

# **The Identity Microcosm of Cyberpunk**

A Critical Analysis of the Construction of Gender and Ethnicity in Cyberpunk Movies  
Featuring Female Cyborgs Between 2017-2021

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## **ABSTRACT**

The exploration of human and non-human identities has rapidly developed in popular culture during the rise of the digital revolution through the figure of the cyborg, an organic and mechanical machine. Cyberpunk, a strand of science fiction (sci-fi), places cyborgs at the center of its narratives having the potential to disrupt oppressive realities as well as reinforce them. Societal problematics are ever-present in Cyberpunk movies in the form of stereotypical beliefs about gender and race where women are hyper-sexual, men are hyper-masculine and Black and Asian characters are commodified. The lack of quality representations is rooted in the structural issues of the sci-fi industry where White men still predominate behind the camera and on camera while women and ethnic actors are cast in side roles. Because of the lack of critical lens and care of Cyberpunk producers toward groups that do not represent them, the Cyberpunk genre inevitably absorbs and projects identity conflicts. This research seeks to explore the identity microcosm of Cyberpunk and unravel the various forms of exclusion and emancipation of its characters. It contributes to the socio-cultural and academic framework of contemporary Cyberpunk in relation to gender and ethnicity by providing a critical and intersectional analysis. This study thus focuses on the ways in which gender and ethnicity are co-constructed in U.S. Cyberpunk movies featuring female cyborgs released between 2017 and 2021. In doing so, it is looking into the Cyberpunk universe of *Ghost in The Shell* (2017), *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019), and *Zone 414* (2021) by adopting a socio-constructivist, feminist, and intersectional approach. This thesis uses the method of thematic analysis as drafted by Braun and Clarke (2006) to generate an in-depth understanding of the textual and visual elements of the selected movies.

The findings reveal that the construction of gender and ethnicity is facilitated by the perpetuation of social hierarchies that question the agency of gender and ethnic minorities, while simultaneously constructing non-linear narratives that foster contradictory identities. The selected movies perpetuate a system of patriarchy and capitalism that assigns stereotypical dualisms in the female and racial body by erasing their agency. Women are trapped in positions of powerlessness and portrayed in domestic, sexual, and victim roles. Women of color are the first to be affected being subjected to narrative exoticism and placed in hyper-capitalist decorative roles that commodify their bodies. These hierarchies are

perpetuated by the upper class constituted by White men and their corporations such as the Veidt corporation in *Zone 414* (2021), Hanka Robotics in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017), and the city of Zalem in *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019). These men construct their superior self-identity through the oppression of women and ethnic characters. Nevertheless, there are instances that challenge gender narratives highlighting women's ability to birth emancipatory spaces of oppositional actions and outlining various forms of masculinities. Ultimately, this research acts as a first step in thinking about gender and race as active organisms as well as encourage cultural producers and consumers to reimagine the world from an intersectional speculative lens.

KEYWORDS: *U.S. Cyberpunk movies, Cyborgs, Gender, Ethnicity, Stereotypes*

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# 1. Introduction

Cyberpunk is a science fiction (sci-fi) genre that had a rapid development in the recent U.S. culture with its sensibilities toward computer technologies and dystopian visions of futures featuring themes about rampant consumerism, genetic engineering, mind control or artificial intelligence (A.I.) (Gomel, 2016; Thierbach-McLean, 2019). William Gibson defined the Cyberpunk genre with his novel *Neuromancer* (1984) by focusing on the various forms of “spatiality generated by the digital revolution” which he named cyberspace (Gomel, 2016, p.5). Gibson explores the boundary between mechanical and biological identities through cyborgs, clones, and holograms, where the mind can reside within a computer reality and leave the physical body in the material world (Vint, 2007). Cyborgs are central to the popular culture of American techno-science and cyberspace. Balsamo (1996) defined the cyborg as a “human-machine coupling, most often a man-machine hybrid” (p.18) whose identity can represent social hierarchies as well offer alternative visions of the present (Haraway, 2000).

On this note, Cyberpunk productions such as movies embody systems of representation that use symbols and signs such as cyborgs to represent and construct meanings (Hall, 1997). Every representation is formed by statements existing in society known as discourses. The circulation of discourses in society reinforces power dynamics where some narratives dominate over others, a practice that cannot be separated from cultural productions (Hall & Gieben, 2011). Cyborg narratives are not new, they date far back to the eighth century with Homer’s *Iliad* which displays intelligent machines serving their master (Hermann, 2023). In contemporary culture, cyborgs are depicted as seeking to be human undergoing human dramas as seen in Samantha’s and Joi’s characters in *Her* (2013) and *Blade Runner: 2049* (2017) reinforcing the Western belief that humans are the highest form of being (Hermann, 2023). Further, U.S. cyborg narratives reinforce social power systems in relation to gender and race (Cave et al., 2018). Cyborgs are often gendered through the maintenance of stereotypical characteristics as men or women and hyper-sexualized figures such as the sexy bodies of female cyborgs encountered in *Metropolis* (1927), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), *Splash* (1984), or *Tron* (2010) (Cave et al., 2018). When it comes to race, there is a long history of marginalization of Black people in sci-fi as disfigured monsters or bad-blood alien races who contaminate the White race (Nama, 2008). Cyberpunk specifically, is constituted of various Asian (Japanese and Chinese) aesthetics (e.g., love hotels, ramen joints, katanas, neon signs) featuring Orientalised backdrops (Roh et al., 2015). Often, these portrayals commodify the

Asian culture and characters, disregarding the Asian bodies as seen in *Cloud Atlas's* (2012) yellow-face practice or in the whitewashing in *Star Trek Into Darkness* (2013) (Thierbach-McLean, 2019). These portrayals are due to the lack of diversity in the movie industry where men cover 73% of the sector with 80% of the directors being white as of 2019 (Topaz et al., 2022). Because of the little gender and ethnic representation in the production teams, women are cast mainly as supportive characters or hyper-sexualized love interests, while the Black and Asian actors are limited to roles of victims, villains, or martial arts fighters being rarely hired in protagonists roles (Erigha, 2015; Hunt, 2019).

Thus, the lack of cultural knowledge on gender and ethnic minorities and critical thinking leads to the perpetuation of sexist and racist stereotypes on-screen. In this sense, cyborg narratives and sci-fi movies reflect the microcosm of society serving as a “magnifying glass for the human condition in its philosophical and cultural, as well as current socio-political problematics” (Hermann, 2023, p.325). The discourses depicted in these movies not only reinforce stereotypes but also impact the viewers’ who consume the content and internalized these skewed beliefs about the depicted groups (Nader et al., 2022). The following research question (RQ) will thus be addressed:

How are gender and ethnicity co-constructed in U.S. Cyberpunk movies featuring female cyborgs released between 2017 and 2021?

In answering the RQ, this research seeks to explore the cyberpunk microcosm of *Ghost in The Shell* (2017), *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019), and *Zone 414* (2021) through a socio-constructivist feminist approach and intersectional perspective which argues that categories such as gender and ethnicity are interconnected and mediated by power relations.

In terms of academic relevance, the literature on Cyberpunk in relation to gender, ethnicity, and female cyborgs is either focused on cyberpunk novels or videogames. Zaidi and Sahibzada (2020) and Wilkinson and Stobie (2017) analyze novels from a feminist viewpoint involving computer cowboys and ass-kicking female cyborgs, while Banbury & Fritsch (2022) discuss Cyberpunk 2077, a videogame, in terms of gender and disability. Further, Zaidi et al. (2018) conduct an analysis of various cyberpunk novels in relation to race and techno-colonialism. Another study that discusses gender, race, and the construction of female cyborgs in movies is Nishime (2017) which analyses *Ex Machina* (2014) and *Cloud Atlas* (2012) and whose article I will use in my theoretical framework. Moreover, when it comes to the selected movies, the literature either focuses on the previous versions of *Ghost*



*in the Shell* (2017) seen in Silvio (2008) and Napier (2001) or doesn't touch upon gender focusing on class or the female characters' relationship with technology (Cahyo & Suryaningtyas, 2020; Soffa et al., 2021; Tembo, 2017; Yoon, 2019). Further, there is a lack of academic research on *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019) and especially on *Zone 414* (2021).

In this sense, the literature on gender and race involving female cyborgs is scarce, being limited to discussing Cyberpunk novels or video games and while there are studies focusing on these identities they do not discuss contemporary representations of the selected movies. By analyzing how gender and race are maintained or challenged in contemporary Cyberpunk movies featuring female cyborgs, this research contributes to the current literature with a more nuanced reading of the genre's socio-cultural discourses. This thesis ultimately informs its readers about the various social hierarchies present in sci-fi productions, while encouraging them to apply a critical and intersectional lens when watching U.S Cyberpunk movies.

The next chapter will develop the theoretical framework of this research by first discussing its theoretical approaches, then looking into gender and ethnicity/race as well the ways in which class perpetuates gender and racial inequalities. The third chapter outlines the research design by discussing the research method, the data collection process, the sample criteria, the process of data analysis as well as the coding procedure while discussing the validity, reliability and ethics of this study. The fourth chapter explores the findings drawn from the analysis of the movies connecting them with the literature. This chapter consists of three sections that present four themes: across gender (stereotypical representation of women and men), across ethnicity (narrow representation of ethnic characters), and across class (class conflicts). In the fifth chapter, I will answer the research question where I argue the construction of gender and ethnicity in the movies is facilitated by the maintenance of social hierarchies that question the agency of gender and ethnic minorities, while simultaneously creating non-linear narratives that foster contradictory identities. Further, I will present the major findings of this study while outlining the study's limitations and its socio-theoretical implications.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

To address the study's research question, first I dive into several theories and concepts that will provide a foundation during the analysis and the findings while contributing to the discussion of results. This chapter begins with the context and politics of cyberspaces, then it moves to the theoretical approach: socio-constructivism, feminism studies, and intersectional theory. Finally, it discusses the identity markers of gender, ethnicity/race, and class in a conceptual manner as well as in the context of sci-fi.

### **2.1 The Postmodern Cyberspace and Politics of Representation**

This part discusses the factors that led to the emergence of cyberspace and in particular it conceptualizes cyberculture as projecting capitalist spaces where conflicts of class, gender and race take place.

Cyberpunk culture is interested in the economic anxieties that globalization brings such as an increasingly automated work environment, capitalism, and class inequalities (Gomel, 2016). To clarify, cyberpunk was born during as a result of the age of globalization where the new global cyberspace that emerged reshaped political, economic, and cultural boundaries (Gomel, 2016; Kehbuma, 2016). For Jameson as mentioned in Murphy (2012), globalization is driven by postmodern capitalism, commodity fetishism, and Western media culture. Commodity fetishism views individuals as workers or consumers, where their human lives are excluded if not needed anymore (Murphy, 2012). Hence, in this system, humans only exist as labor power. Humans serve capitalism by subordinating their bodies and selves to the demands of capital and the ruling class of capitalists (Murphy, 2012).

Similarly, the postmodern cyberspace replicates Western ways of living as seen in the real-world and Western media culture. Kehbuma (2016) argues that cyberspace is ruled by Western customs set by Western manufacturing companies and dictated to the rest of the world. Thus, the exclusivity of cyberspaces raises global concerns about the West's hegemonic power and its implications for the rest of the world. In the same line of thinking, Haraway (2000) highlights in her *Cyborg Manifesto* the repercussions of technology and cyberspaces in perpetuating Western ideologies such as colonialism or patriarchy and how they lay problematic foundations of "antagonistic dualisms" (Haraway, 2000, p.81). Through the metaphor of the cyborg she outlines Western binaries of Self/ Other, male/female, right/wrong and the ways they are represented through post-human identities in sci-fi

(Haraway, 2000). Hence, the imaginary cyberspace as Gomel (2016) puts it, can absorb and intensify political and economic borders and national and cultural tensions. In this sense, one can never detach these technological spaces and actors (e.g., cyborgs) from the politics of representation because they are “projections of the conflicts of class, gender, and race (Markley, 1996, p.4). To discuss the dynamics of gender, race, and class in cyberspace, I will use a social constructivist, feminist and intersectional framework.

## **2.2 Socio-constructivism and Corporeal Feminism**

This research uses a socio-constructivist feminist approach that aims to deconstruct taken-for-granted ideas in society about the gendered and racial body. In this sense, socio-constructivists focus on the ways in which meanings, symbols or signs are constructed and re-presented (Hall, 1997). This perspective acknowledges that objects, people and cultural meanings or discourses are in constant movement and interaction and there cannot be a single truth or reality (Hall, 1997).

Feminism started in the 1960s as a movement advocating for women’s empowerment and for the political change of women’s rights toward greater personal freedom (Trier-Bieniek, 2019). The movement as seen in popular culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is representing female liberation as an individual matter of choice and as freedom over their body and life (Fellner, 2017). Empowered women are thus portrayed as self-confident, autonomous and sexually liberated; individuals who are capable of saving themselves (Ethas, 2022).

This research relies in particular on ideas rooted in feminist film theory (Thornham, 2005). Feminists argue that cinema has been the crucial arena where feminist debates about “culture, representation and identity have been fought” (Thornham, 2005, p.14). Therefore, to see how inequality and gender are connected to culture, an understanding of feminism is necessary (Trier-Bieniek, 2019). Feminists utilize the socio-constructivist approach to ‘the body’ and gender (Balsamo, 1996; Haraway, 2000). Balsamo (1996) engages in a Foucauldian technique of “thick perception” that allows us to understand how different cultural discourses conceptualize and articulate the body (p.3). This approach is also called corporeal feminism. By perceiving the body as a social construct rather than a natural object, one can analyze the processes of how it is transformed into a “sign of culture” (Balsamo, 1996, p.3). Balsamo (1996) suggests that the body is an ongoing process of production influenced by cultural, social and historical factors, hence, the body is political. Here, it is both an embodiment of gender and ethnic identities as well as “a way of knowing and marking the world, [...] of marking a ‘self’” (Balsamo, 1996, p.3). To clarify, this feminist

interpretative perspective suggests that the body represents a critical source for cultural work and that the symbolic, discursive and material body “are mutually determining” (Balsamo, 1996, p.11). By recognizing the importance of the body as a symbolic resource, one can gain a deeper understanding on how gender identity, as a body attribute, is not a natural fact, but a performative social fiction that is “assigned, organized, and acquired through the process of social perception” (Balsamo, 1996, p.11; Butler, 1988).

Further, feminism, in its journey to analyze the politics of the body, also focuses on the way the body is submitted to hierarchical systems of oppressive gender relations. Feminists define the power inequalities between men and women as patriarchy (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). The patriarchal system is reinforced through the subordination of women to men, where the latter group often dominates the public and private spheres (Grau & Zotos, 2016). The Covid-19 lockdowns further intensified the male domination of public and especially private areas where years of patriarchy led now to a male-dominated culture (Javed & Kumar Chattu, 2021). In the public sphere, this hierarchy is often reinforced by other forms of inequalities such as economic or social such as limited access to education, workplace discrimination and lower wages (Haslanger, 2000). Although the socio-economical gaps are reduced by 76.9% in North America as of 2022, the measures to analyze gender equality in terms of economic and political status are insufficient (Javed & Kumar Chattu, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2022). For instance, Hentschel et al. (2019) highlight that in U.S. women are still underrepresented in highly skilled jobs such as senior management positions, whereas they are overrepresented in jobs that consist of caring for others such as nurses or teachers. Moreover, in a patriarchal system, women are promoted as having less value where gender-based violence (GBV) is widely accepted in society and prevalent in the private sphere (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Javed et al. (2021) define sexual and GBV as “any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships” (p.33). GBV is connected to power, dominance, and abuse of authority that consists of emotional, physical or sexual threats of coercion and violence (Javed & Kumar Chattu, 2021).

When it comes to popular culture, Giomi and Magaraggia (2022) argue GBV such as raping, assaulting, stalking, murdering, or torturing women is prevalent. For instance, in vampire movies such as *Twilight* (2012) or *The Vampire Diaries* (2009–2017), the link between violence and romance is “presented as an inevitable component of a romantic relationship” (p.62). In many cases, violence and female victimization through popular

culture is normalized as a universal male behavior and as “an ordinary, structural fact of social reality” (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.64)

### **2.3 Intersectional Theory**

In our truth-seeking journey it is important to not only look at popular culture through a gendered perspective but also through an intersectional lens. This study will thus not only draw from socio-constructivism but also an intersectional approach, since one can simultaneously embody various identities. Socio-constructivism, feminism, and intersectionality are both rooted in cultural studies that argue that reality is not a given, but it is produced through cultural practices (Hall, 1997). I will use intersectionality as a constant reminder to critically observe how different forms of oppression and stereotyping are embedded in the narrative of a movie.

The concept of 'intersectionality' is part of Black feminist activism and was first coined by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw in 1989, an American critical race scholar. In a recent interview Crenshaw defines intersectionality as “a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other” (Steinmetz, 2020). She uses this term to talk about the double discrimination of sexism and racism faced by women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). She further highlights on how intersectionality is a tool for observing the happenings of multiple forms of oppression or inequality that are usually not understood through traditional ways of thinking (Crenshaw, 1991). Edwards and Esposito (2019) argue that intersectionality is used in research to name and “make sense of the complexity of lived experience in relation to systems of domination,” where “one aspect of identity is not treated as separable” (p.4). The identities that intersectionality seeks to observe in relation to each other are ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and class.

To wrap up, the socio-constructivist, feminist, and intersectional approaches use cultural studies to define popular culture as an ideological institution that promotes and maintains power and control, instead of “mindless entertainment” (Edwards & Esposito, 2019, p.8). They highlight the ways in which popular culture operates from a White patriarchal social world, where gender and ethnic groups are often underrepresented or oppressed (Haraway, 2000). They are relevant in outlining how popular culture can be both oppressive as well as emancipatory; a space for creating reality (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). Thus, these approaches allowed me to critically engage with movies and identify how they shape and are shaped by social structures.

## **2.4 Across Gender**

### **2.4.1 Gender binary**

This section first maps out the concept of femininity and masculinity then the intersection of technology and gender named cyberfeminism. Afterward, it will provide a discussion on the representations of female cyborgs in popular culture and sci-fi while outlining the gender asymmetry between female and male movie characters and toxic masculinity traits.

