makes the Japanese-named characters universal. Indeed, animation generally enables a cross-cultural exchange that exceeds the logic of same-based identification. The popular characters are toys and animals, and recent story lines focus on cross-cultural events and alliances, from *Pocahontas* to *Mulan*. When watching anime, one is free to identify with characters one would normally not: with mice and men, with women and toys. Animation structurally parallels (myths of) cyberspace, since both these "spaces" suspend indexicality and are thus spaces, in which race need not matter, and yet does profoundly. As Sergei Eisenstein has argued, animation carries with it a certain omnipotence.[91]

89. Frederik Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1996), 66.

90. Ueno, "Japanimation." Yet the only putatively U.S. female, the Puppet Master in a female body, is similarly given enormous eyes and breasts, unlike other anime such as *AD Police Files* that give U.S. women such as Caroline Evers smaller eyes and a taller physique. The similarities between the Major and the Puppet Master may stem from the fact that they both inhabit Megatech Bodies, which seem to come in two versions: blond and black haired.

91. Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, trans. and ed. Jay Leyda (London: Methuen, 1988).

Further, in *Ghost in the Shell*, Japaneseness becomes humanness. The only named human (noncyborg) characters are Togusa, Chief Aramaki, and the director of Section 6, Nakamura. An interchange between Togusa and Major Motoko reveals the importance of humanness/Japaneseness. After the Major reprimands Togusa for favoring a simple revolver over a more powerful weapon, Togusa asks her, "Why'd you ask for a guy like me to be transferred from the police?" Major Motoko responds that she recruited him precisely because he is a guy like himself, "an honest cop with a clean record. And you've got a regular family. With the exception of your cyber-net implants, your brain is real. No matter how powerful we may be fighting-wise, a system where all the parts react the same way is a system with a fatal flaw. Like individual, like organization. Overspecialization leads to death. That's all." Togusa's difference is his/"our" humanness, his regularity and banality, and in the end, Togusa's humanness saves the day: he figures out that Nakamura and Dr. Willis have brought in thermo-camouflaged fighters, and he uses his revolver to plant a tracking device into the escape car. Diversity, then, moves from racial diversity to diversity between cyborgs and humans, where humans who are recruited or needed for "good" diversity are Japanese.

As humanness is mapped onto the Japanese, technology and global multinational corporations are mapped back onto the United States. In a move that reverses *Neuromancer*'s dissemination of Japanese trademarks, *Ghost in the Shell* marks technology—specifically computer technology—as American through loan words. If Sony stands in for monitors in general in *Neuromancer*, transliterated words such as hacking, programmer, debug, kill, and virus brand computer technology as American (although not corporate). Anime itself is a transliteration of animation and heavily influenced by Disney. U.S. corporations such as Megatech and Genotech are the source of irresponsible capitalism, as opposed to zaitbatsu. The Puppet Master is initially believed to be American and was developed by the American company Neutron Corp. Given Japan's relation to technology, from modernization initiated during the Meiji period to the atomic bomb (a history made clear by Neutron Corp.), this insistence on technology as American rather than Japanese makes sense and reverses an aspect of high-tech Orientalism. In fact many manga, especially those that are mecha or *hentai* ("perverted"), have English names, so that anime marked as "perverse" by the United States (as well as by the Japanese) is marketed

as American. The other name for hentai is *etchi*—which is a transliteration of the letter *h*.

But *Ghost in the Shell* cannot be reduced to "West equals technology" and "Japanese equals human"; the word ghost reveals the Japanese reworking of U.S. technology—and indeed U.S. culture. This word, which encapsulates the essence of a human being (like a soul but not quite), is a loan word. Since there are many preexisting Japanese words to describe one's soul or spirit whereas there are not for words such as programmer, ghost belies the usual use of loan words. Given Shirow's knowledge of U.S. technology and literature, ghost probably refers to ghost in the machine. Rather than simply alluding to Western theories of ghosts and machines, however, ghost encapsulates the forms of identification, appropriation, and transference involved in anime's reworking of high-tech Orientalism. As Diana Fuss contends, "Identification … invokes phantoms. By incorporating the spectral remains of the dearly departed love-object, the subject vampiristically comes to life."[92] *Ghost* marks the vampiristic creation of the Japanoid subject, a subject that exceeds identification with its object and also exceeds the object itself. *Ghosts* result from an incorporation of and desire for technology. Further, only after one has imbibed technology does one's former self become an "original body"—technology thus both makes a retreat to a pure "Japanese" self impossible and enables the notion of a pure self to emerge in the first place.

The question of a ghost and its relation to humanity drives *Ghost in the Shell*. Major Motoko questions her humanity, a humanity unanchored from her "original" human form, for a good portion of it. Images that trace the Major's bodily creation from exoskeleton to womblike fleshification punctuate the opening credits (see figures 4.18–4.23). As to be expected from a film directed at adolescent boys, these images focus on her naked form, especially her breasts. Nevertheless, in contrast to the initial naked image of the Major diving from a building, this animation series emphasizes her difference from "normal" naked women by revealing her construction. Her exoskeleton is unattractive; her breasts are exposed, but as scales fall off her flesh. This extended sequence, interspersed with

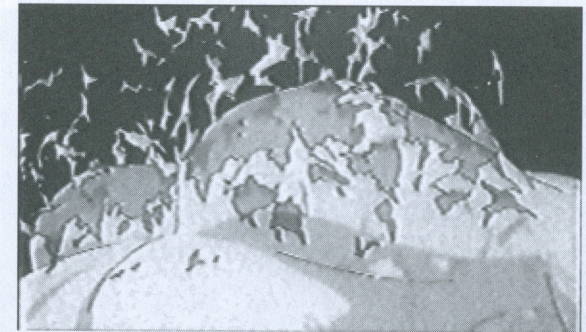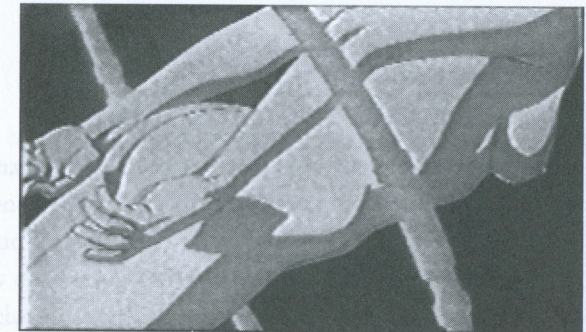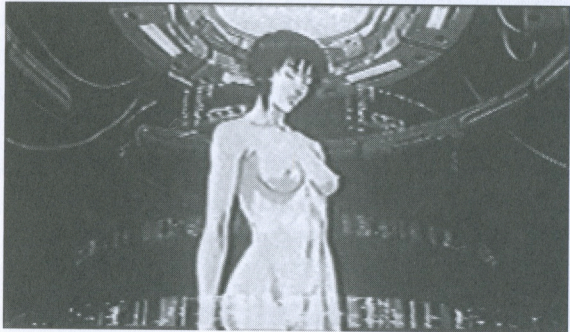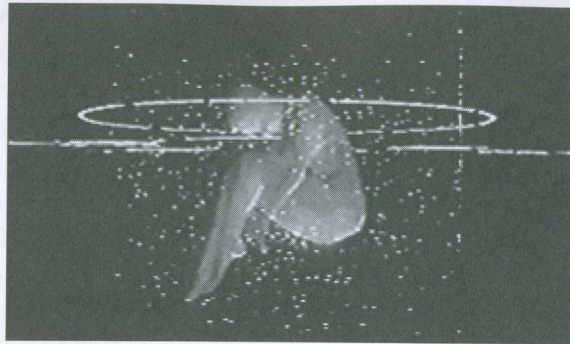92. Fuss, *Identification Papers*, 1.