Butler (1998) argues that gender is constructed through a person's behaviors, acts, and social interactions. These acts and traits are thus viewed based on society's expectations about masculinity and femininity and thus become part of the binary system of gender. In justifying perceiving and treating the members of each category differently, physical, sexual and psychological markers are used to define the gender binary of men and women (Haslanger, 2000, p.38). This binary is maintained through stereotypes, a set of beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and conducts of members part of certain groups (Åkestam et al., 2021). Prysthon (2016) argues that stereotypes hold "simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized" attributes about an individual, they minimize, simplify and essentialize the whole identity of a person to these attributes and exaggerate them (p.80) Further, they also fix differences and deploy "a strategy of splitting" (Prysthon, 2016, p.80) which in Haraway's (2000) terms is defined as "antagonistic dualisms" of Self/Other, men/women and so on (p.81). This process of splitting identities into binaries is so embedded and normalized in society, that is done mostly unconsciously. This banal perpetuation of binaries perpetuates unrealistic expectations about how the female/male gender should look (Haslanger, 2000). In this sense, popular culture reduces people to a few traits and promotes expectations of femininity/masculinity (Grau & Zotos, 2016). For example, there is a long history in advertisements and movies of women and men being reduced to their physical traits (body height, hair length, being fragile, being strong), role behaviors (caretakers, mothers, leaders), occupational status or personality traits (self-doubtful, confident) (Åkestam et al., 2021).

### **2.4.2 The cyborg body**

It is interesting to look at the relationship between technology and the body in both society and popular culture and how they intersect. Haraway (2000) argues that the symbolic, discursive, and cultural traits of the body, and the ways it is constructed, simplified and fixed through stereotypes in relation to gender, can be also applied to cyborgs in sci-fi literature

and movies. The feminist critique of the body as applied to cyborgs is defined as cyberfeminism (Haraway, 2000). The cyborg, because of its hybrid identity of half technological and half organic, has the potential to open up our understanding of the duality of the body as both a material being and a discursive entity (Balsamo, 1996). As Vint (2007) puts it, “technology can be used to signify new forms of exclusion as well as new spaces of freedom” (p.21). In this sense, the cyborg can disrupt dualisms and oppositions of natural and technologically recrafted bodies and encourage a reconstruction of gender (Haraway, 2000; Balsamo, 1996).

Yet, despite the technological potential to re-configure the materiality of the body in both sci-fi and society, gender categories of male and female are still maintained, where that these boundaries are rarely transcended (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). Thus, as Hermann (2023) suggests, technology can mirror “sexism in all stages—from the design to development to application” (p.323). Hence, looking into representations of cyborgs in sci-fi popular culture can shed light on the type of discourses that allow for technology to reimagine these fixed binaries or for the perpetuation of hierarchical systems of unequal relations between men and women.

### ***2.4.3 Representations of gender in sci-fi***

In popular culture, these power dynamics and hierarchical systems are subverted, where often depictions of women are constructed through the male gaze. The gaze theory was coined by the film theorist Laura Mulvey in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (Mulvey, 1975). Gaze theory highlights the objectification of women, where they’re both looked at and displayed as erotic, sexual and (normatively) beautiful to please the male audience. The objectification of women in film, arguably, is a consequence of a lack of diversity among producers, writers and other contributors where women directors are underrepresented in the industry, and men dominate the scene. (Topaz et al., 2022). In this sense, the medium of film and its portrayal of women in sci-fi movies is led by the male gaze and a patriarchal subconscious where white men are still considered the main creator, characters and consumers where women only represent a fraction of characters (Stone & Flores, 2018). This results in women and ethnic groups being neglected and misrepresented as the damsel in distress, “the perpetual sidekick or hypersexualized love interest” (p.87) being constantly objectified and brutalized on screen (Hunt, 2019).

The representations of cyborg women is based on early sci-fi plots where A.I., and female androids on distant planets served as substitutes for human women in sexual fantasies.

Evidently, these women were just part of a male (sex) fantasy. In the 1950s there even existed softcore sci-fi porn with female androids for young men (Stone & Flores, 2018). In contemporary sci-fi, one can find similar issues where “look at her ass SF” dominates the visual identity of female leads, where the posters feature female stars in tight sexy costumes or space suits (Stone & Flores, 2018). This is because most sci-fi movies are directed towards a male audience where the advertisement seeks to promote an experience for young men and appeal to their desires (Stone & Flores, 2018). Thus, films often “express the fantasies and subconscious needs of their (mostly male) creators”(Thornham, 2005, p.15).

In sci-fi, women are often infantilized and represented as naive, innocent, or love interests of the male hero (Devlin & Belton, 2020). For instance, in *Tron: Legacy* (2010), the female A.I., Quorra, is described by one of the movie characters as “profoundly naive” and the main love interest of the male hero. Quorra has a childlike innocent mind designed in an adult sexually appealing body while the male character plays the role of her teacher and lover. Ultimately, this common narrative reflects the male desire to hold power over childlike women which reflects their fear of women having higher intellectual abilities and more sexual experiences than them (Devlin & Belton, 2020). Further, besides being cast in infantilized roles, women are constantly objectified and represented as sex toys. For example, in *Ex Machina* (2014), Kyoko, one of the female robots is created to serve and pleasure her designer Nathan (Figure 1). The movie thus features instances where women are treated as disposable, killed and forced to prostitute and pleasure the male character Nathan (Murphy, 2012).

*Figure 1.* Kyoko sitting naked on Nathan’s bed in *Ex Machina* (2017)



Similarly, we have *Cloud Atlas* (2012), a movie that revolves around female Asian robots built as servers in a restaurant. This movie portrays women as sex robots through Somni-451 where she constantly engages in graphic sex scenes with her clients. These two



movies are based on an old theme of women being hardwired by men to fulfill their sexual desires and do not really touch upon these power dynamics or issues of sexual abuse and predatory behavior as seen in the male characters.

On the other hand, we have the Dominatrix character that stands in opposition to the trope of women as naive or sex toys. The Dominatrix trope is defined by the cyberpunk defining novel *Neuromancer* (1984) which features Molly Millions. This trope doesn't feature strong femininities, but women as weapons having masculine traits (e.g., denying her emotions like a man or aggressive behavior) (Wegert, 2007). These women are killing machines, confident, independent and extremely skilled as well as sexual pursuers always in control during intercourse. However, Wegert (2007) argues that these traits are "too hard, cold and masculine to be identified as a positive portrayal of strong femininity" ( p.115)

In between the representations of naive sex female cyborgs and Dominatrix, there is the representation of female A.I.s such as Ava from *Ex Machina* (2017) as an independent femme fatale which seeks to use her sexuality and intellect to gain agency and reverse those tropes (Hermann, 2023). Ava is designed by Nathan, a White man who brings Caleb (another White man) to test her humanity through a Turing test. She uses her femme fatal traits such as hyper-sexualization, vulnerability, and naivety to trick Caleb into falling in love with her (Hermann, 2023). However, Ava is still complying with stereotypical notions of femininity being designed as conventionally beautiful, where she is ultimately born in a patriarchal system that makes her dependent on men's worth. Although the movie seeks to free Ava from her creator, it completely ignores the agency of other female cyborgs such as Kyoko who are used as plot devices (Hermann, 2023).

There is a systematic association between women's sexual vulnerability and their lack of agency as seen in *Ex Machina* through Kyoko, Movies usually depict women as victims as well as in instances where their agency is canceled through the "dead woman" trope (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.65). The latter also features narratives with murdered women having a "post-mortem life" that emphasize their cancellation of agency as seen in *13 Reasons Why* (2017-2020) (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.65). These tropes radically erase women's agency by dehumanizing them by depicting their bodies as dismembered, shot and so on (Banet-Weiser, 2018). For example, in *Cloud Atlas* (2012), the female fabricants wear death collars that can be triggered via remote control. When one of them tries to rebel against the working conditions at the restaurant she's working, her manager kills her (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Female fabricant being killed in by male manager in *Cloud Atlas* (2012)



When women do try to reclaim their agency over their bodies and life, the choices are often never entirely reflecting their “free will” (Trier-Bieniek & Leavy, 2014) For example, in *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011), Anastasia insists that she has agency over her body, however the decisions she makes align with her lovers (Christian) expectations. Further, in GBV situations women are always engaging in independent action to gain control over their lives. For instance, in the action movie *Enough* (2002), Slim becomes a heroine by having no choice but to confront her abuser herself and kill him to save her child and her independence (Ramon et al., 2021). These narratives are problematic as they place the responsibility of women to end the abuse and renounce their victim status, “absolving society at large of responsibility” (Ramon et al., 2021, p. 119). Thus, these scenarios ultimately fail to show these issues as a consequence of the patriarchal society (Ramon et al., 2021).

The portrayal of female cyborgs in popular culture is very similar to how AI exists in society. Real-world digital assistants such as Siri, Alexa, or Cortana set the expectations of their users and developers of how digital assistants should sound like and perpetuate discourses of women as servants and domestic (Hermann, 2023). Hence, discourses of technological bodies and cyborgs can spill in the real world as well where femininity and feminine roles can be maintained without a body (Devlin & Belton, 2020). For example, we have Samantha in *Her* (2012) or Joi in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) that are inspired by real-world A.Is. They are both portrayed as gendered beings with stereotypical feminine roles such as servant and docile. Samantha’s feminine traits are imbued through her voice tone-soft and seductive. Joi is a hologram that is programmed to look conventionally beautiful and behave like “a stereotypical housewife” (Devlin & Belton, 2020, p. 366). They both fall in love with their owner. Further, the depiction of companion love/sex robots as encountered in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) and *Ex Machina* (2017) is not far from the real world technology of sex dolls. Both popular culture and real-world female cyborg creations tap into the

heterosexual male fantasy of a woman who lacks agency and is physically and emotionally compliant (Devlin & Belton, 2020; Flanagan & Booth, 2002).

The gender asymmetries between men and women are further produced through the “ideology of romantic love” and courtesy (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.26). Aberoni suggests in Giomi and Magaraggia (2022) that love should not be discussed as “an emotion or individual psychological condition; instead, it should also be studied as a social fact” (p.26) where the socio-cultural structure of society influences our ways of loving. Thus, love codifies power relationships between the genders where women are more emotionally vulnerable dedicated to self-sacrificing altruism in the name of love and keeping the relationship at all costs (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022). Further, the courtesy ritual constructs women as fragile, precious or help- seeking and men as helpers and protectors. This system validates the men’s masculinity as non-fragile and not in need of help making women dependent on their existence (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.28).

When it comes to men’s masculinity in popular culture, the identity of men is often done through the representation of women. Whereas women are physically weak, sensitive, crying easily and in need of help, men are strong, lack emotions and always protect (Ethas, 2022). These men have difficulty expressing and managing their emotions and are in a constant battle to try to repress their vulnerabilities (Hanley, 2022). The attempt of men to appear tough and repress their feelings is a foundational trait in the construction of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is a behavior that promotes violence, aggression, and misogyny by holding rigid ideas about masculinity as “male dominance and toughness” (Hanley, 2022, p.11). Toxic masculinity is linked to misogyny which represents a disdain for women. Misogyny instrumentalizes women as objects and represents a “means to an end: a systematic devaluing and dehumanizing of women” (Banet-Weiser, 2018, p.2). For example, in *Cloud Atlas* (2012) female bodies are euthanized and hung in factories like meat by male workers normalizing hatred against women. These toxic masculine representations are thus a common behaviors in society and popular culture, and normalized through GBV such as stalking, brutalizing and killing women.

Thus, sci-fi narratives involving female cyborgs are often “almost invariably male” where its characters have little time for issues of sexual politics (Murphy, 2012, p.9). Veronica Hollinger suggests that this genre was created by White-middle-class men (Murphy, 2012, p.9). Ultimately, cyberfeminists like Haraway (2000) would probably call the cyberspace a boys’ club where women don’t transcend feminine stereotypes and the

technology employed often brings a “total triumph of genocidal patriarchy” (Murphy, 2012, p.9)

## **2.5 Across Ethnicity**

Because this study looks at identity from an intersectional viewpoint, I will also look into the representation (or lack of it) of race/ethnicity in cyborg movies. Thus, in this section, I will lay out the concept of race and ethnicity, then I will discuss the overall representations of race in sci-fi as well as the techno-oriental portrayals of Asian culture and characters.

Both race and ethnicity are social constructs that are socially developed and change according to the existing social discourses across space, context and time (Suyemoto et al., 2020). Ethnicity describes any group or community that gathers around cultural similarity and distinct itself in cultural, religious, behavioral and linguistic terms (Suyemoto et al., 2020). Race is often used to divide social groups based on their physical appearance as well as ethnicity (e.g., Asian Americans). The purpose of this racial classification is to maintain a power hierarchy between various groups and enforce or keep “systems of privilege, most specifically between White people and people of color” (Suyemoto et al., 2020). These differentiations or racial stereotypes are imposed with no regard to the individual’s chosen identity (Suyemoto et al., 2020). Ultimately, people of color have to navigate through a White heteropatriarchal system (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). The White racial ordering is based on power and privilege that reproduce and justify racist institutions and discourse which oppress people of color throughout the U.S. society (Hunt, 2019). White men have thus been dominating the behind and front of the screen throughout decades constructing consciously and unconsciously women and people of color in subordinate positions (Hunt, 2019).

### ***2.5.1 Representations of race in sci-fi & the cyborg body***

When it comes to sci-fi cyborg narratives, many are sites of ideological meaning surrounding race (Nama, 2008). Thus, perceiving cyborgs as racialized characters helps foster an understanding of the various forms in which contexts external to human bodies sustain the racial classifications perpetuated in U.S. society (Jones & Jones, 2017). This view stands in opposition to the sci-fi assumption that the future is color-blind and exists outside race (Kurtz, 2017, p.157). The latter perspective only encourages cultural producers to avoid discussing race and identity politics in their works (Lavender, 2011). To counter the argument of color-blindness and apolitical futurity, Cave et al. (2018) discuss how racial and ethnic stereotypes are embedded in many A.I. narratives in both fictional discourses as well

as non-fictional ones. Cave et al. (2018) further suggest that in non-fictional discourses, there are numerous accounts of White Caucasian men in Stock images representing robots that usually tighten into a long history of colonial mindsets that link intelligence to whiteness. This argument is also backed up by a study by the Human Interface Technology Laboratory in New Zealand (Bartneck et al., 2018). Here, they show that people do assign racial identity to the robots where they apply racial stereotypes to white and black robots (Bartneck et al., 2018).

Thus, avoiding acknowledging the role of race and identity politics in sci-fi productions is an excuse to cast ethnic characters and portray them in leading roles (Lavender, 2011). As Nama (2008) argues when ethnic characters are present in sci-fi movies, they are “so extremely marginalized and irrelevant to the narrative that they are, for all intents and purposes, invisible” (p.11). Butler, a pioneer in post-human sci-fi studies, argues that this is due to custom, where producers get comfortable with things as they are: white, and movies that do have minority characters have no particular minority theme (Butler, 1980). When cultural producers of cyborg narratives do include accounts of race, Butler suggests that in trying to portray or predict the future, their works often promote a linear Western-centric truth and history under narratives of civilization (Butler, 1980). Ethnic characters are thus constantly cast as silent sidekicks, bad guys being overall linked to invisible or villain roles in contrast to the White characters who are often in positions of power and agency (Nama, 2008, p.72). These patterns are thus linked to Western technocratic narratives that make sci-fi an institution that reflects racial inequalities and Western racial hegemony (Butler, 1980).

Discourses of race can get more tangled and subversive where racial subjectivities can be fragmented through a Cartesian dualism of transcending the flesh enabled by the duality of cyborgs as organic and technological (Feasey, 2008; Murphy, 2012). Where humans can be genetically engineered, issues of racial purity and disposable ethnic bodies are perpetuated (Nama, 2008). This results in the genetics of certain bodies being perceived as more valuable while others are exploitable and expandable (Kurtz, 2017).

Furthermore, the possibility to split the mind from the body creates problematic negotiations of racial identities where characters with a White body can embody racial identities which often ends up further oppressing ethnic identities (Shin, 2017). This negotiation further deepens the divide between the White Self (white) and racial Other and

also leads to the common practices of whitewashing, yellowface and overall commodification of ethnic characters which I discuss in the next section in relation to techno-orientalism.

### **2.5.2 Techno-orientalism & representations of Asian identities**

Techno-orientalism with its roots in Orientalism as laid by Edward Said, is at the root of signifying ethnic identities as the Other, a framework that relies on binary representations of culture (Nama, 2008). Techno-orientalism or postmodern-orientalism features East-Asian culture, technology and characters as exotic and oriental. As discussed in section 2.1, postmodernism is a Western product influenced by Western media (Miyoshi & Harootunian, 1989). By the same token, postmodern orientalism portrays East-Asian culture in a Western way, with the Orient and Japan as recognition suppliers that are crucial in the process of its self-identity building (Shin, 2017). Ultimately, the Orient is a concept created by the West that throws together multiple Asian and Middle Eastern identities for the purpose of differentiating themselves and what they are through the “Other” and what it lacks (Roh et al., 2015).

This often simplified representation of Said’s Orient is increasingly seen in Hollywood Western movies and in the sci-fi genre (Mochi Magazine, 2016). One of the movies that set the tone of techno-oriental aesthetics is *Blade Runner* (1983) which portrayed holographic Asian women in traditional clothing smiling on a tall cloudy building, kanji letters, and busy Chinese street foods. These visuals indicate the threatening status linked to Asia as “the inassimilable, unfamiliar, illegitimate, obsequious, and devious who haunt the dark alleys of Western civilization” (Shin, 2017, p.182) Moreover, during the early 2000s, there has been an increase in Asian remakes with American studios purchasing rights for various Asian manga’s and anime series with the goal to turn them into feature films (Mochi Magazine, 2016). Yet, the American remakes often altered the Asian remakes making the characters identities less complex and more appealing to the Western crowds (Lavender, 2017; Nishime, 2017). In movies featuring Asian culture, the phenomenon of imagining Asia and Asians is not only done for aesthetic reasons but this aesthetic fixation and on-screen representation (or lack of it) promotes problematic discourses (Thierbach-McLean, 2019). For example, in 2017, many fans of the Japanese manga series *Death Note* were outraged to see that the Hollywood movie remake featured Nat Wolff, a White American actor, as the main character where he played the Japanese lead Light Yagami (Mochi Magazine, 2016).