| Figure 4.18 |
The beginning exoskeleton

| Figure 4.19 |
Adding flesh under water

| Figure 4.20 |
Breaking water and emerging as flesh

| **Figure 4.21** |
The full human in the fetal position mapped in cyberspace

| **Figure 4.22** |
The finished product

| **Figure 4.23** |
Looking at her hand

| **Figure 4.24** |
Looking back at the translator

credits that appear first as a series of ones and zeros before emerging into words (one among many features that *The Matrix* would copy), visualizes her creation and provides a way of understanding the Major as a cyborg.

This explanation, though, poses more questions than it answers, and the concluding section (the Major wakes up, looking disconnectedly at her hand and then at the Hong Kong landscape) shows the Major similarly dissatisfied. Moving from her hand to the expanse of the Hong Kong landscape, she appears to be trying to understand where her body ends and begins. She resembles an infant, using images around her to understand the relation between her parts and her whole. Throughout the anime, the Major looks for resemblances or images (and is caught by them): the anime shows her looking longingly at other cyborgs and also shows her look being arrested by theirs. When the Foreign Minister's translator is "ghost hacked" and the Major is ordered to pursue the Puppet Master, the Major pauses, looks over her shoulder, and her (and indeed our) look rests on the translator's face (figures 4.24 and 4.25). The buxom blond translator, lying on the couch with her shirt unbuttoned and her body connected to the network, is the object of the "camera's" and the Major's scopic desire. And yet, this shot also troubles the line between desire and identification (which of course is never clear), for the cables protruding from the translator's head are similar to the Major's and the scene begins with a green cyberspace view of the translator's brain—a view identical to the "read" of the Major's brain during the
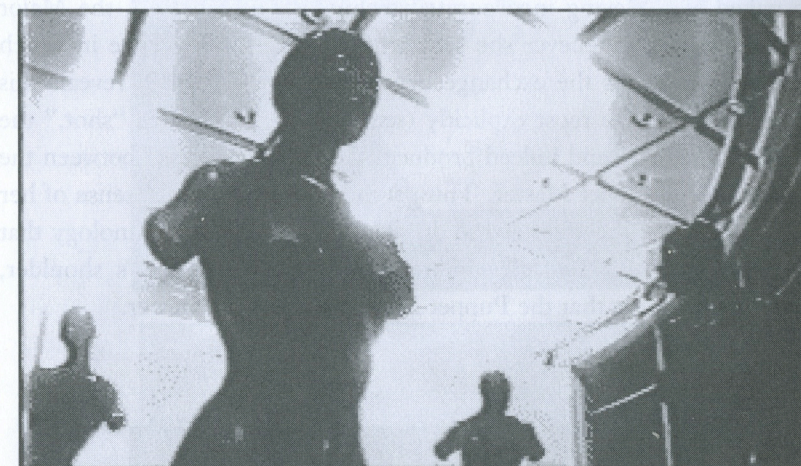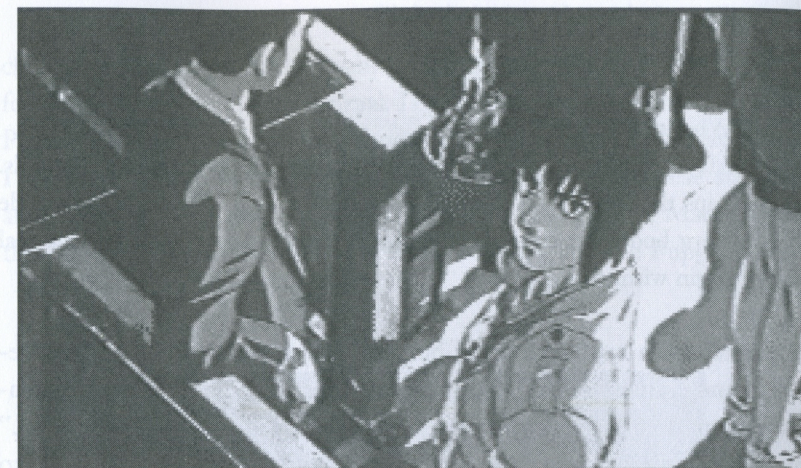
| Figure 4.25 |
The ghost-hacked translator

| Figure 4.26 |
The office lady

| Figure 4.27 |
The Major looking up at the office lady

| Figure 4.28 |
Manikins on display

creation sequence (importantly, only "women" are shown jacked in). The prolonged sequence in which the Major travels through Hong Kong repeats this mirror effect between the Major and cyborg others. Although her look is first arrested by an "office girl" resembling herself, it ends on manikins in an office tower (see figures 4.26–4.28).

Major Motoko is undergoing a second mirror stage—a mirror stage that will inaugurate a new subject that is neither human nor machine/computer. Estranged from her body and faced with its lack of physical uniqueness, she searches for a way to emerge as a unique cyborg subject. The Major makes explicit her anxieties after she and the Puppet Master's mutilated form first exchange looks. In the elevator with Batou, she asks him:

Major: Doesn't that cyborg body look like me?

Batou: No, it doesn't.

Major: Not in the face or the figure.

Batou: What then?

Major: Maybe all full replacement cyborgs like me start wondering this. That perhaps the real me died a long time ago ... and I'm a replicant made with a cyborg body and a computer brain. Or maybe there never was a real "me" to begin with.

Confronted with mirrors around her, the Major realizes what others repress: namely, that misrecognition grounds identity, that the ego is fundamentally an alter ego—that "there never was a real 'me' to begin with." This second mirror stage, however, is based on resemblances invisible to the naked eye. Having incorporated technology into herself, the Major identifies with it whenever she sees artificial forms. The scene in which the Major monitors the exchange between Sections 6 and 9 reveals this second mirror stage most explicitly (see figure 4.29). In this "shot," the "camera" mediates and indeed produces the mirroring effect between the Major and the Puppet Master. Thus, if the Major is to make sense of her body as a whole, she will have to do so through the very technology that has provoked her crisis. The viewer looks over the Major's shoulder, which also suggests that the Puppet Master mirrors the viewer.
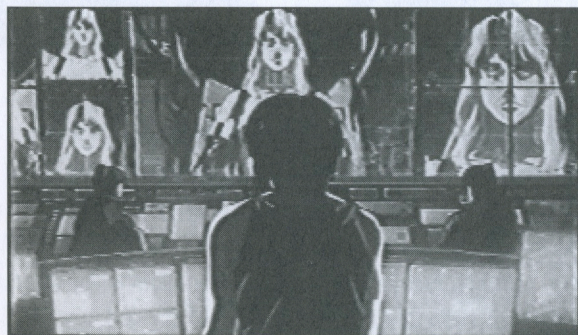
| **Figure 4.29** |
The Major and the Puppet Master

Not unexpectedly, the Major resolves her crisis—she moves from childhood toward adulthood—by merging with the Puppet Master. Before they do so, the Major repeats Togusa's earlier question by asking the Puppet Master, "Why did you choose me?" S/he replies, "Because in you I see myself" (see figures 4.30 and 4.31). At this point, these statements are literally true (when the Major dives into the Puppet Master's body, the Puppet Master takes over the Major's body), and the Puppet Master's
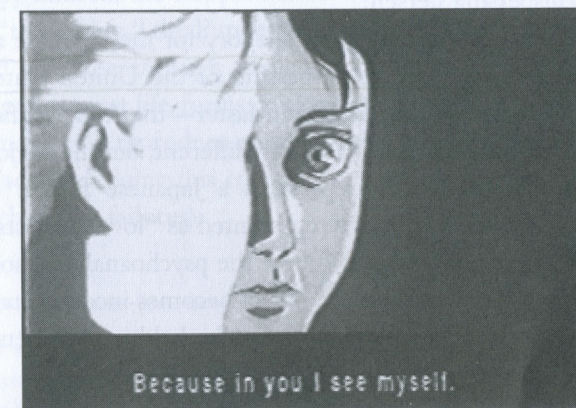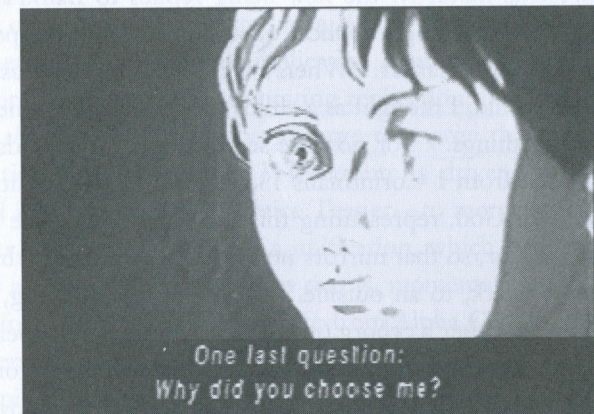
| **Figure 4.30** |
The Major (as the Puppet Master) asking, "Why did you choose me?"

| **Figure 4.31** |
The Puppet Master as the Major responding

response reveals that rather than the Major simply seeking out images or ghosts, ghosts have been pursuing her. The Puppet Master tells her, "At last I'm able to channel into you. / I've invested a lot of time into you." The voice that the Major has been listening to, and assuming was her own, is the Puppet Master's; the ghost in the shell is not her own soul but the Puppet Master's. Their merging incorporates within the Major the voice that she has been unable to hold without. It also fulfills a fantasy: the Major has been recognized—she is the object of the other's desire. When they merge, they are transplanted into a child's form, which paradoxically represents maturity; the new being replies to Batou's question (Who are you?) by finishing a biblical quotation that the Puppet Master whispered to the Major earlier: "When I was a child, I spake as a child / I understood as a child, I thought as a child. / But when I became a man, I put away childish things. / For now we see through a mirror darkly." In this passage, taken from 1 Corinthians 13, Paul ruminates about love and incorporation with God, representing this incorporation as the ability to *see through* the mirror, so that mirrors no longer reflect images but enable a vision, however dark, to an outside.[93] Through this merging, s/he has become a man—or rather a cyborg (in the manga, rather than being transplanted into a female child's body, she is put in a transvestite's one). Joining the vast Net, she has finally been able to move from part to whole by paradoxically dispersing herself.

One can read this merging as an allegory for the Japanese adaptation of U.S. technology and Japan's surpassing of the United States via this technology. As they fuse, the Puppet Master—the U.S. artificial life—dies, and the Major survives as something different, but the Major's recognizably Japanese child's body represents a Japanese future. Since the Puppet Master and the Major are represented as "love interests," the incorporation of the other seems to follow the psychoanalytic model of desire and identification. The lost love object becomes incorporated into the self in order to survive—that which cannot be held outside gets incorpo-

rated within. If we map the Puppet Master as U.S. technology, then it becomes incorporated within the Japanese self.[94]

This privileging of sexual reproduction, as well as the references to psychoanalysis, philosophy, religion, and other originary myths, calls into question Donna Haraway's utopian claim that cyborgs lie outside sexual reproduction, psychoanalysis, religion, and so on. According to Haraway, cyborgs replicate rather than reproduce: "Modern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices, in an intimacy and with a power that was not generated in the history of sexuality. Cyborg 'sex' restores some of the lovely replicative baroque of ferns and invertebrates (such nice organic-prophylactics against heterosexism). Cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction."[95] Rather than celebrating replication, both *Neuromancer* and *Ghost in the Shell* are driven by an urge to merge that privileges sexual reproduction. In *Neuromancer*, Wintermute is driven by an urge—programmed into him by Marie-Claire Tessier—to merge with his unknowable other, Neuromancer. Such a unification, which happens at the end, produces an entirely new life-form that is, momentarily, the matrix. This new life-form then meets with a mate from Alpha Centauri and inexplicably shatters into many "children," who live in the matrix and who humans treat as spirits or loas. In *Ghost in the Shell*, when asked why "he" does not simply copy himself, the Puppet Master replies, "Copy is copy." Looking up at the "tree of life," the Puppet Master makes it clear that humans have summitted the tree through sexual reproduction (recombinant DNA). This denigrates most life-forms; it also obfuscates the fact that many parts of the human being reproduce asexually, and that copying errors introduce diversity (acknowledging this constitutive error would also mean acknowledging technology failures).

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93. As Marc Steinberg has argued, the presence of Christian references in *Ghost in the Shell* and other anime is a form of internationalism (personal correspondence). Less than 1 percent of the Japanese population is Christian.

94. This theme is repeated in the *AD Police Files* series in which the Japanese policewoman replaces her organic eye with a mechanical one after the American cyborg/ripper Caroline Evers dies a violent death. The ghost in the shell is an identification with U.S. technology—one that lives on in a Japanese body.

95. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 150.