This practice of whitewashing or racebending is a common issue in sci-fi (Lavender, 2017). Whitewashing refers to replacing minority characters with white characters or having a white actor play a minority character (Nishime, 2017). For instance, in *Doctor Strange* (2016), the producers cast Tilda Swinton a white actress in the role of the Ancient One who in the original comic was Tibetan (Nishime, 2017). Further, whitewashing is linked to yellow-face where white actors portray roles of Asians such as Jim Sturgess, James D'Arcy and Hugo Weaving in *Cloud Atlas* (2012) who are made Asian with prosthetics (Figure 4). The same movie also portrays Somni-451, an Asian woman, as being freed and reborn as a White woman suggesting the superiority of the White race (Nishime, 2017).

Figure 3. Yellow-face in *Cloud Atlas* (2012)



There are other instances where Asian women are disposed of and commodified as servants. Both Somni-451 and Kyoko in *Ex Machina* (2017) are domestic slaves (Nishime, 2017). Kyoko is depicted as a silent Japanese servant who can't speak English, who submits to Nathan and pleases him sexually. She represents the “demure Asian woman serving a White man” (Nishime, 2017, p.34). Moreover, her body is constructed as expandable as seen during Ava's escape from Nathan when she manipulates Kyoko to get away and uses her skin to fix her own body. The producer's choice to have a Japanese actress playing Kyoko as a submissive emotionless robot who is a plot device for the White female protagonist perpetuates harmful gender and racial stereotypes where the ethnic characters are often othered (Nishime, 2017; Roh et al., 2015)

## 2.6 Across Class

Class, race and gender are entangled identities that create various forms of inequality. Suyemoto et al (2020) emphasize the connection between race and class arguing that the hierarchy between White people and people of color is maintained through a system of socio-economic privileges. The class divisions are maintained through spatial divisions of lower and upper classes. For instance, in *Metropolis* (1926) and *Cloud Atlas* (2012) the capitalist bourgeoisie lives above ground in the clouds while the lower class lives below. The capitalist

power in both movies is shown through inhumane exploitation and domination of the laborers where the elite destroys and swallows its “destroying workers” energies in the devouring pursuit of its own profit” (Byrne, 2003, p.5-8). It is not coincidental that people of color and women are depicted as labor power or exploited workers who have little or no agency over their conditions of living and their bodies as seen in *Ex Machina* (2017) through Kyoko or *Cloud Atlas* (2012) with Somni-451.

Furthermore, the racial Other is also constructed through the absence of whiteness as seen in the multicultural Los Angeles of *Blade Runner* (1983) (Byrne, 2003) In the city, the population is compiled of Latinos, Middle Easterners, and Asians and filled with strangely costumed lower class citizens (Kuhn, 1999). White people are a rare sight in the city and when there is a white person living there such as Sebastian, a genetic designer, the characters wonder why he doesn't live in the offworld where all the middle class and upper class citizens reside (Kuhn, 1999). Further, for the survival and financial security of elite groups in the offworld are sustained through the slavery of artificial beings- replicants who would be killed if they step on Earth. Thus, the *Blade Runner* (1983) world racially classifies the lower class into ethnic groups while the offworld is made of White upper class groups who exploit replicants- the alien Other- through slavery.

All in all, the approaches of socio-constructivist feminism and intersectionality in relation to gender, race, and class highlight the subverted power dynamics of Western dualism in popular culture (man/women, White/ Asian, poor, rich) showing how these identities intersect while arguing that movies are ultimately an ideological site that promotes and creates certain images of reality.



### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research used movies as data. Trier-Bieniek and Leavy (2014) argue that textual and visual data gathered from movies gives an understanding of mediated cultural processes. Films represent a powerful medium that impacts “consciousness of race, class, gender, and other intimate aspects of human life” (Edwards & Esposito, 2019, p.123). Analyzing the content of English-speaking U.S. films in an attempt to observe its relation to various ideologies is important because of movies’ ability to permeate the mainstream consciousness as the main distributors of Western culture and values globally (Edwards & Esposito, 2019).

This study uses a qualitative interpretative approach to uncover representations of gender and ethnicity in films because of its objective to analyze their underlying meanings and discourses as opposed to quantitative studies aiming at generalizations based on numerical and statistical data (Flick, 2018). Further, they allow the researcher to make sense of the content portrayed and to position it within the broader socio-cultural context of identity representations and debates in U.S. sci-fi movies (Flick, 2018). To address my research question, I used Braun and Clarke (2006) method of thematic analysis (TA) on the movie scripts and scenes. I analyzed the textual data side by side with visual data since one “cannot interpret a text or image through that text or image alone” but only in reference to one another (Reavey, 2021, p.154).

TA has been growing in popularity in media research since 2006 and became an insightful tool in qualitative data collection and analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that TA seeks to identify, explore, and report recurring themes within data. Boyatzis (1998) defines themes as patterns that describe and organize the possible observations within the data and interpret the aspects of that phenomenon. TA is suitable for this research, as it will help me in relating the various themes/meanings from each movie to each other and make a coherent narrative. Moreover, this method is in line with the interpretative approach as they both seek to categorize and unravel the portrayed reality and its socio-cultural background, while revealing different aspects of the topic of research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is important to consider the movie’s relationship to the larger cultural framework and ask “how the film models, challenges, or subverts different types of relations, whether historical, social, or even theoretical (Corrigan, 2015, p.).

Furthermore, TA is used to analyze qualitative data from various sources from social media comments, YouTube videos, television (TV) shows and movies (Bulck et al., 2019).

TA is ideal for providing a pattern in a sample of visual images like in the case of this study where films are compiled of visual data (Reavey, 2021). Therefore, in selecting this method I took into consideration and built on existing studies that have used TA for visual and textual data. For instance, Kanwar (2021) applies TA to examine how the representation of gender through various themes is portrayed in Indian web series “Four More Shots Please!”. This method has also been applied to TV shows as well (Cantor, 1990; Pehlke et al., 2009). Cantor (1990) analyses how gender, emphasizing men, has been represented in domestic comedies from the 1950s to the 1980s, while Pehlke et al. (2009) use TA to analyze portrayals of fatherhood in TV sitcoms. The latter study uses similar data stages to Braun and Clarke (2006) and emphasizes the researchers’ transparency through memo-taking - a tool I used in my research as well Teixeira et al. (2020) applied TA film analysis to present women’s personal and work life in the TV series “Most Beautiful Thing” in line with Bardin’s (2006) steps of pre-analysis (watching the film), material exploration & treatment (collecting codes and themes) and interpretation (make the report). Also, TA is used to study movies such as Seo and Kang (2023) to explore portrayals of metaverse in “Belle” and “Ready Player One.”

In qualitative analysis, it is important for the researcher to build her understanding on the topic. In so doing, I familiarized myself with the consumption and production of the films. Here, I read producers’ and actors’ interviews and news articles about the films discussing *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) having a race problem, *Zone 414* (2021) as a grim world with sex robots and *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019) as an empowering movie for girls (Flint, 2019; Loayza, 2021; Romano, 2017; Sampson, 2016). Exploring the background of the movies allowed for a context-sensitive analysis of the movies and the social phenomena studied (Berg & Lune, 2012).

### **3.2 Data Collection**

In my research process, I initially opted for applying textual and visual CDA on a few selected scenes since, similar to TA, it can be suitable for revealing power relations (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). However, as the data collection developed, it became noticeable that it wasn’t enough to analyze a few scenes, instead, a discussion of reoccurring meanings within the whole movie was necessary. Thus, this method granted me a more flexible breakdown and reading of the films. Since flexibility is a central mark of success in interpretative research, TA felt more suitable for achieving this (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

### 3.3 Sample

I used purposive sampling (typical for qualitative studies) to collect information-rich data in a time-effective way. Hence, I could narrow down the scope and determine if similar or identical themes show in other settings. I chose content that aligns with my RQ, objectives and literature. Purposive sampling is not aiming at generalizations or a representative sample therefore the analysis concerns the chosen sample and the specific phenomenon studied (Flick, 2018) The sample unit is represented by: *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) released by Paramount Pictures (88m) and directed by Rupert Sanders grossing \$169 million, *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019) released by 20th Century Fox (132m) and directed by Robert Rodriguez grossing \$405 million and *Zone 414* (2021) released by Saban Films (83m) and directed by Andrew Baid grossing \$4000. The plot of the movies and their background can be found in Appendix A.

I chose movies that would allow me not only to explore representations but also to reflect on similarities and differences between two movies with female cyborgs as protagonists, and one movie with a male lead. I expected that including a movie that features a male protagonist and female cyborgs as supportive characters would provide different relational dynamics between the characters and a new perspective to the analysis enhancing its diversity. During my research, I considered sufficient to analyze three movies as I wanted to keep my sample manageable for an in-depth analysis.

I chose the movies based on seven criteria. First, the language had to be English, since translating the scripts would be time-consuming and add an extra layer of complexity that can affect the validity and reliability of the research (Guest et al., 2012). Second, the movies had to be live-action or a live-action animated feature film. Third, the movies had to be U.S. productions as justified earlier, and the fourth, to fit within the cyberpunk genre. The fifth criterion was that they had to feature a female cyborg as main character or supporting character. The seventh criterion was related to recency, as I wanted to study recent productions to show how gender is represented in films of my interest, therefore I set the period of focus to films released in the past five years between 2015 to 2022. Thus, these criteria allowed me to address a gap in academic research on contemporary cyberpunk movies already identified in my introduction and theoretical framework (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). I concluded that the three movies are appropriate to answer my RQ after watching them as part of the audience as well as reading news articles discussing these films in relation to gender and ethnicity.

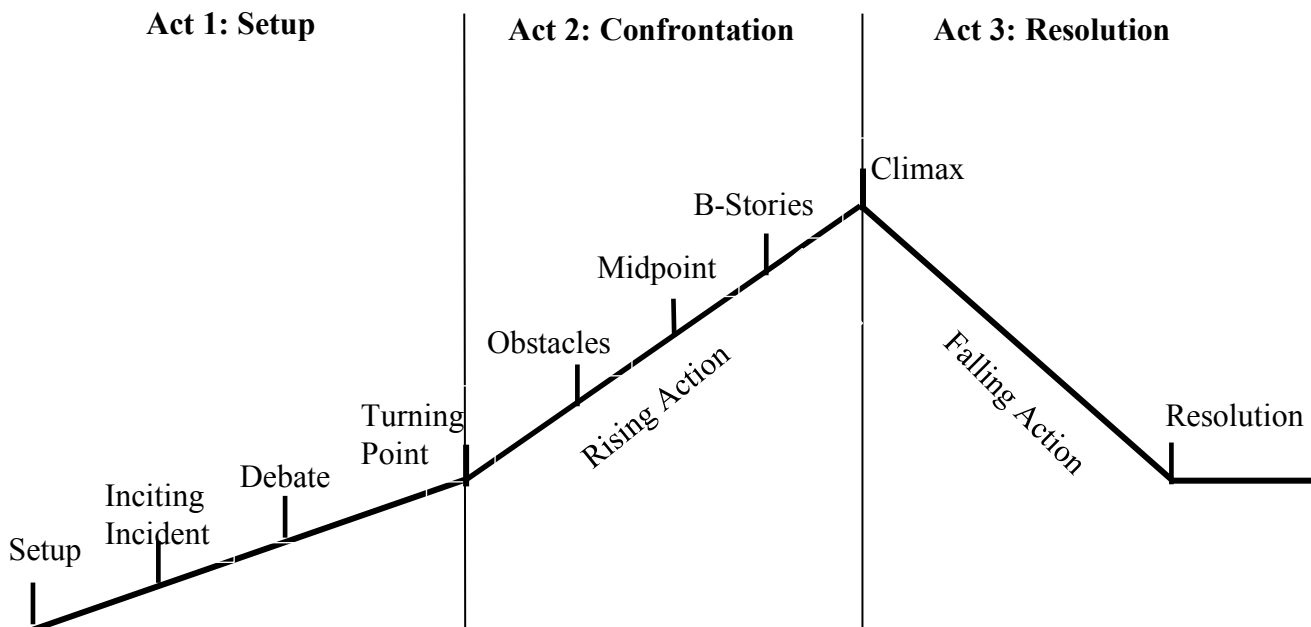
### **3.4 Data Analysis**

#### **3.4.1 Acts and scenes**

In conducting the analysis, I focused on the entire body of the movie and divide it according to the film grammar in acts and scenes (Bordwell et al., 2020). These elements constitute the movie plot which represents everything that is visible and hearable in the film (Bordwell et al., 2020).

First, I identified the acts per each movie which were three in total. Here, I took into consideration Syd Fields' three-act structure as well as the key narrative stages from Freytag's pyramid of plot stages as cited in Moore (1895) and Benshoff (2016) The act structure drafted by Syd Field in 1978 as well as Frytag's pyramid divide movies into Act 1: Setup, Act 2: Confrontation, and Act 3: Resolution as drafted in Figure 4 which was inspired by multiple figures from Benshoff (2016). Act 1 consists of the setup, the inciting incident, the debate, and the turning point where the character commits to the action (Moore, 1895). Act 2 consists of the rising action with obstacles, midpoints and B-stories (subplots that introduce relationships or inner conflicts). Act 3 is the climax (the character's attempt to achieve their goals), the falling action which leads to the resolution where the conflict and B-stories are resolved (Moore, 1895). The breakdown of each movie's scenes is in Appendix C.

Figure 4. The act structure and Frytag's pyramid as visualized by the author.



Second, I also looked at the movie scenes. Because TA doesn't require such an in-depth analysis of the movie sentences, words and visual cues, I analyzed the entire movie. I prioritized a more detailed coding for scenes that feature the protagonists and moments that move forward the plot as laid out in Figure 4. Besides that, I also paid attention to scenes that represent the characters' world (in relevance to the topic). Here, I coded the scenes for each act until theoretical saturation has been reached to make sure the sample remains manageable. I added the script and the movies in Atlas.ti, a software for qualitative data analysis. This allowed me to keep track of the codes and divide the analysis across all movies and across their acts and scenes. Atlas.ti also enabled me to take snapshots from the movies and use them as part of the evidence for each theme.

### 3.4.2 Operationalization of concepts

First, I classified the main movie characters and their relation to the plot following Akpan (2018). For example, I coded protagonists, supporting characters, dynamic characters who undergo changes and have inner conflicts (see Appendix B), static characters who remain the same throughout the plot, and flat characters who have one-dimensional traits and undergo no substantial changes. This helped me gain an overall image of each character's role in the plot.

Second, I looked at general feminine and masculine attributes. These traits served only as sensitizing concepts and a direction for analyzing gender. They emerged from the

data where the coding was inductive. The traits added in Table 1 are from England et al. (2011, p.558-560), where only a few of the attributes emerged during the analysis such as submissive, emotional, protective, described as physically attractive, victim, and authoritative.

**Table 1**

*Feminine and Masculine Traits*

<b>Feminine Traits</b>	<b>Masculine Traits</b>
Physically Weak	Physically strong
Submissive	Assertive
Emotional	Unemotional repression of emotion, indifference to pleasure or pain
Affectionate physical display of love (e.g., hug, kiss)	Self-Serving
Nurturing mothering, prolonged touching and attention in a soothing manner	Protective
Sensitive	Independent performing an independent action
Helpful	Inspires fear
Troublesome the character causes trouble	Brave
Fearful	Authoritative
Ashamed	Athletic

---

Described as physically attractive	Engaging in intellectual activity
Asks for or accepts advice or help help can be physical, mental, or emotional	Gives advice/ Teaches
Victim physical harm or abuse	Leader

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*Note.* Adapted from *Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses*, by D. England, 2011, p.558-560.

Further, as detailed in Chapter 2, I looked at gender and ethnicity as social constructs embedded in social discourses that classify various groups and reinforce social hierarchies between men and women respectively White and ethnic groups (Haslanger, 2000; Suyemoto et al., 2020). To further determine the construction of gender I've looked into various tropes that emerged in Chapter 2 which explored instances where women are portrayed as submissive, inferior, or independent. I've explored the following tropes: women as prostitutes and sex objects subjected to the gaze of male characters, manufactured women designed by male creators who have limited agency, disposable women which portray instances where women are expendable being eliminated from the plot, the damsel in distress who is protected or saved by the male character, the damsel out of distress where women can save themselves (TV Tropes, n.d.; Ethas, 2022; Katsaris, 2022). Additionally, I've also looked into instances where men exercise dominance through the trope of the powerful male boss who is authoritative and often mistreats his workers even killing them, instances that promote toxic masculinity as outlined in Chapter 2 section 2.4.3 and when men are dudes-in-distress who are saved by women (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Ethas, 2022; TV Tropes, n.d).

When it comes to ethnicity, besides the theories discussed, I also looked at tropes of disposable ethnic bodies and ethnic characters as prostitutes/sex objects similar to the tropes for gender, as well as the Orientalism trope which depicts Asian culture and characters as stereotypical (Knife, 2021; Lavender, 2017). Further, for both gender and ethnicity I've explored the dehumanization trope where the character is views as less than human, and the double consciousness trope which I labeled as an identity struggle where the character is torn inside (TV Tropes, n.d.). To be mentioned, there are various types of traits and tropes when it

comes to gender and ethnicity, however, to have a consistency in my research design, I explored the ones that are relevant to my research topic.

### **3.4.3 Data procession and coding**

To ensure that the research design was fit for the data set I conducted a pilot analysis using Braun and Clark (2006) TA steps on *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019). The pilot analysis served as a pre-testing step to verify the suitability of the research method (Flick, 2018). Conducting a pilot phase helped me to learn how to organize and analyze my data, to observe which visual parts I should focus more on, and to relate the visual data to the textual patterns.

The first step of TA is familiarizing with the breadth and depth of the data through a continuous reading of the content. Here, I watched the movies and divided them by acts and scenes (see Appendix C) before I began coding each of them where I searched for patterns in the script and visual data and took notes of preliminary ideas. In the second step, I developed the codes inductively and empirically. Yet, I also compiled them analytically in relevance to the theoretical framework and concepts around gender and ethnicity (Berg & Lune, 2012). In this way, I could develop patterns according to the producers of the messages and meanings from the movies as well as code in a context-sensitive manner (Berg & Lune, 2012). When it comes to coding the visual data, I loosely coded the mise-en-scene (Corrigan, 2015) considering the character (clothing, body language, emotional expressiveness), set (location, space), binary oppositions as well as the composition of the image (low/high angles, foreground). To connect the codes and themes with the visual cues I've considered the following questions as laid out by Trombeta and Cox (2022):

- How is the mise-en-scene supporting the text?
- How is the mise-en-scene contradicting the text?
- What is in the mise-en-scene that is not in the text?

These questions facilitated the complementation of the textual and visual data as well as the identification of any possible contradictions between them. The process of textual and visual data collection and analysis can be found in Appendix C and was coded along the following elements: the act number (1, 2 or 3) and film structure (setup, midpoint etc.), the scene timeframe, the scene description, the characters involved, the codes, the mise-en-scene and the number of screenshots taken.



In the third and fourth steps, I compiled the codes into themes and sub-themes for each movie, constantly reviewed the themes, and re-arranged them to create a coherent story (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the process, I also considered the relation and validity between the individual themes and the entire data set. Afterward, in the fifth phase, I named and merged the movies' themes for the final report and described their content in Chapter 4. All in all, I had 46 codes out of which 6 were sub-codes. For example, the code "weak" (women) was defined by being "underestimated" and "sexist remarks" while "protective man" consisted of the sub-code "over-protective father." The codes were compiled in four themes and 12 sub-themes. For instance, I built on "woman described as physically attractive," "male gaze," and "women as prostitutes/ sex objects" to create the sub-theme "sexualization of female characters." Some codes were also found in multiple themes such as "manufactured woman." In Appendix D I added the overview of themes, sub-themes, codes and sub-codes which were organized according to the order of appearance in the discussion. for ease of reading. The sixth step consisted of producing the report, where I connected and embedded the themes in an analytic narrative and the theoretical framework. Here, I collated illustrative data extracts for each movie to demonstrate the "prevalence of the theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006 pp. 93).

### **3.5 Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations**

The validity and reliability of this research were ensured through the exploration of multiple points of reference for the analysis such as primary data, the theoretical framework as well as through a sensitizing socio-cultural background exploration on the movies and their media representation (Berg & Lune, 2012). Furthermore, because TA is interpretative in nature, researchers have an active role in collecting and translating the data. This means that there is a lot of room for individual judgment in the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the research has to be placed in a theoretical framework to increase the method's interpretative strength and "anchors the analytic claims that are made" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97). To allow for a transparent and clear research design Braun & Clarke (2006) advise mentioning the type of analysis that is conducted, which in my case comes from social constructionist epistemology. Here, the meanings and patterns identified in data are theorized as socially produced and reproduced. Thus, in this research, I theorized and explored socio-cultural and structural conditions instead of individual psychologies. Further, to minimize my individual bias, I ensured theoretical transparency by not only justifying my research design

choices but also by addressing any incongruent data in the findings section such as opposite cases (Guest et al., 2012).

Moreover, it is important for researchers to engage in an “ongoing reflexive dialogue” throughout the analytical process and discuss their biases to enhance the research credibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p.82; Berg & Lune, 2012 ). Thus, I’ve reflected on my positionality and identity and the ways in which this might influence the research. I am aware that after watching the movies as part of the audience I formed personal opinions on their quality and content. However, this only sparked my interest to explore them from an anthropological viewpoint. Additionally, my identity as an Eastern European woman and feminist and my previous academic interest in ethnicity and gender were the other factor that influenced my research focus. Nevertheless, by discussing my positionality and background and reflecting on my role as a, I fostered a transparent and valid study. To further tackle my assumptions and biases I wrote memos throughout the data collection. For instance, I noted my assumptions about the movies and what I was expected to discover. This helped me to gain self-reflexivity and debate decisions openly. Additionally, in the report of findings, I reviewed my concepts and language to ensure that I was consistent and on track with my epistemological position and research goals (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

When it comes to ethical considerations, the data set consists of fictional stories and characters, thus anonymity and privacy was not an issue. The research was approved along the guidelines of the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity as set forth by the Netherlands Association of Universities (VSNU). The data was kept confidential and was stored in a secure environment that was accessed only by me.

## 4. Analysis of Findings

In this chapter, I will lay down the findings from the analysis of *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019) as ABA, *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) as GITS, and *Zone 414* (2021). In total, I have identified four themes that are structured in three main sections: across gender, across ethnicity, and across class. The first section is focused on two themes: the stereotypical representation of women and the stereotypical representation of men, while the second section, focuses on the narrow representation of ethnic characters. Finally, the last section is represented by class segregation across space, gender, and race.

The first theme discusses stereotypical representations of women in relation to the following sub-themes: gender roles, emotional expressiveness, sexualization of female characters, female cyborgs as manufactured women with damaged independence, and reversal of gender roles. The second theme is constituted of gender roles, emotional expressiveness, toxic masculinity and reversal of gender roles. The third theme brings up the narrow portrayals of ethnic identities featuring: the invisibility of ethnic characters, the commodification of ethnic characters and Cartesian dualism and racial discourses. The fourth theme is centered on class conflicts which reveal the spatial, racial, and gendered segregation between the upper class and lower class.

### 4.1 Across Gender

Gender is a verb, not a noun. Gender is always about the production of subjects in unequal relationships, where some have more property than others. (Haraway, 2000, as cited in Markussen et al., 2000, p.12)

#### 4.1.1 *Stereotypical representation of women*

**Gender roles.** The first theme focuses on the argument that women are emotional snowflakes whose agency as independent individuals is undermined and whose bodies are often abused or sexualized by the male characters. This narrative outlines the physical, emotional, and sexual vulnerability of women. When it comes to female cyborgs specifically, they are portrayed as exploited man-made metal girls who go through identity crises. Ultimately, female cyborgs as Haraway (2000) suggested, absorb and amplify stereotypical characteristics of what is meant to be a woman in the eyes of society.

First, female characters are portrayed as damsels in distress. In Z414, there are multiple accounts of Jane being seen as helpless when David, the protagonist, protects her (McGee, 2019). When they first meet, David runs out to find her stalker while he tells her to:

Lock the door behind me and don't open it till I come back, until you hear my voice, okay? (Z414).

David assumes Jane's inability to protect herself. Toward the climax of Act 3, Jane finds herself in a dangerous position where her stalker tries to kill her. Before that happens, David instinctively runs to her apartment to save her showing his view of women as less competent in protecting themselves where their femininity is associated with fragility (Xu et al., 2019). Similarly, in ABA and GITS, at the midpoint of Act 2, both Alita and Major are in life-threatening situations having to be saved by male characters (Ido, Hugo, Batou). These references are rooted in the patriarchal belief that at the end of the day, women are still dependent on the protection from their male counterparts (Devlin & Belton, 2020).

Second, women are positioned in roles of vulnerability, and powerlessness. Their vulnerability is expressed through their feminine appearance confirming the belief that women's vulnerability stems "from physical factors: their generally smaller size" (Hollander, 2001, p.104). Thus, Jane's vulnerability is defined according to her feminine physical traits (fragile, weak) and role behavior as a sex robot (Åkestam et al., 2021). Similarly, male characters view Alita as helpless due to her small stature and innocent childlike look. For instance, Alita's girlish appearance motivates Hugo to instinctively run to save her from the Centurions although she appears to be able to fight them back as shown in Figure 5.

*Figure 5. Hugo saves Alita from Centurions in ABA.*



Women's status as vulnerable is also seen when they are underestimated by men. For example, Major's competencies to follow up on a mission are questioned by her colleagues who suggest "it's too dangerous" for her (GITS). In ABA, Alita's decisions are constantly

undermined by Hugo even after he notices her extensive battling skills questioning her belonging among the “professional” hunters asking “Are you sure about this? This place is just for bounty hunters, nobody else.” Later on, when the two arrive at the hunters’ bar, despite Alita telling Hugo she is able to handle the situation, Hugo tries to protect her from Zapan, during their heated argument as portrayed in Figure 6. Hugo’s intervention normalizes behaviors that enable women as invisible where their voices are unheard and not valid perpetuating narratives of women as incapable (Becker, 1999).

*Figure 6.* Hugo intervening in Alita’s argument with Zapan in ABA.



Moreover, viewing women as powerless is reinforced through gendered remarks such as sexist or belittling nicknames where they are infantilized. This is because men fear being inferior to women; and for them to have more authority and intellectual abilities, men choose to use belittling nicknames that minimize women’s power (Devlin & Belton, 2020). For example, Alita’s inferior authority is set by Ido suggesting that she’s “new here” and “still learning about things,” being recurrently minimized to „pretty girl” and „little cyborg” by male characters. For instance, Tanji, Hugo’s friend, mocks Alita’s Motorball skills by calling her “princess,” while Grewishka calls her “little flea” during their conflicts and Zapan calls her patronizing names such as “sweets” or “cupcake”. Similarly, in GITS, Major is addressed as “sweety” and Melissa from Z414 is called a “little girl”. These patronizing nicknames communicate the social attitude that women are powerless while fostering subtle acts of misogyny (Banet-Weiser, 2018). This also reveals men’s desires and expectations toward female cyborgs, where they search for women who are stripped of agency, rejecting anything that looks “too smart” as one of the Z414 clients seeking female companions mentions. In this sense, as Ethas (2022) put it, “helplessness and vulnerability are still believed by some men to be admirable qualities in a woman” (p.2).

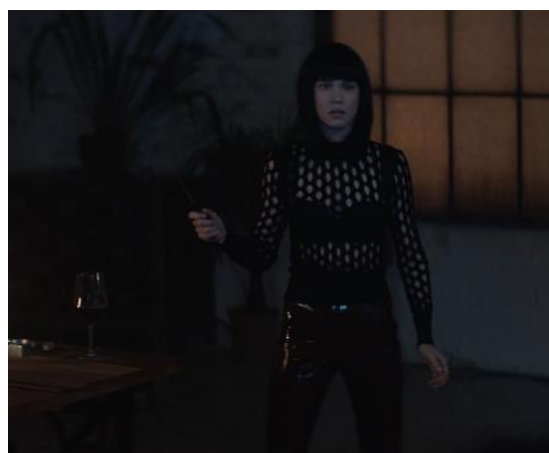
Third, women's status is distorted to submissive roles where they engage in domestic services and serve men with their bodies. In GITS there are multiple instances of women serving men with their labor where they take the roles of housewives or assistants helping the male characters. Moreover, cyborgs like Jane and Jaden, are slave robots, who live to serve the Zone 414 male clients. In a disturbing scene from George's house, one of the city's residents, Jaden is displayed as bruised with her face cut while she sits silently on her knees at her master's feet as depicted in Figure 7.

*Figure 7.* Jaden, a female cyborg sitting at George's feet in Z414.



In these instances, women are viewed as “passive servants of the patriarch” (Mirkin, 1984, p.45). They cooperate because they have been conditioned to believe that their life purpose is to please the patriarch (Mirkin, 1984). Thus, they are born into submission or forced to submit like Jane in Figure 8 when she's immobilized by a man, through a remote controller.

*Figure 8.* Jane is paralyzed by her stalker, Joseph in Z414.



Forth, all three movies depict women as victims of GBV where female vulnerability is linked to dangerousness (Hollander, 2001). These women live in a society that constantly abuses them. ABA's Iron City sets with a serial murderer (Grewishka) on the loose who kills

women. Act 1 thus begins with a Black woman screaming before she gets murdered at night as depicted in Figure 9.

*Figure 9.* A Black woman being killed in ABA.

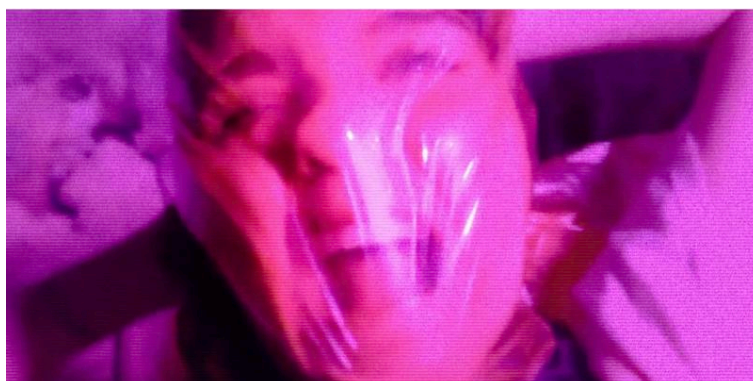


The cruelty of the city is shown through the killing of Ido's daughter by one of his male clients. Further, Z414's GBV system is set in the first scene in Act 1 and sets the tone of Z414 as a society that displays women as victims who are brutally murdered by men as seen in Figure 10. These grotesque images appear throughout Z414 as pictured in Figure 11 and are linked to a system of vulnerability that is translated into physical fragility (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

*Figure 10.* Snapshot picturing a dead woman in Z414.



*Figure 11.* Snapshot picturing a strangled woman in Z414.



These snapshots portray a misogynistic society where women are men's toys being shot at, held hostage, or raped. Ultimately, as Daly argues in Mirkin (1984) "men prefer women to be bent badly 'out of shape' on all levels - physical, mental and spiritual" (p.50). Thus, the narrative of victimized female bodies and the systemic misogyny is almost banal whereas scenes of women being threatened or killed are a normative pattern in sci-fi (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Murphy, 2012). The tortured and dead woman is subject to absolute domination by the male spectator, "whose gaze falls upon the woman and meditates on femininity and death" (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.65). Women's victimization and death often becomes a plot device. For example, the death of the geisha cyborg and Dr. Ouelet's position as a victim in GITS, forward Major's journey to find her enemy. The passivity of women is also represented through the "post-mortem" life of dead women that carries the entire plot and constantly emphasizes the status of women as victims as seen in Mellisa's role in GITS (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.65).

**Emotional expressivity.** All three movies portray women as emotionally weak through zoomed shots with female characters crying, having dramatic reactions or being scared. For instance, Alita shows excessive impulsive emotions during her argument with Ido in Act 2 when she begs him to unite her to her UDM body. When Ido refuses, she has a breakdown and smashes a table, and cries as portyaed in Figure 12. Similarly, Major is portrayed as impulsive not being able to contain her emotions during her missions as seen during the scene when she almost beats to death Dr. Ouelet's assassin.

*Figure 12.* With tears in her eyes, Alita smashes a table in ABA.



Jane cries when she is in danger, when she feels overwhelmed or in the climax scene when she has to kill her stalker, Joseph pictured in Figure 13. Both figures show how directors seek to emphasize women's vulnerability by zooming in their reactions.



*Figure 13. Jane portrayed scared, crying in Z414.*



Besides crying, Jane and Major are portrayed as scared. These instances emphasize the stereotype of emotionally fragile women whose connection to their feelings is a weakness, further contrasting them from the male characters who are portrayed as calm or passive (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Ethas, 2022; Hanley, 2022).

Another gendered emotional trait is the unbalanced romantic vulnerability of the female characters. Here, love behaviors structure the unequal power relationships between men and women (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022). In ABA and GITS the female protagonists are portrayed as independent and strong, however, they are vulnerable in relation to their loved ones. In GITS, Major despises Kuze, showing no affection throughout the movie, but when she realizes they had an intimate connection in their past life, she sacrifices herself and her body to save him in Act 3. Further, Alita is repeatedly dedicated to self-sacrifice for Hugo mentioning that “I’d do whatever I had to for you” (ABA). On the contrary, Hugo doesn’t give back the same commitment saying “Don’t just do things for people” (ABA). Furthermore, women, out of love, are dedicated to “self-sacrificing altruism, so must victimize” themselves (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.26). Here, Alita victimizes herself when Hugo almost dies saying “This is my fault.” Because she is falling in love, she constructs her narrative arc around him pursuing becoming a Motorball champion for him to reach Zalem. Both movies thus display the dualist hierarchy of male and female emotional vulnerability (Gilson, 2016).

**Sexualization of female characters.** The higher degree of vulnerability of women is also due to their bodies, where “to be a woman is to inhabit the kind of body that is perceived as inciting lust and thus as inviting sexual attention, whether desired or not” (Gilson, 2016, p.75). Therefore, although the cyborg body creates vast possibilities for one’s understanding of gender, its body remains a ground that amplifies sexist practices such as the sexualization and objectification of women (Balsamo, 1996; Haraway, 2000). These sexist practices are done at both textual and visual levels and are produced by male characters as well as the producers of the movies (Mulvey, 1975). At a textual level, Alita is described as “beautiful”, and “older” once her breasts grow, and with the “face of an angel” (ABA). Jane is portrayed as “beautiful” and “lovely” (Z414) while Major is constantly characterized by her physical appearance as “beautiful” (GITS). At the visual level, female characters are repeatedly looked at by men making them appealing to the viewers (Mulvey, 1975). The first scene of GITS pictures Major’s naked body being created where the shot focuses on her butt, emphasizing the scene as a spectacle (Mulvey, 1975).

The male gaze is also used in Alita’s encounter with Zapan when he looks at her up and down, un-consensually touching her as seen in Figure 14. This seems twisted since throughout the movie before she unites with the UDM body, she is a “young girl”, while Zapan is an adult man (Flint, 2019).

*Figure 14. Zapan hitting on Alita in ABA.*



Similarly, in Z414, one scene focuses on a male client looking at the various female sex models touching them without their consent. In all movies, there are women depicted as prostitutes and sex objects as seen in Figure 15 where women’s role is to entertain the male character. These scenes highlight how prostitution is a pleasure instrument for the male society where women’s inferiority is represented by their link to their bodies as docile sexual

beings and objects (Byrne, 2003; Xiaojiang, 2013). These practices create negative forms of vulnerability where a woman's body is "the kind of object on which others, active male subjects, seek to act" (Gilson, 2016, p.75).