While these narratives favor sexual reproduction and seek to insert themselves within a history of human sexuality, they also rewrite the significance—and even the means of—sexual reproduction. Recombination is favored over replication, but both "parents" die in this merging, which is by no means heterosexual. In *Neuromancer*, the two artificial intelligences are referred to as "he," and in *Ghost*, the Major and the Puppet Master are both female forms when they merge, although the Puppet Master is called a "he" and speaks in a booming male Japanese voice. This merging in and of itself is hardly subversive ("lesbian" after all can be a heterosexual pornographic category), but it loosens gene recombination from heterosexual intercourse. This fictional loosening also parallels reality, for scientists are working to produce a gamete from two *X*s. Sexual reproduction is thus becoming an effect of—or one possible route toward—gene recombination, rather than its source, and this "dissemination" of sexual reproduction complicates the status of the sexual, opening new forms of sexuality.

Who's Zooming Who?

Although *Ghost in the Shell* can be interpreted as an allegory for incorporation, such an interpretation reduces the Major to Japan and the Japanese viewer to the Major, and fails to account for the popularity of this anime within both Japan and the United States, especially within male "minority" cultures.[96] Moreover, the fact that the Major and the Puppet Master are both females when they merge belies a simple nationalist reading, since most nationalist allegories are unforgivingly heterosexual. One could account for the presence of female cyborgs and "lesbian sex" through the tradition of Japanese manga: same-sex relationships have been featured in manga from the Edo period, and *Bishonen* (pretty boy) manga feature male homosexual relationships.[97] In addition, anime such as *Ranma 1/2* and

Birdy portray boys whose bodies become female under certain circumstances. Both *Bishonen* and *Ranma 1/2*, however, are not meant to realistically portray gay relationships or male transsexuals. They are not written for or by gay males but rather by women for young girls (given that anime's mainly male overseas audience does not tend to distinguish between genres, *Ranma 1/2* and *Birdy* are more popular among boys than girls in the United States).[98] So why the persistence of women and transgendering? According to Annalee Newitz, reproduction plays a key role: "Bodies manipulated by *mecha* science are merged with pieces of technology in order to 'give birth' to new creatures.... Female bodies and sexuality are therefore 'best suited' to *mecha*—and male bodies and sexuality are disfigured by it—precisely because it is related to reproduction and giving birth."[99] Cyborgs do, in a sense, give birth to new bodies; in *Ghost in the Shell*, the Major gives birth to offspring that populate the Net, and in *Bubblegum Crisis*, women bond with mechanical outer shells to become new creatures with extraordinary fighting powers. Still, this explanation overlooks transformations to reproduction and the connection between feminism (or perhaps more precisely postfeminism) and technology as empowerment.

Technological empowerment draws from and maps itself onto feminist empowerment. At about the same time that Haraway called for feminists to embrace technology in her "Cyborg Manifesto," technology companies were embracing "feminism." From Apple Computer's female runner in its mythic 1984 commercial to MCI's marked spokespeople, technology corporations, in order to sell technology and deflect questions

96. Scott Mauriello, one of the owners of Anime Crash, a hangout for anime fans, notes, "Anime is especially popular with minorities.... All the stories talk about a small group fighting against the system" (quoted in Lee, "Anime").

97. See Sandra Buckley, "'Penguin in Bondage': A Graphic Tale of Japanese Comic Books," in *Technoculture*, eds. Andrew Ross and Constance Penley (Minne-

apolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). Frederik Schodt also claims that "homoerotic relationships have been a staple of girls' comics for years, starting with stories that featured cross-dressing women, then beautiful boys in boarding schools falling in love with each other, and so forth.... [N]owadays girls' comics with a gay theme sell, and those without one don't" (*Dreamland Japan*, 185).

98. See Seiji Horibuchi, "Interview with Rumiko Takahashi," in *Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of ANIMERICA, ANIME, AND MANGA MONTHLY (1992–1997)*, ed. Trish Ledoux, 46–53.

99. Newitz, "Magical Girls," 9.

of inequality, have perpetuated images of women who, with the proper technological enhancements, overcome physical inferiority to become fully functioning "equals." The belief that women need technological "extras" because they are naturally weaker underlies this narrative of technology as the great equalizer, and this narrative largely draws from (more critical) science fiction. In cyberpunk fiction, these enhancements often necessitate the loss of reproductive organs. The Major, after she has been technologically enhanced, cannot reproduce organically and her lack of sex organs becomes a joke: when Batou tells the Major that there is a lot of static in her brain, the Major replies that it is that time of the month.[100] The similarity between "geeky" boys and anime females does not mean, however, that the audience simply identifies with these women. Technology as empowering renders these women understandable and sympathetic, but does not adequately explain their prevalence.

Another possible answer would be: these women are sexy. The Major, in the manga and anime, combines cyborg and pinup—a combination whose genealogy Despina Kakoudaki convincingly outlines in her "Pinup and Cyborg: Exaggerated Gender and Artificial Intelligence." Examining 1940s' pinups placed next to military equipment or portrayed using the telephone, she argues, "The co-optation of the pinup into an instrument of war has great ideological repercussions: It admits women's relation to the military industrial complex and the increasing freedom it implies, but also conforms this new power into a pornographic sub-

ject."[101] Basically, cyborgs have always been pinups. The female cyborg and all "new women" have always been "interpolated" with pornography —partly as a means to diffuse their transgressive potential, but also partly because such transgression is desired. This *appropriation* of the pornographic mode has also been a means by which the artificial woman has emerged (materialized) as an agent. In terms of Major Kusanagi, Kakoudaki alleges:

Ghost in the Shell depicts the artificial woman as a complex and sexual being. At the same time, the film demonstrates anxiety regarding repressing or counteracting this possible positive female image. As is the case with "No Woman Born," the cyborg narrative proposes the artificial woman as an agent. This narrative also redirects her, uses that agency to tackle a different target. Cyborg science fiction thematizes existential dilemmas, skin tropes, and narratives of emergence. The tradition and historical precedent of "New Women" who face representational and technological challenges—and the affinity of women's representational tropes to transparency and fetishism—affect the contemporary science fiction landscape. Faced with a space that may make consciousness disappear, the ability of women to "appear" is thus used as a means to escape the existential dilemmas of new technology.[102]

Kakoudaki insightfully observes that through sexuality and gender, cyborgs have mattered and that cyberpunk uses the female cyborg's appearance (or to-be-looked-at-ness) to escape existential dilemmas. But representations of the *female* look—especially within anime—also negotiate and humanize new technology. Importantly, the Major (and much pornography) enables simultaneous desire and identification.