*Figure 15.* Grindcutters exiting a bar with female companions in ABA.



**Female cyborgs as manufactured women with damaged independence.** The way women's bodies are treated, created, and perceived by their male counterparts restricts women's autonomy (Balsamo, 1996). Thus, this section dwells on the theme of damaged agency first referring to how female cyborgs' bodies are dehumanized and exploited, then looking into the way this affects their perception of their identity.

On this note, the portrayals of female cyborgs are similar to women's status in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the peak of the rapid development of capitalism and before their liberation movement. The need for large amounts of cheap labor gave women the opportunity to operate in public, however, the need for their capital did not come with respect for women as citizens nor resulted in their liberation (Xiaojiang, 2013). On the contrary, female workers were treated inhumanely with their bodies being used for profit (Xiaojiang, 2013). Similarly, female cyborgs are considered useful by the movies' corporations and societies only for their mechanical bodies being ultimately trapped in a "genocidal patriarchy" (Murphy, 2012, p.9). This world dehumanizes female cyborgs by considering them "machines" (GITS) "synths who don't feel anything," (Z414) and disposable bodies who are murdered, and disfigured by men as seen in Figure 16.

*Figure 16.* A female cyborg being tortured by Joseph in Z414.



In this sense, women’s status as free-willed subjects is limited by a system that commodifies their bodies (Rogan & Budgeon, 2018). Alita’s and Major’s status as artificial beings is set in the opening scenes that portray their bodies and brains as augmented as exemplified in Figure 17 which features Alita’s artificial birth. Both are “instruments of science” where their identity is just a “scientific experiment” (Kurtz, 2017, p.163).

*Figure 17.* Alita’s body being constructed by Ido in ABA.



Because of their hybrid nature, the protagonists struggle with their identity by either not remembering their past as seen in Alita’s case or suffering from their current identity as a manufactured sex cyborg as seen with Jane, or both as encountered in Major’s situation. Corporeal feminism is here an appropriate framework for understanding the contradictions that create the female identity as it questions the agency of their bodies (Balsamo, 1996). For example, Alita, Major, and Jane are man-made women that ultimately conform to their goals for them. This is consistent with the pattern of women’s bodies being sites of control where they have to conform to the legislative (male-dominated) system. (Coen-Sanchez et al., 2022). Alita’s identity exploration and agency depends on Ido. Ido refuses Alita’s choice to unite with her UDM body, only to enable her to embrace her new identity later. This narrative hints at the long legacy of denial of women’s bodily autonomy in relation to their reproductive rights. This legacy puts them in fragile positions, where for decades women have faced legal constraints in the U.S. relating the bodily freedom such as the overturn of Roe v. Wade by the U.S. Supreme Court (Coen-Sanchez et al., 2022). Like many women

who died giving birth or conducting illegal abortions as a consequence of legal decisions, Alita's body is shaded to pieces during her conflict with Grewishka because of Ido's refusal to unite her with a better body (Gozdecka, 2020).

Further, female protagonists are haunted by contradictions between their minds and manufactured bodies experiencing a split between "the I that sees and the I that is seen" (Cavallaro, 2000, p.114). For example, Alita's and Major's identity struggles are visualized through mirrors as shown in Figure 18 and Figure 19.

*Figure 18.* Alita looking into the mirror before her Motorball match in ABA.



*Figure 19.* Major looking into the mirror after she hallucinates in GITS.



These snapshots highlight an opposition where although the body they see is theirs, it also embodies "the controlling gaze of the system" that owns them, forcing them to question themselves for evidence of their ability or "failure to comply to the expected image" (Cavallaro, 2000, p.114). This metaphor is also shown when Jane literally splits her arm skin showing her desire to be liberated from this gaze, to be able to feel and to have the possibility to live and die as she mentions: "I'm the metal girl who wants to be real" (Z414). Although Jane still meets with her male clients, complying with her expected image, her mind seeks freedom, ultimately relating to the women's liberation movement where women seek to have

freedom over their lives (Fellner, 2017). This leads to a paradox where one is caught between contradictory desires and spaces of both oppression as well as “tactical and oppositional maneuvers” (Flanagan & Booth, 2002, p.32)

**Reversal of gender roles.** In this sense, female cyborgs are both a figure of oppression as well as a figure of emancipation, of both “the triumph of a male technological culture (the machine-woman as object)” (p.32) and the emergence of overturned subjectivities (Flanagan & Booth, 2002). Thus, in this section, I will justify this paradox through instances where women are agential and independent.

Despite the oppression faced, Jane, Alita, and Major show signs of independence and agency reflecting a postmodern “form of oppositional consciousness” (Wolmark, 1999, p.249). The independent trait is assigned as a masculine attribute as seen in Table 1 from England et al. (2011, p.558-560), which shows the overturned gender roles. Thus, Jane shows independence over her destiny when she tells David that Royale, her manager, is not her master, implying that she is her own person. Similarly, when Ido refuses to unite Alita with her UDM body, she asks “How is that your choice to make?” (ABA) pointing out that he should not have any saying in her bodily autonomy. Alita acts independently despite Ido’s efforts to restrict her. Although her motivation for these decisions is questionable, since she mostly does it for Hugo, there is no question about her ability to act independently. Similarly, Major is also portrayed as strong and independent, constantly going against her team’s orders right from the setup of Act 1 when she jumps to save her client.

Furthermore, characters do not always need saving from a man, they can protect themselves and others and reverse the damsel in distress trope. Alita does this multiple times by trying to save Hugo twice from death. She also challenges all her male enemies despite Hugo’s doubts and defeats them successfully without any man’s help:

Alita: I will take on anyone in this room.

Bounty hunter: This bitch broke my nose.

Alita: Yes, I did. (ABA)

Contrary to the hunters’ beliefs that Alita is a “little flea”, she exudes confidence and skills which surprise and offend every time her enemies. When it comes to Jane, although she is not represented as a powerful woman as Alita or Major are, the climax of Act 3 finds her reversing the damsel in distress trope and regaining her agency by killing her stalker. This

moment resolves her identity crisis where she is finally free as she emphasizes: “I'm alive. I'm alive! I'm alive!” (Z414).

Similarly, Major regains her agency by killing her creator, Cutter. The moment that reflects Major's liberation from Hanka Robotics is when Aramaki asks for her consent to kill Cutter giving her the opportunity to make an autonomous choice. After she resolves her conflicts she concludes: “We cling to memories as if they define us. But what we do defines us.” (GITS). From a gendered perspective, this can be an empowering statement where Major's past as an oppressed and controlled female cyborg does not define her future. It suggests that women can free themselves from their past subjugations through their actions.

#### ***4.1.2 Stereotypical representations of men***

**Gender roles.** This theme further explores the male behavior toward women focusing on male roles- protective figures and powerful leaders, on their emotional expressivity and on their toxic behavior. It will also dwell on the contradictory gender traits.

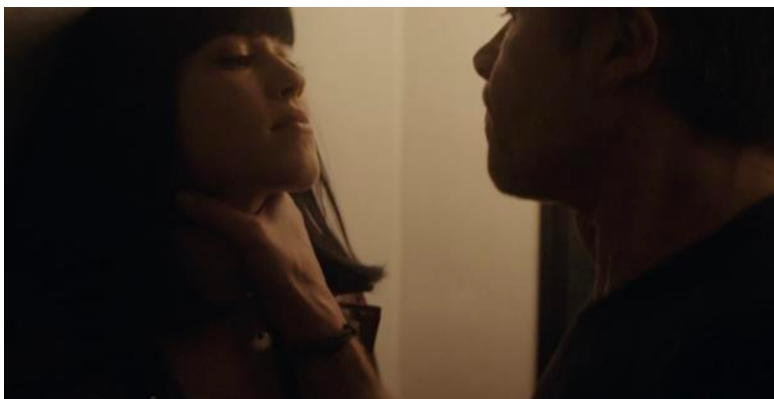
The man in these movies is a “White, able-bodied” male who signifies the “full and free social subject” (p.23) and whose representations dominate over other types of masculinities (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022). Thus, men are often portrayed in positions of control and strength through protecting women as described in the section related to the damsel in distress trope. Protecting a woman is a privilege as it exerts authority over deciding who needs and gets protection which validates a man's masculinity and constructs his identity (Banet-Weiser, 2018). For example, David's identity as a savior is portrayed as a natural built-in trait and life goal as outlined in his conversation with Jane where Jane asks: You protected me. Why?” Here, David replies that: “That is my dream, protecting, okay?” (Z414) highlighting his gender role as a savior and his own conception of women as vulnerable and helpless (Xu et al., 2019). Thus, the act itself of helping allows men to identify their invulnerability, independence and experience in comparison to women's fragility, powerlessness, and dependence. Similarly, Ido also takes an over-protective role in asserting his authority as a father figure. This is done both through his body language as well as verbally. To assert dominance, he grabs Alita's shoulder suggesting she is his responsibility as well as grabbing her aggressively by her hand after he finds her in the hunters' bar. Verbally, Ido holds Alita accountable if she doesn't come home before the curfew and threatens her that “you and I are going to have a little talk” (ABA) after he sees her in the hunters' bar.

Further, men are also represented as powerful leaders as seen through the CEO roles with Cutter in Hanka Robotics, Marlon in Veidt Corporation, and Nova in Zalem, respectively Vector in Iron City. This reinforces the gender inequalities where men are powerful, in control and commending roles, while women are domestic, submissive, or victims. (Becker, 1999; Ethas, 2022).

**Emotional expressivity.** When it comes to expressing their emotions, “men are men to the extent they are not women” (Becker, 1999, p.27). In contrast to female characters, men are associated with traits such as emotional stability (Araüna et al., 2018). When women express their emotions by crying, men are silent and avoid expressing their feelings. During the scene featuring Alita and her UDM body, Ido remains calm and rational while Alita has a breakdown (Figure 12). This outlines Alita’s immaturity and emotional impulsivity and Ido’s emotional maturity. Similarly, while Jane has an emotional crisis not knowing if she should kill Joseph, David remains strong and says detached: “You have a job to do, so do it” (Z414). In this sense, the male characters do not possess strong emotional traits, thus they follow the stereotype of men being emotionally detached.

Further, men have difficulty managing their feelings because of the pressures of stereotypical masculinity which is above emotions. Denying and repressing emotions creates tensions that are expressed through aggressive language and behavior (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022). For example, when Jane confronts David about his dead wife, his sadness and guilt are expressed through aggressive language and physical violence: “You need to get the fuck out.” He then pushes her to the wall as pictured in Figure 20. Similarly, because Tanji feels intimidated by Alita and betrayed by Hugo, he addresses her as a “freak girlfriend” or “bitch” (ABA).

*Figure 20.* David pushing Jane to the wall in Z414.





However, there are a few exceptional instances where men in ABA, Hugo, express their emotions but either in romantic contexts or life-and-death situations. Hugo expresses love by teaching Alita, showing her the city's customs, which seeks to reinforce the role of men as superior in experience (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Further, he is portrayed as emotionally hurt and has emphasized feelings but only when Zapan stabs him or when he dies. Yet, in these scenes Alita's emotional expressiveness still dominates as she is mourning him, screaming with tears in her eyes.

**Toxic Masculinity.** Overall, repressing emotions and managing them through aggressive behavior is a sign of toxic masculinity and hyper-masculinization (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022). This hyper-masculinization portrays men as arrogant, independent, overly confident and cold, having strong and sharp bodies and a rough facial expressions as seen in Figure 21 and Figure 22 portraying David and Batou's bodies (DeGraw, 2007). Men are often portrayed as assassins (Z414) with bodies that slice "armor like butter" (ABA) and "tactical eyes" (GITS).

*Figure 21.* David as a rough figure in Z414



*Figure 22.* Batou as a rough well-built man in GITS



Moreover, hyper-masculine identities are also created through oppressing women. Men instrumentalize women as a means to an end and dehumanize them (Romano, 2017). For instance, Cutter and Nova see Major and Alita as “weapons” (ABA) who have to be destroyed and terminated “on sight” as Cutter mentions (GIST). Thus, male power is reinforced through hurting women, where “powerful men are very attracted to those who suffer” (Z414). Kuze’s antagonist character is defined by killing a geisha and seeking to kill Dr. Ouelet, while Zapan and David try to validate their masculine authority when they are humiliated by female characters. Therefore, men engage in GBV toward women as a way to fix their disconnection with their feelings and self (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

**Reversal of gender roles.** Nevertheless, dominant narratives of over-protective, hyper-masculine, and aggressive men do not necessarily fit a unitary role. There are also representations that contest these rigid roles and provide a complex depiction of men on screen (Araüna et al., 2018; Fellner, 2017). Therefore, some male characters express traits of caring masculinities that embrace the relational and emotional qualities of care attributed usually to women (Araüna et al., 2018). For example, despite Batou’s hyper-masculine appearance, he is caring toward Major, being concerned about her mental and physical health by asking repeatedly: “Are you okay?” (GITS). In ABA, although Ido is authoritative in relation to Alita, his concern for her well-being is expressed through cooking for her and preparing her for the Motorball match. These instances portray Ido as the “new man” who emerged during the feminist movement in the 1970s, a man engaged in caring work, “particularly in relation to parenthood” (Araüna et al., 2018, p.86).

Further, ABA counters the trope of a damsel in distress by portraying Hugo as a dude-in-distress (Ethas, 2022). This term appeared in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and is a product of post-feminism which views gender roles as fluid (Ethas, 2022; Zaidi & Sahibzada, 2020). ABA reverses the stereotype of a protective man by constantly including Hugo in dangerous situations where Alita has to save him. Similarly, Kuze is also a dude-in-distress as Major seeks to protect and save him from his death in Act 3. Through the male characters’ portrayals as caring and vulnerable it is clear that masculinity is not homogeneous, but “the collective practices that construct masculinity are multiple, contradictory and change over time” (Araüna et al., 2018, p.85).

## 4.2 Across Ethnicity

### 4.2.1 *Narrow representation of ethnic characters*

This theme outlines the stereotypical representation of ethnic identities through three sub-themes. The first sub-theme relates to the invisibility of ethnic characters through instances where they are portrayed in silent, supportive roles. The second sub-theme looks into the portrayals of ethnic characters as commodities- exotic and decorative in relation to gender as well as vulnerable and expandable. Further, the third sub-theme explores the agency of ethnic characters by looking into racial hierarchies as reinforced through Cartesian dualisms.

**The invisibility of ethnic characters.** The absence of ethnic characters has been a signature trait of the sci-fi genre and when they are present, they are often marginalized and deemed irrelevant and invisible to the plot (Nama, 2008). For example, ABA prides itself on a multicultural and ethnically diverse city and movie with a Latina woman as a protagonist. Rosa Salazar puts the experiences of Latinx people at the front making woman of color more represented and visible on screen as Rosa mentions in an interview (Randall, 2019). However, the movie lacks when it comes to the representation of other ethnic characters such as Nurse Gerhard-Gerhard- a black woman, Tanji- a black man, and Koyomi- an Asian woman.

Nurse Gerhard-Gerhard, Tanji, and Koyomi have minimal speaking parts being supportive roles for the main characters- Ido, and respectively Hugo. Nurse Gerhad is portrayed as Ido's help and as a flat character with no conflicts of her own. She is portrayed as silent most of the time, standing still in the background, at a distance from Alita and Ido, having minimal body language as seen in Figure 23, and little or no dialogue parts.

*Figure 23.* Nurse Gerhad assisting Ido and Alita in ABA.



Tanji and Koyomi, are supportive characters to Hugo acting as his friends who only talk about Hugo's crush, Alita. Similar to Nurse Gerhad, they lack depth in their character. Although Tanji has a few screen appearances seen working with Hugo, he only appears as Hugo's aid. Similarly, ethnic identities lack complexity in GITS where Asian characters are either portrayed in domestic roles, or in servant exotic roles as I will detail below (Nishime, 2017).

#### 4.2.2 *The commodification of ethnic characters*

On this note, I will discuss the construction of ethnic characters as commodities: first as instruments of narrative exoticism, suffering from hyper-sexualization, and second as expendable characters. First, the narrative exoticism in these movies is rooted in the fascination with the racial Other through the hyper saturation of Asian iconography (Nishime, 2017). Similar to *Blade Runner's* (1983) techno-oriental aesthetics, the cityscapes of Z414 and GITS are abundant in kanji letters, noodle food stalls, holographic Asian women dressed in traditional attire, and busy streets with geishas as visualized in Figure 24 and Figure 25. Here, Asian cultural signs reprogram Asian identities as decorative (Nama, 2008).

*Figure 24.* Narrative exoticism & oriental aesthetics in GITS.



*Figure 25* Narrative exoticism & Oriental aesthetics in Z414.



Asian iconography often features women in servant and demure roles as seen above, where the importance of being Asian is reduced to an aesthetic choice (Thierbach-McLean, 2019).

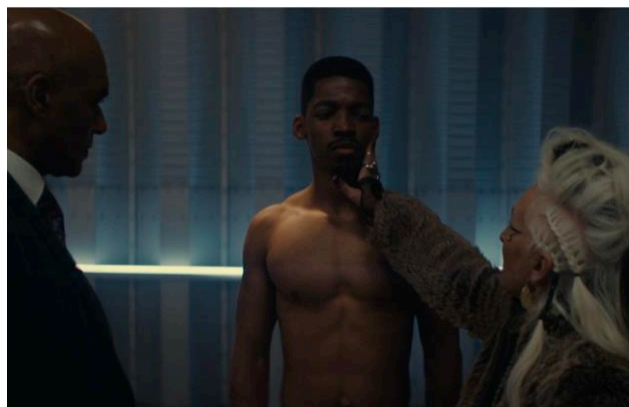
On this note, gender roles and sexism have a racial layer where the patriarchy reinforces racialized social hierarchies perpetuating double discriminations faced by women of color (Crenshaw, 1991; Joubin, 2022). Here, Asian women are represented as “post-modern items of furniture and décor” (Cavallaro, 2000, p.96). For example, in GITS the only Japanese actress with an active role in the plot, Rila Fukushima, was cast as a killer geisha cyborg who is also portrayed as an emotionless servant as depicted in Figure 26 with no individual identity.