Cinematically, the female look has been considered contaminated and incapable of adequate separation from its object. As Mary Ann Doane has pointed out in her groundbreaking *The Desire to Desire*, the female

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100. The loss of reproductive organs via technological replacement and then their ghostly reappearance is the theme of the first two files of *AD Police Files*. The first concentrates on how replicants or Boomers with mechanical female sex organs go crazy—how passion and emotions are fused onto these entirely mechanical beings via ovaries. In the second file, an American woman, Caroline Evers, has her reproductive organs cybernetically replaced in order to get a promotion (she is denied her first one because her male competitor produces a graph that shows that her productivity falls with her period). After she has her reproductive organs replaced, her work becomes flawless and she becomes president of the company. She eventually marries her competitor, who then cheats on her with prostitutes and tells her that "real women are better." She kills him and then starts killing prostitutes whenever she gets menstrual cramps from her phantom period.

101. Despina Kakoudaki, "Pinup and Cyborg: Exaggerated Gender and Artificial Intelligence," in *Future Females, the Next Generation*, ed. Marleen S. Barr (Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 165.

102. Ibid., 186–187.

spectator has been viewed as "too close" to images (incapable of fetishistic distance because of her castration) and "too close" to commodities (because she is both commodity and consumer).[103] The classical Hollywood gaze has thus been considered male. According to Laura Mulvey, this gaze, in order to circumvent the castration anxiety provoked by the female spectacle, oscillates between fetishistic scopophilia and sadistic voyeurism.[104] Feminist scholars have often assumed that women either narcissistically identify with the woman as spectacle or "pass" as male. As Doane contends, neither works with women's films (films in which the woman's gaze is prominent).[105] For Doane, women's films—with their imagined rather than real female spectator—tend to desexualize and hence disembody the female spectator; this disembodiment is hardly empowering, since a bodiless woman cannot see. Regardless, women's films produce perturbations and contradictions within the narrative economy.

Ghost in the Shell is hardly a traditional woman's film. Although its protagonist is female, it seems closer to soft porn (without overt female sexual pleasure and without an appeal to a male spectator) than a woman's weepie. Yet *Ghost in the Shell* both pornographizes cyborgs and disseminates a thoroughly contaminated, "close," and seemingly disembodied female gaze: the look, in other words, is gendered (machine) female. The female cyborg represents ideal cyborgian subjectivity; the Major is always absorbed by the spectacles around her and incapable of distinguishing herself from others. As well, her more than evident castration denies male spectators the fetishism needed to separate themselves from the spectacle before them. The film still provokes desire—the Major is a pornographic subject—but this type of desire does not fit nicely into psychoanalytic models premised on castration anxiety. Except for Togusa and Chief

Aramaki, it's not clear that *any* character has a penis—that inspiration for the phallus. This complication of desire—this denial of distance—means that perhaps, in this anime and others that feature female protagonists, the viewers and the female protagonists passively desire; they desire to desire. We are all therefore disembodied, and hence identify with computerization.[106]

This anime cyborg-subjectivity, which embraces castration and specularity *through* the representation of female bodies, coincides with Kaja Silverman's discussion of male subjectivity at the margins. Stressing the difference between the ego and the moi, Silverman argues that "moi" is a "psychical 'precipitate' of external images, ranging from the subject's mirror image to parental images to textually based representations we imbibe daily … what the subject takes to be its 'self' both other and fictive." Thus, notes Silverman, desire and identification are closely knit, since it is one's own ego that one loves in love.[107] Silverman also distinguishes between the gaze and the look. The gaze is always from outside—the subject never simply possesses the gaze; the gaze is that look from outside that constitutes the subject. One performs before the gaze, and in classical cinema, the male look is made to coincide with the gaze. We are, however, not simply the object of the gaze but rather also possessors of a look. We are therefore always both subject and object.

The simulated "camera work" highlights this difference between the gaze and the look as well as the connection between spectator and protagonist (this simulated camera work is often cited as the difference between anime and mainstream U.S. animation). When asked why he uses the "fish-eye" effects in anime, Oshii replied: "If you pressed me, you could say that these are the 'eyes' that look at the world of the film from the outside—that these are the eyes, in fact, of the audience."[108] Oshii, trying

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103. Doane (1987) argues that women—as a gender—undermine masterful embodied viewing because their spectoricity frustrates narrative; their relation to language and the phallus is difficult, and their relation to desire mediated at best.

104. See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 14–26.

105. Doane (1987) claims that women's films also have an affinity with paranoid films, since both femininity and paranoia carry with them the sense of being on display.

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106. The sound track—which is relentlessly Asian and female—furthers this female disembodying effect. I owe this insight to Jeffrey Tucker.

107. Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3, 4.

108. Carl Gustav Horn, "Interview with Mamoru Oshii," in *Anime Interviews*, 139.

to represent a networked society, links every scene and camera angle through a look or a sound, so that like a game of tag, someone is always "it"—someone's look coincides with the viewer's, more often than not the Major's. This constant move highlights the importance of the gaze and the look to fantasy. As Silverman remarks, "Fantasy is less about the visualization and imaginary appropriation of the other than about the articulation of a subjective locus—that is 'not an *object* that the subject imagines and aims at but rather a *sequence* in which the subject has his own part to play.'"[109] The last scene, in which the camera comes online again after fading out with the Major, makes explicit the viewer's role. When it does so, the audience jacks in as an audience with a line of vision that for the first time, does not coincide with anyone else's (only the "camera's"). This new line of vision brings to the fore the ambiguity of the frequent over the shoulder shots, where it is unclear whether a character is looking at the Major or the audience. In figures 4.30 and 4.31 (the dialogue between the Major and the Puppet Master), for instance, the Puppet Master could be addressing the audience when s/he says, "Because in you I see myself." In this manner, the viewer is another cyborg, a ghost who haunts the screen.

At the same time, this jacking in has a precedent within cyberpunk fiction itself—namely, Case's relationship with Molly. Case literally jacks into Molly, seeing what she sees and physically, if not emotionally, feeling what she feels. Similarly, the viewer jacks into the Major, and the portrayal of the Major's female connectors makes this explicit: in *Ghost in the Shell*, jacking into cyberspace is not portrayed as ejaculating into the system or penetrating the Net. Rather, the trodes emerge and penetrate the Major (see figures 4.32 and 4.33)—the cyborg is our female plug. The camera imitates the network connection, and when we look over the Major's shoulder, we take the position of a Net/console cowboy logging into her and seeing what she sees. This jacking in functionally parallels "passing" on the Internet. Rather than offering people an opportunity for others to lose their body or to "be" whoever or whatever they want to be, cyberspace as popularly conceived offers simstim—the illusion of jacking into

109. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, 6.
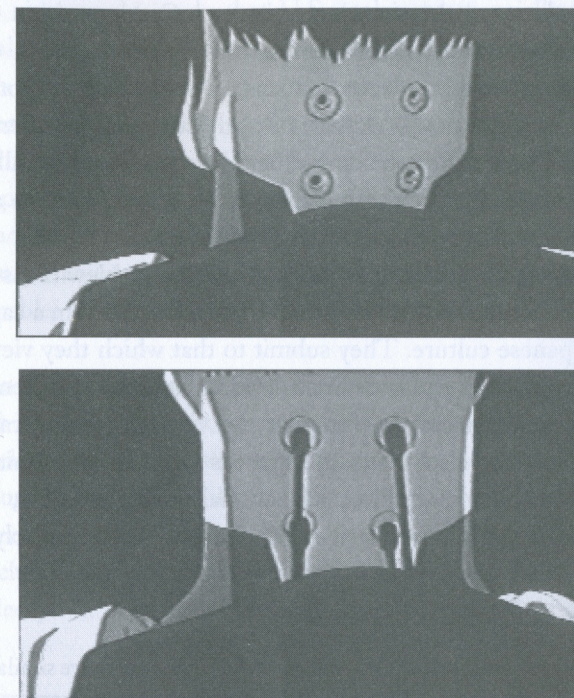
| Figure 4.32 |
The "female connectors" at the back of the Major's head

| Figure 4.33 |
Cyberspace jacked into the Major

another being, seeing what they see, and pretending to be who they are. There is always an option of jacking out, of leaving when things get too uncomfortable or difficult.

In order to effect such an insertion, anime viewers turn to cyberpunk fantasies about the Orient already in place, invariably a prerequisite to anime fandom. If "through fantasy, '*we learn how to desire*,'" through cyberpunk fantasies such as *Blade Runner* and *Neuromancer*, the viewer learns to desire and enjoy anime. The viewer identifies with protagonists such as Case and Deckard, who are faced with a world dominated by technology and all things Asian. The uncompromising nature of anime, the sense of being thrown into another culture and not being able to

completely understand the situation, reiterates Case's position in *Neuromancer*. The arbitrariness of the trouble one finds oneself in, combined with the green cyberspatial views that makes everything comprehensible in terms of a cat-and-mouse chase, is exactly what anime offers its U.S. otaku viewers. The inability to comprehend Japanese and read all the signs afforded one, rather than alienating the viewer, places them in a position structurally mimicking cyberpunk heroes.

Does nationality affect this jacking-in effect? Newitz asserts that watching anime feminizes U.S. boys and thus places them in a capitulatory position to Japanese culture. They submit to that which they view and are overtaken by another's culture. Such a view assumes that feminization equals submission, ignores the fact that the viewer jacks in, rather than gets jacked into, but also, crucially, ignores the fact that anime's gaze feminizes its audience regardless of nationality. Importantly, otaku on both sides of the Pacific are considered effeminate or irregularly male.[110]

Newitz's view would imply that U.S. otaku are especially feminized, but Newitz also suggests that translating and viewing anime may be a means by which viewers "convert a Japanese product into a uniquely American one. What might be satisfying for Americans about this is that it essentially allows them to 'steal' Japanese culture away from Japan."[111] This view supports the notion of anime as producing a Peeping Tom or spying effect. Indeed, Antonia Levi initially claims in *Samurai from Outer Space* that anime enables a great cultural exchange.[112] But Levi also argues that anime enables a penetrating view into Japanese society:

Anime can show you a side of Japan few outsiders ever even know exists. Unlike much of Japanese literature and movies, *anime* is assumed to be for local consumption only. That's important, because most Japanese are highly sensitive to outside pressure.... They write for and about Japanese. As a result, their work offers a unique perspective, a peeping Tom glimpse into the Japanese psyche.... But be warned. What you learn about Japan through *anime* can be deceptive. This is not the way Japanese really live. This is the way

110. The socioeconomic status, age, and gender of mecha fans are similar on either side of the Pacific. As director Mamoru Oshii rather facetiously noted at an anime conference, there seemed to be little difference between his Japanese and U.S. audiences: "Both groups show a notable lack of females, and both seem to be the 'logic-oriented' type" (Carl Gustav Horn, "Interview with Mamoru Oshii," in *Anime Interviews*, 139). Specifically, both Japanese and U.S. audience members identify/are identified as otaku, which in Japan has become a derogatory term. Akio Nakamura first used the term otaku to describe attendees at a Komiketto (comic) convention. He writes that they "all seemed so odd ... the sort in every school class; the ones hopeless at sports, who hole up in the classroom during break ... either so scrawny they look like they're malnourished or like giggling fat white pigs with silver framed glasses with sides jammed into their heads ... the friendless type" (quoted in Schodt, *Dreamland Japan*, 44). In the United States, however, otaku has come to signify insider nerd-cool: as mentioned previously, *Wired* magazine's first cover featured the word otaku written in Japanese with no English translation, serendipitously placed next to a picture of Bruce Sterling's head. In fact, U.S. marketing strategies conflate anime with edgy cool. Eleftheria Parpis, in *Ad Week*, declares that "Japanimation is edgy and cool—and shops love it" ("Anime Action," 18). Analyzing Blockbuster's use of anime in its 1998 Christmas advertising campaign, she argues that "the ad targets the video game-playing-cartoon-watching 18–34-year old set; for them, Japanese animation is shorthand for insider cool" (20). Indeed, although anime in Japan stretch from historical drama feature films to children's television series, anime popular in the

U.S. market "generally fall into two broad categories: children's films and science-fiction adventures" (Charles Solomon, "For Kids, a 'Magical' Sampling of Japanese Animated Stories; Movies: UCLA Archive Caters to Growing Interest in Anime with Screenings of Features and Shorts," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1999, 10). According to Matt Nigro of Manga Entertainment, "Most of our movies take place in the 21st century, follow futuristic sci-fi story lines and are geared towards 17- to 28-year-old males and females whose interests include music, comics, virtual reality, Internet surfing and computer games" (quoted in Rob Allstetter, "Entertainment: Japanese Videos Get Animated Interest," *Detroit News*, January 17, 1996, J1).

111. Newitz, "Magical Girls," 3.

112. According to Antonia Levi,

The new generations of both Japan and America are sharing their youth, and in the long run, their future. However much their governments may argue about trade and security in the Pacific, American's Generation X and Japan's *shin jinrui* will never again be complete strangers to one another. The connection is not only with Japan. *Anime* has already spread across most of Asia. Future social historians may well conclude that the creation of the American *otaku* was the most significant event of the post–Cold War period. (*Samurai from Outer Space: Understanding Japanese Animation* [Chicago: Open Court, 1996], 1–2)

they fantasize about living. These are their modern folk tales, their myths, their fables. This is not a peep into the conscious Japanese mind, but into the unconscious.[113]

The viewer, looking over the Major's shoulder, peeps into the Japanese unconscious, penetrating to the very ghost in the shell.[114] Anime as a great mirror, or illusion, enables one to look through a mirror darkly.