*Figure 26. Geisha as an emotionless servant in GITS.*



In this sense, ethnic characters suffer from hyper-sexualization where in the GITS Yakuza Club, there are multiple Asian women stripping for men showing their body in a sexual manner. Further, male audiences within and outside the movie enjoy, absorb and normalize the subservient status not only of Asian women but also of Black characters as seen in Z414 picturing a Black man as a sex robot being sold, and placed in a dehumanizing role by being looked at as a product (Figure 29).

*Figure 27. A Black male robot being sold in Z414.*



These screen representations are harmful as they reinforce racial biases that fetishize ethnic characters' identities which is rooted in the practice of commodity fetishism, where “‘shopping’ as a spectacular event” (Lunning, 2018, p.3) oppresses racial identities to products of hyper-capitalism (Joubin, 2022).

Second, these movies place ethnic characters as vulnerable where their bodies are often disposed of and exploited. The geisha in GITS is killed by Major outlining the expendability of her body. ABA sets the tone by showing a Black woman about to get killed (Figure 9). Kinuba, an Asian character, is killed as well with his parts being stripped away and put for sale by Vector and Chiren who manage the Motorball championships. Tanji is also sacrificed for Hugo to live, being used as a plot device. Further, although Vector is a layered character who has inner conflicts and established relationships with Chiren and Hugo, his body is still controlled by Nova. Hence, Vector too is portrayed as exploitable as Alita highlights:

Vector: What do you want me to say? I will say anything.

Alita Not you. Him!

By demanding to talk to his master, Nova, Alita implies that Vector's significance is limited to being a servant, whereas Nova sees him as a commodity who was anyways “getting tiresome” as he points out (ABA). After Alita speaks to Nova, she kills Vector. Similarly, after Kuze aka Hideo, a Japanese activist, fails to connect with his new body, he is “dismembered” and “discarded” like garbage (GITS). Consequently, the brutal treatment of ethnic characters reveals that “racialized bodies are not only exploited but expendable” (p.157) as Kurtz (2017) puts it.

#### ***4.2.3 Cartesian dualism and racial discourses***

The fact that ethnic characters are so easily expendable questions their agency as free individuals. Primarily, their agency is constricted by a patriarchal institution that perpetuates racial hierarchies where a White male ruler rules on top of everyone and exists within everyone (Butler, 1980). Thus, racial discourses are reinforced through the presence of a Western Cartesian dualism enabled by the technological advancements of the movies' companies such as Hanka Robotics or Nova's technology which breach the privacy of ethnic characters allowing for whitewashing of their identities (Nama, 2008).

First, in GITS, Dr. Ouelet, a White woman, dives into Major's mind where she "can see everything," Major's thoughts, and her decisions. Thus, "privacy is just for humans" as Major suggests (GITS). Nevertheless, when ethnic characters are humans, they are still deprived of human rights. Nova's god-like abilities allow him to connect his mind to Vector's body enabling subtle racism forms where White characters infiltrate ethnic bodies without their consent (Murphy, 2012). The agency of ethnic characters is only performative. For instance, Dr. Ouelet never needed Major's approval to manipulate or delete her data as she suggests: "We never needed your consent" (GITS).

Second, technological advancements allow for racial subjectivities to be split constructing "race as technology" (p.157) as Coleman mentions in Kurtz (2017), further deepening the belief of superior and inferior races (Nama, 2008). Kurtz (2017) argues that "this racialization occurs through the ways in which certain bodies are genetically modified" (p.160). Here, Hideo and Motoko aka Major who were Japanese in their past life, were abducted by Cutter and transformed into Caucasian cyborgs. Although Scarlett Johansson who played Major argues Major is a race-less "identity-less" cyborg, these narratives still perpetuate issues of racial purity similar to the portrayals of Somni-451 in *Cloud Atlas* (2012). Here, ethnic characters such as Somni-451, Motoko, and Vector are mentally and physically destroyed to allow White people specifically Major and Nova in this case to exist (Nishime, 2017; Romano, 2017). Ultimately, the negotiation of Major, Kuze and Vector between "two different racial subjectivities" (p.370) of Asian/Black and White, marginalizes the oppressed race for the dominant race to thrive (Cadora, 1995).

## 4.3 Across Class

### 4.3.1 Class conflicts

The fourth theme first focuses on class segregation as revealed through urban planning of the city, then on the intersection between gender, race, and class. I've divided the theme into two sub-sections for a better flow.

**Spatial segregation.** In loose terms, class is defined as low class, middle class, and upper class. The upper-class in Marxist terms, controls the means of production such as capital which indicates a high socio-economic status (Tyson, 2006). These class divisions are reinforced through the “urban distribution of space” either vertically or horizontally (Byrne, 2003). Vertically, capitalists and the upper-class live above ground in luxurious apartments while the workers are below as exemplified in Figure 28 picturing the tube through which products from Iron City are transported in Zalem. The tube emphasizes the class divisions- the control of the upper-class on the means of production of Iron City and the limitations of the workers to ascend.

*Figure 28.* Iron City's and Zalem's spatial segregation in ABA



Horizontally, the class segregation is depicted through an enormous door that fragments the cyborg workers from the human elite world as seen in Z414 in Figure 29.

*Figure 29.* Zone 414 as a segregated city in Z414.





Further, class inequalities can also be expressed through visual representations in the workers' cities as seen in Section 4.2.2 which portrays gender and ethnic minorities as eye-pleasing (Nama, 2008). These visuals show the role of women and ethnic characters as products, where visual advertisements are a “medium for the transmission and dissemination of authority, and the means for the mediation of those subjects to that authority” (Mirzoeff, 2011, p.xv).

**Class, gender, and race segregation.** In these movies, corporations control the everyday life of their citizens (Nama, 2008). Thus, the upper class is ruled by White men- Nova, Marlon, and Cutter that control Iron City, Zone 414 and New Port City. Nova is described as a “master” (ABA) while Marlon describes himself as “the god of power” who created an Eden that sells “20 million pounds robots”(Z414) while Cutter controls “73% of the world” with his cyber technology (GITS). These depictions highlight the intersection of class with gender and ethnicity where the authority often belongs to White men who exercise their power to naturalize systems of oppression with the purpose of trapping their workers (Mirzoeff, 2011). For example, this is shown when Ido describes Iron City to Alita:

Everybody down here works for Zalem. Nobody from down here ever goes up. It's a rule that's never broken (ABA).

Ido outlines the rigid class segregation in Iron City and portrays this division as a normal state of things where the authority of Zalem remains unquestioned. Here, capitalists reinforce their authority by using their status as some kind of nobility to tap into the fantasy of their workers (Byrne, 2003). For example, in ABA, Nova, and Vector use Hugo's desire to be part of Zalem. Here, the citizens' aspiration toward Nova's utopian world decides Alita's narrative arc whose goals ultimately appropriate Hugo's desire to be part of the upper class.

Further, the capitalist society swallows and exploits the workers' energies and bodies for their own profit enabling a patriarchal system where gender and ethnic minorities are abused and exploited as highlighted in section 4.1.1 and 4.2.2\_(Byrne, 2003; Cavallaro, 2000). Thus, in these movies, cyborgs are commodified, being exploited by corporations such as Veidt or Hanka Robotics which have “little regard for their well-being” (Kurtz, 2017, p.166).

These cyborgs are treated as the property of corporations. In Z414 George doesn't view cyborgs as humans but only as products to be used and thrown if broken saying: “Oh,

don't worry. I wouldn't do anything too drastic. At least nothing the Veidt corporation couldn't repair" (Z414). Whereas Cutter sees Major as a "contract" saying "She is a weapon and the future of my company" (GITS). The narrative of female and ethnic characters being systemically "discarded like garbage" (GITS) represents the highest form of erasure of their agency (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022). This system of exploitation and dehumanization is related to how women's and racial minorities' identities were ignored for goals of capital and of achieving the extract surplus value during the rise of capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lavender, 2011; Xiaojiang, 2013). These narratives as Murphy (2000) puts it, tune to discourses of class struggles, neoliberalism and postmodernism where humans' purpose is to serve the demands of capitalism and once the demands change and their labor is no longer needed, their existence ceases as Nova emphasizes about Vector who was "getting tiresome anyways" and Cutter about Major: "She is no longer a viable asset.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Main Findings

In this thesis I sought to provide an answer to: How are gender and ethnicity co-constructed in U.S. Cyberpunk movies featuring female cyborgs released between 2017 and 2021? The TA method on the textual and visual data of three movies *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019) *Ghost in the Shell* (2017), and *Zone 414* (2021), helped me address the research question. Thus, I argue that the construction of gender and ethnicity in the movies aforementioned is facilitated by the maintenance of social hierarchies that question the agency of gender and ethnic minorities, while simultaneously creating non-linear narratives that foster contradictory identities.

This research outlined that “no matter how far in the future” (p.147) a world is presented, Cyberpunk U.S. cinema affirms dominant ideologies that circulate in our society and that assign oppositional dualisms on the female and racial body with the help of patriarchy and capitalism (Balsamo, 1996; J. Butler, 1988; Nama, 2008).

#### 5.1.1 Reinforcing stereotypes across gender and ethnicity

The gender and racial stereotypes presented in Chapter 2 were encountered in all three movies. Nevertheless, depictions of female characters were more stereotypical in *Zone 414* as I assumed previously in Chapter 3 section 3.3. The movies with female protagonists encountered more quality representations of female characters (*Alita*, *Major*), whereas *Zone 414* portrayed women mostly as victims of GBV, while lacking in representing ethnic characters. In all three movies, female and ethnic characters are portrayed in positions of vulnerability (Becker, 1999). Here, women’s perceived vulnerability is abundant in *Alita*’s, *Major*’s and *Jane*’s characters perpetuated by men doubting their actions and using patronizing sexist language that distorts their intellectual and physical abilities and capabilities to act independently. These patterns suggest that women are not equal in men’s eyes, and further naturalize misogynist behaviors where the masculinity of the male actor and spectator is created through the oppression of women (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Huot, 2013; Manzoor et al., 2016). The trapping of women in the movies’ patriarchal society is done through depictions of female characters as toys to be played with, whose passivity is expressed in instances where they’re reduced to domestic, sexual and victim roles (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022; Javed & Kumar Chattu, 2021). This is mostly encountered in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) and *Zone 414* (2021).

The invisibility, commodification and hyper-sexualization of women is interlinked with race where women of color are the first to be impacted on-screen (Butler, 1980). Thus, ethnic characters are marginalized, commodified and subjected to racial discourses (Cavallaro, 2000; Nama, 2008). Women of color specifically Asian women suffer from narrative exoticism where their bodies are hyper-capitalist decorations as seen in the advertisements portrayed in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) and *Zone 414* (2021) (Lunning, 2018; Mirzoeff, 2011). Here, women's validity is linked to their bodies where they are looked at and portrayed as sex objects (Mulvey, 1975). This is seen in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) with the close-ups of Major's naked body, in *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019) through Zapan's sexual interest in Alita, and in *Zone 414* (2021) where male clients have the possibility to buy female and ethnic robots for their own sexual pleasures. Ultimately, all movies reside within the capitalist and patriarchal system which displays gendered and racial hierarchies where the upper class is made up of male ruled corporations and cities- Veidt corporation, Hanka Robotics, city of Zalem. This system makes the agency of gender and racial minorities dependent on the ways male subjects treat and perceive them (Balsamo, 1996; Gilson, 2016).

When it comes to female cyborgs in the movies discussed, their minds and bodies are kickstarted by the men who view them as scientific experiments, weapons or sex toys whilst the protagonists struggle with the controlling gaze of the patriarchal system (Cavallaro, 2000). In hindsight, the exercise of the male authority over female cyborgs' bodies resonates with the oppressive history of women's bodily autonomy in relation to their reproductive rights (Coen-Sanchez et al., 2022). In both fictional and real accounts, controlling women's bodies tells much more about men, who define their power through oppressing women showing that even in futuristic scenarios, men hold onto their toxic masculinity as a way to cope with their lack of an independent self-identity (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

When it comes to ethnic characters, their erasure of agency is enabled by White rulers' ability to penetrate their bodies and minds and whitewash their racial subjectivities without their consent, which allows for the dominant race to thrive on the back of the oppressed one (Cadora, 1995; Nama, 2008). This dystopian technology only feeds into White peoples' fantasy of walking in the shoes of the racial Other. These practices move the racial Other to the margins either physically as seen through the segregated vertical architecture of Zalem and Iron City or figuratively through the penetration of their bodies and minds. Ethnic characters are thus alienated and placed in expandable positions where their identities are only relevant for the goal of capital accumulation (Lavender, 2011; Xiaojiang, 2013).

### 5.1.2 Challenging linear narratives

One surprising finding is the way the movies challenge fixed notions of gender. The identity of female characters creates a contradictory space where on one side these women are suppressed and on the other side they have the ability to birth spaces of oppositional independent actions. Alita, Jane and Major manage to achieve personal freedom and rights where their bodies and lives are not owned anymore by men, proving their abilities to liberate themselves from their past oppressions through their actions as highlighted by Major's ending statement. Their emancipation journey starts with the act of imagining escaping the constraints that came with their bodies and continues with rebelling against their perpetrators. This narrative resonates with the feminist movement in the 1960s when women showed that they can think and speak for themselves (Ethas, 2022). Similar to how the fight for female agency has been in the past 200 years, Alita's, Jane's and Major's journey to gain autonomy hasn't been linear, but an ongoing challenge (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

The findings do not show the same overturns of gender stereotypes in regard to men where portrayals of men usually promote a homogeneous masculinity that dominates over other representations. Nevertheless, *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019) and *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) introduce a few scenes that show men in caring or distressing roles which prove the complexity of masculinity, pluralizing its forms. Although there's still much work to be done, these movies manage to show how men can take up different identities mirroring the fluctuant changes in society toward expectations on their gender roles (Araña et al., 2018; Fellner, 2017).

Further, when it comes to challenging race, *Ghost in the Shell's* (2017) hints toward a speculative future where one's racial identity is not relevant anymore. Her final statement can be interpreted from a transracial perspective as well where one's actions not racial past identity matter. Indeed the Orientalist and racial discourses depicted in this movie have the potential to be exploited and "liberate race toward a greater expression of agency" (Nama, 2008, p.177). Nevertheless, the movie's attempt to subvert this narrative and deconstruct racial relations fails as it continuously reinforces stereotypical representations which is ultimately a missed opportunity to reimagine the world.

## 5.2 Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is the narrow data sample focused only on U.S. productions. Here, it would've been interesting to look into movies with different cultural

backgrounds and analyze the relational dynamics between culturally diverse productions. Regardless, analyzing U.S. productions is relevant because of their ability to infiltrate Western values and narratives globally in the mainstream consciousness (Edwards & Esposito, 2019).

Further, the lack of a detailed socio-cultural background containing media representation of the movies such as news articles, interviews with the movies' actors and producers or audience reviews has its own limitations. Due to time constraints, I lacked in detailing on the media representations and the content of the original productions as I initially planned which would have allow me to have a more dynamic discussion of findings. However, the findings in connection to the theories presented and a sensitizing socio-cultural and media background proved create an insightful analysis. Including a more thorough socio-cultural background and a comparation between the original productions of these movies and their remakes could be an interesting avenue for further research.

### **5.3 Socio-theoretical Implications and Future Research**

Through using a socio-constructivist feminist perspective and an intersectional approach, this research developed an insightful first step in understanding contemporary discourses around gender and ethnicity in the Cyberpunk genre. These approaches outlined the need for un-conventional ways of thinking when it comes to discussing movies. From a theoretical standpoint, employing critical approaches contributed to the development of posthuman epistemologies. It forwarded an understanding of the body as a vehicle for sexist, racist, elitist and Eurocentric frames, while questioning the dualism between life and technology and the implications of films' "artificing of the human" (Hermann, 2023, p.323). Further, this research brought awareness of the socio-cultural forces at play when it comes to reading gender and ethnicity and how the representation of these identities is so natural to our being that we can only notice them with conscious consideration, "a bit like eyelashes, they are too close to the eye to be seen" (Giomi & Magaraggia, 2022, p.30). Further research that would provide a progress in Cyberpunk academia, would focus on the generation of speculative futures in film productions. Here, it would be interesting to explore movies portraying racial futurisms such as Afro-futurism and Asian-futurism as well as feminist movies that provide a female fictional viewpoint of cyberculture. Both would allow for an alternative comprehension of our present cyberculture in contrast to the male vision of Cyberpunk productions. Further, an inclusion of movies from other cultural regions would

illuminate how various cultures perceive gender and ethnic stereotypes in relation to technological narratives.

From a social perspective, this research encourages film producers to make their work representative and inclusive for the gender and ethnic minorities they seek to portray and attract in the audience. For example, many young girls including girls of color are highly impacted by sci-fi representations of women and people of color where these characters have the potential to make them feel powerful, strong, confident and motivated to accomplish anything (WMC, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial for producers to avoid turning Cyborgs into stereotypical oppositions of human/machine, male/female, White/ Black. Adopting radical deconstructions of humans and cyborgs would reimagine gender and ethnicity and liberate those who are oppressed by these fixed notions.