Thus, as Susan Pointon notes, "What is perhaps most striking about *anime*, compared to other imported media that have been modified for the American market, is the lack of compromise in making these narratives palatable."[115] Although the television series *Sailor Moon* was revamped for an English audience by changing the main character's name, Usagi (bunny), to Serena so that it would not offend female viewers, these anime do not go through an intensive Americanization before they hit the market. Indeed, among hard-core fans, the less mediated the better, and subtitled versions are valued over dubbed ones. This fetishizing of the other and the emphasis on incomprehensibility has not been lost on anime and manga creators. Rumiko Takahashi, the creator of *Ranma 1/2*, speculates that the popularity of anime in the United States may stem from exoticism: "Because I consciously feature Japanese life such as festivals and the traditional New Year's holiday, rather often in my manga, I sometimes wonder if American readers understand what they're reading. Maybe they just like the comics because they're exotic."[116] Exoticism and authen-

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113. Ibid., 16.

114. As Frederik Schodt argues,

Ultimately, the popularity of both anime and manga outside of Japan is emblematic of something much larger—perhaps a postwar "mind-meld" among the peoples of industrialized nations, who all inhabit a similar (but steadily shrinking) physical world of cars, computers, buildings, and other manmade objects and systems. Patterns of thinking are still different among cultures, and different enough for people to be fascinated by each other, but the areas of commonality have increased to the point where it is easier than ever before to reach out and understand each other on the deepest levels of human experience and emotion. (*Dreamland Japan*, 339)

115. Susan Pointon, "Transcultural Orgasm as Apocalypse: *Urotsukidoji: The Legend of the Overfiend*," *Wide Angle* 19, no. 3 (July 1997): 35.

116. Horibuchi, "Interview with Rumiko Takahashi," 18.

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ticity do appeal to viewers, and more often than not authenticity is proven by incomprehensibility. The *true* Japanese anime, unlike *Power Rangers*, do not try to address a non-Japanese audience. This insistence on anime as quintessentially Japanese and difficult to understand, as Thomas Lamarre has argued, constructs an essential Japaneseness that is untenable given the anime's position within global culture, given its own translation of animation.[117] It also assumes that U.S. culture is entirely readable.

Translation, however frugal, does appropriate another culture even as it establishes a bridge between cultures. In a translation, materials are domesticated—at the very least they must be rendered in one's domestic language and the domestic subject inserted. Yet, as Rey Chow drawing on Walter Benjamin has contended, translation (between media and languages) is a process of putting together and inscription that exposes the "original's" construction in all its violence; translation, which is not a one-way movement from an "original" to a "translation," is "a *liberation*, in a second language, of the 'intention' of standing-for-something-else that is already put together but imprisoned—'symbolized'—in the original."[118] This reciprocal liberation makes "both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel."[119] Chow, emphasizing the corruption of "original" and "translation," argues that a text's transmissibility depends on the level of its contamination: transmissibility "*intensifies* in direct proportion to the sickness, the weakening of tradition." Specifically analyzing translation between literary and visual texts, Chow maintains that the literalness of visual texts depends on their transparency, on what is "capable of offering itself to a popular or naive *handling*": "In the language visuality, what is 'literal' is what acquires a light *in addition to* the original that is its content; it is this light, this transparency, that allows the original/content to be transmitted and translated." The displacement of literary signification leads to a new way of thinking about one's native texts, "*as if it were a foreign culture peopled with unfamiliar others.*" Further pushing Benjamin's

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117. Lamarre, "From Animation to *Anime*."

118. Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 187.

119. Walter Benjamin, quoted in ibid., 188.

contention that a translation is transparent—that it is an arcade rather than a building, Chow also claims that "the light and transparency allowed by 'translation' are also the light and transparency of commodification."[120]

The mutual and ongoing translation between thoroughly contaminated Japanese and U.S. cyberpunk—neither of which stands as an original—reveals each other's construction and the construction of this standing in called cyberspace (as they also erase the importance of other nations). Read together, they critique each other's Orientalism and expose the violence enabling their construction; they disorient each other's Orientalism, even as they rely on it to orient their own narratives. Each confronts/treats its "native" text "as if it were a foreign culture peopled with unfamiliar others"—making its audience "see" itself anew, but also exposing the violence inherent to constructing the foreign in the texts from which it draws. This mutual contamination not only describes the transmission between these texts but also the content of their narratives: the contamination of culture by technology, humanity by machines. And in many ways, it is this translation between that makes this other translation comprehensible (while at the same time obfuscating it). This multiple translation reveals the ways in which technology does not stand outside culture; rather, technology and culture constantly displace each other in a structure in which they are always made to stand in for each other.

The translation between media is as significant as the translation between languages. The movement from text to anime, from film to anime (in the case of *Blade Runner*) reveals textual and filmic construction. Oshii's re-creation of the look, for instance, reveals the work behind realist films—a look he (using technology) fuses with technology in order to reveal the difference mechanization makes. The translation to anime also graphically exposes the violence of Orientalist display, of viewing oneself as a spectacle (as it also uses spectacle). Perhaps unintentionally, anime also exposes the limitations the very imaginings of cyberspace—the ways in which cyberspace, that limitless land of possibility, has been constrained to repeat conventions. Crucially, Gibson's text is also a translation—a translation into text of video games, military technology, and popular

visual culture. This translation—which is structurally a looking forward enabled by a looking backward—renders everything into a surface, a spectacle, and relies on the shiny light of commodities. Gibson's very transparency disorients and confuses the reader who must struggle with this shiny object that has none of the depth usually afforded by prose (and thus perhaps the saving grace of bodiless exultation). All this transparency, in other words, others. It creates what Chow drawing on Gianni Vattimo, drawing on Friedrich Nietzsche, calls a fabling of the world:

Instead of moving towards self-transparency, the society of the human sciences and generalized communication has moved towards what could, in general, be called the "fabling of the world." The images of the world we receive from the media and the human sciences, albeit at different levels, are not simply different interpretations of a "reality" that is "given" regardless, but rather constitute the very objectivity of the world. "There are no facts, only interpretations," in the words of Nietzsche, who also wrote that "the true world has in the end become a fable."[121]

This new fabling of the world is, as Nietzsche argued for the old, based on language, but also differs from the old because of transformations to language. It is not only the translation from language to image but also the translation from language into instrumental language (which increasingly produces these images, with whose surfaces we grapple). This other, invisible translation between voltages and signifiers, code and interfaces—obfuscated by visual culture—is also obfuscated by cyberpunk's mutual translation.

Going Native

The Orientalizing of the digital landscape, the entry into cyberspace as an entry into the world of Oriental sexuality, is not limited to literary and animated conceptions of the Internet, although Gibson's Orientalism, combined with Ridley Scott's, has become an enduring legacy in cyberpunk fiction: from Stephenson's *Snow Crash* and *The Diamond Age*, to the

120. Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 199, 200, 19, 201.

121. Gianni Vattimo, quoted in Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 198.

Wachowski Brothers' *The Matrix*, every cyberpunk fiction contains some residual Asianness, even if its vision differs from *Neuromancer* or *Blade Runner*.[122] As discussed in chapter 2, Marty Rimm, whose senior thesis became the notorious Carnegie Mellon report on the consumption of pornography on the information superhighway, asserts that cyberspace introduces nine new categories of pornography, two of which are Asian and interracial. In this supposedly identity-free public sphere, not only has Asian pornography emerged as a popular genre but Asian itself has become a pornographic category.

The Internet also revises our understandings of Orientalism by disengaging Orientalism from the Orient. Through high technology, Orientalism is made to travel. Oriental mail-order bride sites such as Asian Rose Tours feature women from the former Soviet Union as well as the Philippines; when asian69.com first went online in 1999, it offered pictures of bound or mutilated white women. The conceit behind these sites is that Oriental women are submissive, and in some way lacking the independence and status of their white counterparts (the visitors to these sites are American *and* Japanese, among many other nationalities). The inclusion of Russian women exposes the economic base behind this assumption and the flexibility of the category Oriental. In 2004, mail-order bride sites were predominantly Eastern European. High-tech Orientalism, then, disperses Orientalism, in all the meanings of the word disperse. High-tech Orientalism seems to be all about dispersal, specifically the dispersal of global capitalism and networks.

These attempts to contain the Internet, to restrict it via Orientalism, do not guarantee safety. Orientalist narratives are not always comforting; they do not always orient. Rather, they carry with them fear of the yellow peril, or uncontrollable and contagious intercourse; they carry fears of overwhelming contact, of being taken over by the very thing they seek to

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122. For more on the relationship between *The Matrix* and Japaneseness, see chapter 3 of Nakamura, *Cybertypes*. For more on the relationship between *The Matrix* and *Ghost in the Shell*, see Livia Monnet, "Towards the Feminine Sublime, or the Story of 'a Twinkling Monad, Shape-Shifting across Dimension': Intermediality, Fantasy, and Special Effects in Cyberpunk Film and Animation," *Japan Forum* 14, no. 2 (2002): 225–268.

control. They carry with them the fear of going native. As discussed in chapter 1, Senator Exon portrayed cyberspace as spreading obscene pornography, even though Exon, when arguing on the Senate floor for Internet regulation, had never surfed the Web for porn. Instead, he had a "friend" print off the most vile online pornography and then he carefully compiled it into a little blue binder, which he brought to the Senate chamber. Before the vote on the CDA, his peers came over to his desk, looked at the pictures, and then overwhelmingly supported the CDA. His notebook, in many ways, served as a perverse version of "look at my pictures from my friend's last vacation." Exon's horror at "hard-core" pornography and his desire to censor such materials parallels European reactions to excessive Oriental intercourse. As Said argues, "Every European traveler or resident in the Orient has had to protect himself from its unsettling influences.... In most cases, the Orient seemed to have offended sexual propriety; everything about the Orient—or at least Lane's Orient-in-Egypt—exuded dangerous sex, threatened hygiene and domestic seemliness with an excessive 'freedom of intercourse,' as Lane put it more irrepressibly than usual."[123] Again, what ruffles legislators' feathers about the Internet is freedom of intercourse in all senses of the word intercourse and in the dangerous sense of freedom. Faced with the information superhighway and the massive deregulation of the telecommunications industry in 1996, the government seized on pornography—excessive sexuality—as the reason for regulation.

But what happens when we take freedom of intercourse seriously, even if it is within the rubric of high-tech Orientalism? Consider, for instance, virtual sex. In many ways virtual sex epitomizes the Orientalist dreams of the Internet. As Cleo Odzer observes in *Virtual Spaces: Sex and the Cyber Citizen*, "Western men play with Thai prostitutes with the same non-chalance we play with our cyber-lovers."[124] The guiding metaphor of the Web—namely, virtual travel—feeds into the notion of the Internet as a vacation space, in which responsibility is temporarily suspended in favor

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123. Said, *Orientalism*, 166–167.

124. Cleo Odzer, *Virtual Spaces: Sex and the Cyber Citizen* (New York: Berkley Books, 1997), 239.

of self-indulgence. Virtual sex seems always to verge on the "deviant": bondage, domination, sadism, and masochism dominate virtual sex, which furthers the theme of submissive and deviant Oriental sexuality.

Virtual sex and all so-called real-time communications cannot be safely cordoned off because they are not limited to the self, and because cyberspace cannot be limited to narratives of it perpetuated by works in other media that try to tell the truth about it. Instead, these real-time communications enable a form of contact that disables the notion of disembodied communication. The mirror starts breaking down. By now, we've all heard stories of people addicted to chat rooms and virtual sex—people whose lives and marriages have been destroyed by virtual infidelities or obsessions, or people whose definition of community has been redefined by their online participation. Further, rather than marking a disembodied space, the Internet creates spaces in which people pass, rather than imagine themselves as everywhere yet nowhere. In real time, dreams of exploration and domination are put to the test. The fact that real-time communications are never really real time, that there is a considerable time lag between question and response, also makes this space disorienting, and it is this disorientation, I argue, that enables the Internet to verge toward the disruptive, to verge toward the truly public. In real-time communications, narratives do not prevent contact with the "new."

Again, the Internet is not *inherently* Oriental but has been made Oriental, and high-tech Orientalism does not seal fiber-optic networks. The narrative of the Internet as Orientalist space accompanies narratives of the Internet as disembodied space. In other words, the Internet can only be portrayed as a space of the mind if there is an accompanying Orientalizing of difference, if there is an accompanying display of Orientalized bodies. Yet this binary of disembodied mind, on the one hand, and disembodied Orientalized other, on the other, breaks down with so-called real-time communication. This binary begins to break down in much cyberpunk fiction after Gibson, even if, influenced by Gibson and Scott, almost all cyberpunk to some extent uses Japaneseness to signal the future. Stephenson's half Korean, half African American protagonist—although a "case" —differs significantly from Case, and in his vision of the Metaverse, racial differences and representations of bodies proliferate. Although Cadigan's protagonists eat fast-food sushi, her vision of the future is not pinned to all things Asian; her fictions do not feature disembodied cowboy heroes

either: in *Synners*, jacking into the Net (or more properly, being jacked by the Net) does not result in bodiless exultation. Rather, one can be jacked in and still grounded in one's body. Also, although not considered cyberpunk, Octavia Butler's *Patternmaster* series portrays mind-to-mind communications as disruptive and controlling: her empaths regularly commit suicide in order to escape. As well, in her dystopian *Parable* series, Butler presents "cyberspace" technologies as middle-class toys rather than tools "detourned" by the oppressed.[125] Importantly, this binary breaks down not because the Orientalized other is suddenly afforded the status as subject but rather because the boundary between self and other, self and self, freedom and control, begins to collapse.

125. See Dery, "Black to the Future."