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## Appendix A: Information about the Movies

	<b>Alita: Battle Angel (ABA)</b>	<b>Ghost in the Shell (GITS)</b>	<b>Zone 414 (Z414)</b>
<b>Release Date</b>	January 31, 2019	March 31, 2017	September 3, 2021
<b>Director</b>	Robert Rodriguez	Rupert Sanders	Andrew Baird
<b>Screenplay Writer(s)</b>	James Cameron Laeta Kalogridis	Jamie Moss William Wheeler Ehren Kruger	Bryan Edward Hill
<b>Studio</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox	Paramount Pictures	Highland Film Group
<b>Plot</b>	300 years after “The Fall,” Dr. Dyson Ido finds in the junkyard of the Iron City a female cyborg, reactivates her and calls her Alita. Alita is a teenage girl who struggles with remembering her past. She is a high-skilled fighter who has a love interest in Hugo. Throughout the plot, Alita goes through many challenges to find out who she is including fighting off her enemies. After her lover, Hugo, dies, she decides to become a Motorball champion to be able to enter Zalem and challenge its ruler – Nova.	The movie features a futuristic world where humans cybernetically improved. The cybernetics company Hanka Robotics integrates the brain of Mira Killan into an artificial “shell”, Major, who is placed by Hanka’s CEO, Cutter, in a counter-terrorist group- Section 9. After a year of doing missions, she questions her identity and goes on a journey to find her past, finding she was Motoko Kusanagi, a Japanese activist abducted by Cutter. Major hunts Kuze, a hacker, only to realize he was part of the same experiment. Major kills Cutter and continues her work as a free Section 9 member.	Zone 414 is a walled city with humanoid robots that provide companionship and sex to rich clients. When the creator of Zone 414 realizes that his daughter Melissa is missing in Zone 414, he hires David Carmichael, a detective, to bring her home. David goes in the city and meets Jane who is struggling with her identity as a synth and prostitute and has a stalker who tries to kill her. During she and David’s journey to find Melissa, Jane develops human emotions and ends up killing her stalker. David finds Melissa dead body and returns her to the Zone 414 creator, Marlon. Marlon promises David to release Jane from Zone 414 if he tells the investigators that Zone 414 is a safe city. Jane is released and walks away with David.

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Based on	The manga series Gunnm by Yukito Kishiro (1990-1995) focuses on the city of Scrapyrd where the cybermedic expert Daisuke Ido finds and revives a female cyborg who lost all her memories and uses her Panzer Kunst fighting skills to find her identity.	Ghost in the Shell franchise, specifically the 1995 movie directed by Mamoru Oshii which is set in 2029 Japan and follows Motoko, a cyborg agent. Motoko hunts a hacker- the Puppet Master- only to find out they knew each other.	-
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*Note:* This information was gathered from Wikipedia and IMDB.

## Appendix B: Overview of Main Characters for each Movie

Movie	Character	Bio	Traits
<b>Alita Battle Angel (ABA)</b>	Alita	Cyborg who tries to remember her past	Protagonist
	Dr. Dyson Ido	Doctor, bounty hunter who discovered Alita and brought her back	Dynamic character
	Chiren	Ex-wife of Ido, works for Vector	Dynamic character
	Vector	Controls Motorball championship, works for Nova	Dynamic character
	Hugo	Alita's love interest, works for Vector	Dynamic character
	Grewishka	Assassin cyborg, works for Vector	Flat character
	Zapan	Bounty hunter	Flat character
	Tanji	Hugo's best friend	Flat/supportive character
	Koyomi	Hugo's best friend who doesn't trust Alita.	Flat/supportive character
	Nurse Gerhard	Ido's assistant	Flat/supportive character
	Gringcutters	Motorball champion	Flat character
Nova	Ruler of Zalem	Round character	
<b>Ghost in the Shell (GITS)</b>	Major/ Motoko Kusanagi	Assassin cyborg who tries to remember her past	Protagonist
	Daisuke Aramaki	Chief of Section 9	Dynamic character
	Kuze/Hideo	Major's enemy and past friend	Dynamic character
	Batou	Major's friend, Section 9 member	Round character
	Dr.Ouelet	Major's doctor and creator	Static/supportive character
	Cutter	Major's creator, CEO of Hanka Robotics	Dynamic character

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	Dr.Dahlin	A cyborg doctor who helps Major	Flat character
	Hairi	Motoko's mother	Flat character
<b>Zone 414</b>	David Carmichael	Former detective and marine	Protagonist
	Marlon Veidt	CEO of the Veidt Corporation	Dynamic character
	Jane	Cyborg who is a sex worker	Protagonist
	Joseph Veidt	Marlon's brother, assistant head of Veidt Corporation	Static/supportive character
	Melissa	Marlon's daughter	Static character
	Royale	Cyborg dealers	Flat/ stock character
	George	Z414 citizen who likes to torture women	Flat/ stock character
	Jaden	Cyborg owned by George	Flat/ stock character

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## Appendix C: Overview of Timeframes, Scenes, Characters, Codes, Mise-en-Scene for each Movie

### Alita: Battle Angel (2019)

<b>ACT 1 SETUP</b>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	SS
0:01:22- 0:02:56	Ido discovers Alita's head in a scrape-yard in Iron City and proceeds to repair her with Nurse Gerhad.	Ido, Alita & Nurse Gerhad	- Manufactured Woman - disposable	Alita's destroyed body laying open on the operation table.	2
0:05:24- 0:07:48	While Ido and Nurse Gerhad repair one of their cyborg clients, Alita comes down the stairs and meets the people that brought her back. Ido checks on her for malfunctions and peels an orange for Alita when she says she's hungry. While he peels the orange, Alita asks if they know each other and if Ido knows <b>who she is</b> . <b>She cries when she realizes that she doesn't remember anything</b> , but Ido reassures her that she'll remember eventually.	Ido, Alita & Nurse Gerhad	• ethnic character as supporting & flat in relation to main characters • silent ethnic character • caring dad • Teaching Her • Woman Cries • identity struggle	COMPOSITION: Alita & Ido are placed on an equal footing in the image composition, both sitting at a table. Although Alita is in a stranger's house, Ido's body language and joyful and calm emotional expressiveness calm her and establish trust between the two and the beginning of their daughter-dad relationship. Nurse Gerhad in the background <b>standing still a bit distanced from them</b> . <b>Smiling, nodding, minimal body language, no dialogue</b> . <b>The Mise-en Scene reveals that Ido's teaching is purely a paternal instinct</b> .	1
0:08:17- 0:09:55	Ido shows Alita the Iron City. She then asks if he has a name for her, so Ido <b>calls her Alita</b> .	Ido, Alita & Nurse Gerhad	- silent ethnic character • Teaching Her • Manufactured Woman • Man making choices for woman • divisions between lower and upper class	Alita & Ido in Foreground, Nurse Gerhad in the background <b>standing still a bit distanced from them</b> . <b>Smiling, nodding, minimal body language, no dialogue</b> . <b>CITY= multicultural with various ethnicities and languages</b>	SS 2
0:09:55- 0:12:59	Ido leaves Alita alone. While she shares her food with a stray dog she sees a <b>wanted poster for a murderer that killed 6 human females</b> . Centurions, , robot police machines pass by Alita and her dog. <b>Hugo jumps to save Alita</b> . However, her dog is the Centurions way, so Alita runs back to save it. Later, Ido comes and pulls Alita away from Hugo mid conversation.	Alita, Hugo, Ido	• Victim • Damsel in Distress • Reversal of Damsel in Distress • Man being surprised by a woman's skills • male gaze • Protective Dad	• Murdered Woman poster SS 1 • Hugo runs to save Alita and later he gives her a helping hand although he acknowledges her fighting skills SS2 • Hugo touches Alita's hand amazed by her sophisticated body	SS 2
<b>ACT 1 SECOND THOUGHTS</b>					
00:12:59- 00:15:02	<u>At night, someone attacks a black woman from behind</u> . Later, <u>Alita wakes up and notices Ido coming home with blood on his arm</u> . In the morning, Ido's client <b>mentions that there's a guy who "carves girls up... and sells their body parts"</b> . Ido tells Alita to take care saying he doesn't want her out after dark.	Black Woman, Alita, Ido's patient, Ido	• ethnic bodies as disposable • Victim • Protective Dad	NIGHT: black woman screaming and being attacked at dark before he comes home	SS 1
00:17:21- 00:17:23	Chiren tries to convince Ido to help her make Motorball champions. He reveals her goal to get back to Zalem.	Chiren & Ido	Desire to Climb the Class Ladder		
0:18:06- 0:20:21	<b>Alita plays Motorball with Hugo and his friends. Hugo teaches her how to play while one of their friends call her "princess" when he knocks her down in the game. Yet, Alita steals the ball and scores the point proving the boys wrong. Tanji then feels humiliated by her.</b>	Alita, Hugo, Tanji	• Teaching Her • Belliteling of women • Reversal of Damsel in Distress • man feeling humiliated	Hugo supports Alita and teaches her how to play Motorball.	SS:1
0:21:04- 0:21:38	<u>Hugo gives Alita a ride back home in an attempt to bond with her. He teaches Alita about food and shows her around Iron City.</u>	Alita, Hugo	• Romantic Ride Sharing • Teaching Her+ male gaze • divisions between lower and upper class	SEXUAL- character body language: LOOKS UP AT HIM BEFORE SHE TAKES A BIG BITE, composition of the image high angel- HUGO's perspective	SS:1
0:22:49- 0:22:54	<u>Alita arrives home. Ido tells her she should've come home before dark and takes care of her by giving her food</u>	Alita, Ido	• Protective Dad • caring dad	Alita & Ido sitting at the table. Alita & Ido are placed on an equal footing in the image composition, both sitting at a table	SS:1
0:23:31- 0:25:10	The next day, <b>Hugo takes Alita to his secret spot</b> and gaze at Zalem. Similar to Chiren, his goal is to live in Zalem.	Alita, Hugo	• divisions between lower and upper class • Secret Spot ; Belliteling of women		SS 1 ZALEM

<u>ACT 1</u> <u>TURNING POINT</u>					
0:27:12-0:31:34	At night, Alita sees Ido going out. Believing that he is the women murderer she follows him. She sees Ido following a woman. When he takes out his weapon at her, Alita jumps to stop him. Yet, Ido notices it's a trap when they get cornered by Rom and Grewishka. During the fight, she gains a memory of herself during a battle where she's called "99". She then, beats Grewishka that promises she will pay later.	Alita, Ido, Nyssiana	• Independent Woman +Protective Woman • men underestimating women + women are weak • Victim • Belliteling of women + Sexist Language/ Remarks		
0:33:17-0:36:25	Alita questions Hugo about her identity and body. He reveals it was his daughter's body who was killed my one of his male clients.	Alita, Hugo	• Manufactured Woman + identity struggle • Victim • Revengeful Man		
0: 36:51-0:37:44	Vector's house: Vector orders Chiren to build Motorball champions for him. Grewishka comes in and begs Chiren for repair. Chiren refuses initially, but changes her mind when he says Alita did this. Nova then talks through Grewishka and orders Vector to kill Alita, then he takes contor of Vector and promises that he'll bring Chiren to Zalem if she pleases him.	Chiren, Vector, Grewishka, Nova	• Man Orders Woman + Naked woman • Belliteling of women • Powerful Boss + Desire to Climb the Class Ladder	NIGHT: Chiren lies in Vector's bed half naked with her legs crossed. She's portrayed as a sexual femme fatale although she takes orders from Vector.	ss: 1
0: 41:19-0:42:12	<b>Alita tries to convince Ido to become a hunter-warrior like him to gain her memories her past.</b> Ido refuses , so <b>she runs away and meets with Hugo.</b>	Alita & Ido, Alita & Hugo	• Victim • <u>Man making choices for woman + Protective Dad + Independent Woman</u> • Manufactured Woman + woman living after man's standards and rules	Grabs Alita's hand or shoulder tight to assert dominance either in front of Hugo as seen in Act 1 Setup or during arguments with Alita such as Scene 1 Turning point 0:41:56.	

<u>ACT 2</u>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	ss
0:43:24- 0:45:24	Hugo takes Alita to a Motorball Match where he teaches her about the game and shows her around. During the game, one of the players, Kinuba wins	Alita & Hugo, Vector & Chiren	Teaching Her		

	with his weapon Grindcutters which makes Chiren realize her and Vector could use that for their game.				
<b>B PLOT HUGO</b> <u>0:46:07-0:48:23</u>	Hugo leaves the match with Tanji. Later, Kinuba goes out with a group of 3 women who entertain him when two masked motorcyclists bring him down. Hugo and his team take off his Grindcutters at the order of Chiren and Vector. Vector congratulates Hugo and kills Kinuba.	Hugo and his Team, Kinuba, Vector	• Women as prostitutes/ sex objects • Powerful Boss • ethnic bodies as disposable	NIGHT: Kinuba is hold by 2 women, while he carries the third on his shoulders. They are laughing and their body language communicates that they are drunk and in a playful mood, while also suggesting Kinuba will take them home to engage in sexual activities.	2
0:49:58- 0:50:54	Hugo and his two friends Tanji and <b>Koyomi</b> take Alita to a sunken URM ship.	Alita, Hugo & Tanji & Koyomi	ethnic character as supporting & flat in relation to main characters	Tanji & Koyomi are in background suggesting they are supportive characters for the journey of Alita & Hugo	: 1
<b>OBSTACLE</b> <u>0:53:08-0:55:38</u>	Alita takes the URM body to Ido and asks him to replace her body with it, however he refuses. He doesn't want to unite her with her body because it is a URM Berserker weapon. After punching a table and tearing, she leaves and registers as Hunter warrior.	Alita, Ido	• <u>Man making choices for woman + Protective Dad</u> • RAGE WOMAN + Woman cries • Independent Woman	Alita smashes a table and tears while begging Ido to unite her with her original body. <b>Compared to Alita's emotional breakdown, Ido is rational and calm. This shows Alita's immaturity and emotional impulsivity and her role as a young teenager daughter and suggests Ido, the man who created her, knows what's best for her.</b>	2
<u>0:56:07- 0:56:29</u>	After registering, she goes to the hunter warrior bar but Hugo doubts her mentioning that it's only for bounty hunters.	Alita, Hugo, Dog	• men underestimating women • Independent Woman		
0:56:47- <u>1:03:15</u>	• Alita goes in the bar <b>and shows Zapan her bounty hunter badge, but he makes fun of her in front of the other male bounty hunters. He jokes that "cupcake here is a bounty hunter" and the men sitting laugh it off.</b> • Zapan suggests she will competing against them for kills while making sexual advances on Alita. Not swayed, Alita asks the hunter-warrior "Brothers" for help in defeating Grewishka but everyone laughs at her. • Zapan hits on Alita by suggesting he can train her if she has a drink with him. Hugo tries to save Alita from the situation but she puts him off implying that she got this. Alita then declines his offer. • He then threatens her but Alita roasts him in front of his team.	Alita & Hugo, Zapan, bounty hunters, Ido	• <u>Belliteling of women: Sexist Language/ Remarks; men underestimating women</u> • <u>Damsel in Distress</u> • <u>MALE GAZE: MAN MAKING SEXUAL ADVANCES + Unwanted Touch</u> ; • Belliteling of women; <u>man feeling humiliated by Alita, Sexist Language/ Remarks, men underestimating women,</u>	• SS:1 Hugo in background, watching over. Alita and Zapan foreground. . Zapan grabs Alita by her shoulder + gazes at her in a sexual way = <b>male gaze</b> . • Overall the visual representation of the bounty hunters seeks to belittle Alita and point out her lack of experience and physical strength. This portrayal is carried from a male gaze and ultimately reveals how the other characters see her • SS2: Hugo background positioned in the middle of	2

	Someone from the crowd further further hurts his ego by saying that <b>"He's scared of the pretty girl"</b> . <b>Zapan proceeds to hit Alita, but she smashes his head right away and puts a stop to it. Shortly after, she challenged the bountry hunters and if she beats them, they have to help her.</b> • Ido intervenes and stops the fight.		<i>Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive</i> • <b>Protective Dad+</b> Independent Woman	background positioned in the middle of the shot with Alita and Zapan between him. He wants to intervene but Alita raises her finger suggesting she got this and doesn't need his help.	
<b>MIDPOINT:</b> <b>1:03:28-</b> <b>1:10:44 FIGHT WITH GREWISHKA: RESILIENCE OF ALITA &amp; NEW BODY</b>	Midpoint is triggered when Grewishka enters the bar and seeks to kill Alita in the underworld. During their fight, : <b>Grewishka mentions that he was saved by the same person who shapes Alita's destiny: Nova.</b> When she tries to attack him, <b>Grewishka cuts Alita's body. Here, she has another memory where her instructor, Gelda, tells her that Nova is the enemy.</b> Back in the present, Alita uses her remaining arm to hit Grewishka however she's losing. When Grewishka attacks Alita, Ido and Hugo save her.	Alita & Grewishka, Ido, Hugo	• Powerful Boss • Belliteling of women + Sexist Language/ Remarks • Damsel in Distress		
<b>1:11:11- 1:13:33</b>	<b>Ido reunites Alita with the URM Berserker body, which changes to Alita's subconscious image of herself. (bigger breasts, slimmer, older body). This is the moment Alita accepts Ido as her dad.</b>	Alita & Ido, Nurse	• Naked woman + Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive • silent ethnic character • caring dad	• SS: 1 Shot focused on her upper and lower body (bigger breasts, slimmer) • SS:2 Shot going from her lower body showing her breasts to her head while Nurse says " Looks like she's a little older than you thought".	2
<b>B STORY ALITA &amp; HUGO KISS 1:13:59- 1:16:17</b>	Alita shows off her body's features to Hugo. The scene cuts quick to Hugo's friends commenting on them and comes back to Alita. <b>After she suggests she's more touch-sensitive, Hugo tells Alita to close her eyes and leans to kiss her.</b>	Alita & Hugo, Hugo's friends	• ethnic character as supporting & flat in relation to main characters • Kiss		
<b>B STORY VECTOR 1:16:47- 1:18:03</b>	• Nova takes control of Vector's body and orders Grewishka to kill Alita and bring him her heart. • After Nova leaves, Vector is left weak. While Chiren hands him a towel, <b>Vector makes his own plan and goes against Nova, as he hates that he can control his body whenever he pleases.</b> • Vector then invites Hugo for a drink to talk about Alita. Hugo assures that he's working hard to get Vector a million credits to send him to Zalem.	Vector, Grewishka, Chiren, Vector & Hugo	• Powerful Boss • ethnic characters as servants • Desire to Climb the Class Ladder	SS 1: Chiren hands napkins to vector	SS
<b>B STORY ALITA &amp; HUGO</b> She gives him her heart <b>1:13:59- 1:16:17</b>	<b>Alita visits Hugo. He confesses that Vector is helping him to go to Zalem but he's unsure now that he met her. Alita won't let Hugo abandon his dream,</b> so she suggests she would give anything she has to fulfill his dream including her URM heart. Hugo refuses but instead he suggests that she can join the Motorball championships. She then can <b>"become a big Motorball star, make a pile of money"</b> and they can go to Zalem together.	Alita & Hugo	• drops everything for a man + Vulnerable in relation to her love interest		
<b>RISING ACITON</b>	Soon, Ido and the Nurse help <b>Alita getting ready for the game.</b> Yet, Vector hired hunter-warriors to kill Alita while playing Motorball. Alita is asking Hugo of his location	Alita, Ido, Nurse	• caring dad • ethnic character as supporting & flat in relation to main characters • drops everything for a man + Vulnerable in relation to her love interest	SS:1 Nurse Gerhard in the background <b>standing still a bit distanced from them. Smiling, nodding, minimal body language, no dialogue.</b>	
<b>B STORY HUGO QUIT 1:25:35- 1:27:23</b>	Hugo tells Tanji, while he's taking parts from a cyborg that he wants to quit this business. <b>When Tanji realizez this is because of Alita,</b> Hugo slams him on the wall. Zapan arrives and mocks Hugo for his thieving work while mentioning that Alita might forgive him for this if he dies. Hugo says he can't be killed, so Zapan kills Tanji's cyborg and frames this on Hugo, thus making him a bounty target. When Tanji tries to save Hugo, Zapan kills him with his sword. Hugo then runs.	Hugo, Tanji, Zapan	• TANJI Belliteling of women + Sexist Language/ Remarks • man feeling humiliated by Alita • ethnic bodies as disposable		
<b>1:33:19-1:41:45</b>	<b>Hugo calls Alita for help against Zapan, so she leaves to save him.</b> The hunter-warriors continue to pursue her out of the arena but she manages to defeat them. When Zapan approaches Hugo, Alita kicks him off but Zapan stabs Hugo. After saving Hugo's body with the help of Chirne, Alita slices Zapan's face defeating him.	Alita, Hugo, Chiren	• Belliteling of women • Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive • drops everything for a man; Dude-in-distress/ Protective Woman • RAGE WOMAN		



<b>TURNING POINT 2</b> <u>1:42:32-1:43:25</u>	After Chiren attached Hugo's upper body to a cyborg, Alita finds out from Ido who her true enemy is. She is now motivated to kill her enemies and face Nova.	Alita, Ido	• Vulnerable • divisions between lower and upper class - caring dad		
<b>B PLOT CHIREN</b> <u>1:43:28- 1:44:27</u>	After lying to Vector and making the decision to side with Alita and repair Hugo, Chiren suggests she saved them because <b>she's a doctor and a mother</b> and thus quitting her partnership with him. Hearing this, Vector tries to manipulate her and tap into her desire to go to Zalem, but <b>Chiren realizes that what she wants isn't there . Vector is left helpless.</b>	Chiren, Vector			
<b>ACT 3</b>					
<b>TIMEFRAME</b>	<b>SCENE DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CHARACTERS</b>	<b>CODES</b>	<b>MISE-EN- SCENE</b>	<b>SS</b>
<b>CLIMAX</b> <u>1:45:30- 1:51:21</u> <b>BEATING GREWISHKA &amp; VECTOR, MEETING NOVA</b>	After defeating Grewishka and confronting Vector, Alita uses Vector to meet with Nova. Nova threatens her through Vector's body that he can kill Hugo and Ido. Pissed, she kills Vector. Nova's reaction is neutral towards Vector's death suggesting " <b>Well, that looks fatal. No matter. Vector was getting tiresome.</b> "	Alita, Vector, Nova	• ethnic bodies as disposable • Powerful Boss + ethnic bodies as disposable		1
<b>FALLING ACTION</b> <u>1:51:30- 1:53:48</u>	<u>Hugo is being hunted, so he's heading to Zalem to escape his death. Alita leaves Vector to save Hugo.</u> <b>Hugo suggests he'll die if he stays in Iron City</b> since there's a bounty on him. • <b>Hugo argues that they'll always run if Alita stays with him, but she says that at least they'll be together.</b> Just when Hugo goes decides to stay in Iron City, Nova deploys the barrier and cuts him	Alita, Hugo	• drops everything for a man + Vulnerable in relation to her love interest • Protective Woman + Dude-in-distress/ • Desire to Climb the Class Ladder	Hugo is everything for Alita.	1
<b>RESOLUTION</b> <u>1:53:38-1:56:29</u>	Months later, Alita competes in the Motorball Championship in an effort to reach Zalem and murder Nova. She mourns Hugo and sobs before the contest, but she immediately gathers herself and walks onto the arena. We can see Nova observing her as she approaches the arena.	Alita, Hugo	-Woman Cries ; identity struggle		1

# Ghost in the Shell (2017)

<b>ACT 1 SETUP</b>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	SS
0:02:26- 0:04:55	In the future, where the boundary between human and machine is disappearing and humans became enhanced with cybernetic parts, Hanka Robotics, a company funded by the government is working to create a new model of cyborg- a human brain into a fully synthetic body.		Manufactured Woman; Naked woman		2
0:04:55- 0:07:59	After an accident, Mira, a woman, is transported to Hanka. Her brain is implanted into a synthetic body that is more agile and strong. When the procedure is finished, her creator, Dr. Ouelet, informs her that her parents were killed in a cyberattack by terrorists and only her brain remained; the rest of her body was destroyed. Her mind and soul are still inside the synthetic shell that was created for her. Ouelet then speaks with Cutter, the CEO of Hanka. The anti-terrorism team Section 9 is where Cutter wants to place Mira, but Ouelet believes Mira isn't ready for that.	Major, Ouelet, Cutter	identity struggle; scared; Manufactured Woman; Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Powerful Male Boss		
0:08:02- 0:13:50	A full year has now passed. Mira is now referred to as The Major. She is watching a meeting between a Hanka representative, Dr. Osmond, and an African ambassador from a building's roof. The Major collaborates with Batou and takes orders from Section 9 Chief Daisuke Aramaki.	Major, Dr.Osmond, Batou, Aramaki			
TURNING POINT 0:13:50- 0:14:24	<b>During the meeting, a number of geisha-bots begin to attack the attendees, prompting The Major to act against Aramaki's orders and take action. She turns invisible and jumps off the roof, enters the room and starts shooting the geisha-bots. Yet, one of the geishas manage to hack into one of Hanka robotics representative's neck and kill him. Right before Major kills the geisha she says: "Commit to the will of Hanka and be destroyed."</b>	Major, Dr.Osmond, Guest Hanka, Aramaki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women as prostitutes/ sex objects; • Asian characters as killers; • Orientalisation of Asian culture/ characters; • Independent Woman; • Naked woman; • Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive; • ethnic character as servants; • ethnic bodies as disposable; • Victim; • Dehumanization of Ethnic Bodies</li> </ul>	SHOTS SHOWING ADS IN THE CITY— WOMEN AS SEX WORKERS; SHOT MAJOR UNDRRESSING, SHOT WITH ASIAN ASSASSINS/ VILLAINS; SHOT SHOWING THE GEISHA; SHOT WITH GEISHA BEING KILLED	5
<b>ACT 2</b>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	SS
0:14:50- 0:16:00	Later, Major has a hallucination of a cat. To resolve her glitch, she takes the medicine prescribed by Hanka.	Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identity struggle • male gaze • Naked woman • Orientalisation of Asian culture/ characters; ethnic character as servants</li> </ul>	SHOT MAJOR LAYING HALF NAKED IN BED; SHOT WITH ORIENTAL CITY PORTRAYING GEISHAS, SERVANT ASIAN WOMEN	2
0:16:00- 0:19:20	The Section 9 team then meets with Aramaki to talk about the attack. They discover that the geisha-bots were hacked from an unknown source. As the rest of the squad departs, Aramaki speaks with Major regarding her decision to go against his orders and jump into the room. She is informed by Aramaki that her "ghost" is still there inside of her "shell".	Major, Aramaki	class divisions; Powerful Male Boss; identity struggle; Manufactured Woman		
<b>MAJOR &amp; BATOU B PLOT</b> 0:19:25- 0:21:30	Major and Batou are cruising the city. She explains she has little memories of her past. One of them is that her family died on their way to the country. Major then has a hallucination of a burning hut.	Major, Batou	Sexist Language; Orientalisation of Asian culture/ characters; caring man	ORIENTALISED BACKDROP	1
<b>MAJOR &amp; OUELET B PLOT.</b> 0:21:40- 0:23:54	Major routinely sees Dr. Ouelet to get her body repaired after it has been damaged. The Major tells her she can't remember her past only recalling brief memories. Despite ignoring her hallucinations as glitches, Dr. Ouelet is seen to be concerned for her.	Major, Ouelet	identity struggle; Manufactured Woman; Dehumanization of Female Bodies;		
0:23:54- 0:28:03	After that, Major and Batou see Dr. Dahlin, who hold the geisha-bot body. Major "deep-dives" into the AI of the geisha-bot in an effort to uncover more information about the hacker. Major finds herself wandering through a club while experiencing distorted vision. The hack reaches out and grabs her. Dr. Dahlin tries to stop her, but Batou has to disconnect her since Major is being hacked. Major finds out the whereabouts of the hacker.	Major, Batou, Dr. Dahlin	Dehumanization of Ethnic Bodies; ethnic bodies as disposable; Independent Woman; woman is underestimated by man; Damsel in Distress	SHOT GEISHA BEING OPENED UP	1

0:28:03-0:33:19	Major and Batou <b>visit a Yakuza club.</b> Major enters a room with men to try to find information about the hacker and she forced to dance while shackled to a pole and shoked. She can't contact Batou since the signal is being blocked by the room. She starts a fight with them causing Batou to participate in a shootout. He and Major then run to find the hacker after killing the men.	Major, Batou,	Women as prostitutes/ sex objects; Ethnic characters as prostitutes; male gaze; MAN MAKING SEXUAL ADVANCES; Unwanted Touch; Sexist Language; Damsel in Distress; Man torturing women; Victim; Reversal of Damsel in Distress	SHOT ASIAN WOMEN STRIPPING IN CUBICLES, MAN TOUCHING MAJOR, SHOT WOMAN STRIPPING WHILE MEN WATCH , SHOT ASIAN WOMEN STIRPPING	3
0:33:19- 0:34:10	<b>Trying to get to the back room of the club, Major has a hallucination of the burning hut and sees the hacker. A bomb detonates out of sudden and she tries to protect Batou, absorbing most of the blast.</b>	Major, Batou,	identity struggle; scared; Protective Woman; Reversal of Damsel in Distress		
MAJOR & OUELET B PLOT 0:34:10-0:37:48	<b>Major wakes up in Dr.Ouelet's</b> The doctor informs her that the attack damaged her body tissues and Batou's eyes. She repairs both.	Major, Batou, Ouelet	Manufactured Woman; Naked woman; identity struggle; hyper-masculine ; caring man	SHOT MAJOR'S BODY OPEN	1
CUTER & ARAMAKI B	Cutter sees Aramaki and criticizes his decision to let her deep dive into the geisha, threatening him. Aramaki protects	Cutter, Aramaki	Powerful Male Boss; class divisions; Manufactured Woman		1
PLOT 0:38:25-0:39:25	himself and tells him that his responsibility is to the Prime Minister not the Hanka company				
0:39:36-0:41:23	Major further struggles with her humanity. She meets with a Black sex worker. While they're in bed, Major gazes at her eventually leaning to kiss her. in an attempt to discover how a human looks like, thus to discover herself.		identity struggle; Orientalisation of Asian culture/ characters; Women as prostitutes/ sex objects; Ethnic/ Asian women as prostitutes;	SHOT GEISHA/ PROSTITUTES; SHOT MAJOR AND SEX WORKER; LOOKING INTO THE MIRROR	3
0:41:28-0:42:15	<b>Dahlin observes geisha's body and looks into her file, Protect 2571. When she opens the drive, the hacker enters the room and threatens her. She takes out the drive but he takes her eyes out and kills her</b>	Dr. Dahlin, Kuze	Victim	SHOT DAHLIN GETS KILLED	1
0:42:17- 0:43:53	<b>The Section 9 crew finds Dr. Dahlin dead body. Major takes the drive from her hand, which</b> includes the names of Hanka collaborators that were killed by the hacker. Ouelet is also included in the file. They realize she will be the hacker's next victim.	Major, Dr. Dahlin			
0:43:58- 0:48:14	The focus of the scene changes to two sanitation workers eating their lunch. The hacker hacks into their bodies and makes their truck smash into Ouelet's car. Although she manages to survive, the men go outside and attempt to shoot her. Major and her team arrive and try to protect Ouelet. Major pursues one of the workers as he runs past a body of water. Major finds him and is about to kill him, before Batou stops her.	Major, Batou, Ouelet	Victim; RAGE WOMAN	SHOT MAJOR RAGES WHILE BATOU INTERVENES	1
0:48:18-0:51:46	After cutting off the hacker's connection, the worker is questioned by the team. He claims he was about to pick up his daughter. They discover that the hacker implanted false memories. The hacker aka Kuze, hacks into him and threatens the team. Togusa manages to trace his signal to a site. Kuze then kills the worker.	Major, Batou, Kuze	Independent Woman; man as victim; woman is underestimated by man; Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive		
0:52:02-0:55:21	Section 9 crew arrives at the site and start shooting everyone. <b>Major finds a hidden room where she sees Kuze as he's plugged into a web of human cyborgs.</b> Major hallucinates again. She is then knocked out and trapped in a room by Kuze's team	Major, Kuze	ethnic bodies as disposable; Orientalisation of Asian culture/ characters	SHOT WITH MONKS,	1

MIDPOINT 0:55:21- 1:01:03	MAJOR & KUZE B PLOT Kuze meets with Major and confesses that Hanka used him as a test subject but they left him to die because it was a failure project. Major then sees a tattoo on this chest of the burning cottage she hallucinates. Kuze says that Hanka stole their lives, not saved them and mentions that the drug they give to Major is meant to block her memories. When Section 9 arrives, Kuze escapes and Major starts searching for the truth.	Major, Kuze	Damsel in Distress; Victim; scared; identity struggle; Manufactured Woman; Dehumanization of Ethnic Bodies; ethnic bodies as disposable; male gaze; Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive; Unwanted Touch; RAGE WOMAN	SHOT KUZE TAKES OFF MAJOR'S FACE	1
MAJOR & OUELET B PLOT 1:01:13-1:04:24	Major meets Ouelet and confronts her. Before Major became the first successful project, according to Ouelet, 98 other tests had to fail. Kuze was the subject of those failed tests. Ouelet confesses they had to implant fake memories and tries to explain herself, yet Major is upset.	Major, Ouelet	ethnic bodies as disposable; Manufactured Woman; Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive		
1:04:49- 1:08:30	After meeting with Batou, Major decides to embark on her identity discovery journey.	Major, Batou	hyper-masculine ; caring man		
TURNIG POINT 2 1:08:30-1:14:34	Hanka's security arrests Major as she enters the city and take her to the lab. Cutter orders Ouelet to poison Major in order to get rid of her because she knows too much. Instead of killing Major, Ouelet gives her an address that can help her find about her past. Ouelet helps Major to escape but in revenge, Cutter shoots her and pins it on Major ordering Aramaki to kill her.	Major, Cutter, Ouelet, Aramaki	Powerful Male Boss; Manufactured Woman; Independent Woman; Protective Woman; Victim;		
B PLOT MAJOR & MOTHER 1:14:39-1:19:10	<b>Major goes to that address which is a block of apartments and meets her previous home and mother.</b> Her mother thinks that her daughter Motoko was killed. Although not recognizing her at the beginning, the mother feels that she knows Major from somewhere.	Major, Mother	Woman cries		
1:19:19- 1:25:41	Major contacts Aramaki, who tells her that Ouelet is dead and that Cutter pinned it on her although he doesn't believe him. They trick Cutter into overhearing their chat while they discussed their next plan. Cutter sends his team to kill Section 9 members; however, Batou, Togusa, and Aramaki escape. To find Kuze, Major makes her radar visible. She finds a hiding place with the help of her memories	Major, Aramaki	class divisions; ethnic bodies as disposable; domestic woman; ethnic character as servants	SHOT ASIAN WOMEN HELPING ARAMAKI	1

<b>ACT 3 SETUP</b>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	SS
<b>CLIMAX</b> 1:25:41-1:30:26	Major meets Kuze in the burning hut. She discovers that Kuze's name was Hideo, and that their group of activists was opposing human and cyborg augmentations. Kuze attempts to persuade her to join his cause. The hut is blasted by Cutter. Kuze is hurt. Cutter tries to kill them with a spider tank.	Major, Kuze	class divisions; ethnic bodies as disposable; Manufactured Woman		
<b>FALLING ACTION</b> 1:30:26-1:33:39	27. Cutter approaches Kuze with the tank as he is about to die, however Major opens up the tank and destroys it along with her body. As Major lays down Kuze moves toward her. 28. Kuze asks Major to join him,	Major, Kuze, Cutter, Aramaki, Batou	Protective Woman; Dude-in-distress/ Manufactured Woman; Naked woman; Female Robots/ Women as disposable bodies; identity struggle	SHOT MAJOR'S BODY TORN APART	1
	but she denies once again. One of the snipers shoots him in the head and he dies. 29. Major is saved by Aramaki, Saito and Batou.				
<b>RESOLUTION</b> 1:33:44-1:35:07	<b>Aramaki kills Cutter after Major's consent and the Prime Minister's approval.</b>	Major, Aramaki, Cutter	Powerful Male Boss; Independent Woman		
1:35:27-1:36:22	<b>Major goes to her grave with her mother who finds out she is her daughter.</b>	Major, Mother			
1:36:22-1:38:00	As she sits on top of a building looking down, Major says " We cling to memories as they define us, but what we do define us". She then suggests humanity is one's virtue and that she finally knows who she is. She then jumps off the building and starts a new mission.	Major	Independent Woman; Manufactured Woman		

## Zone 414 (2021)

<b>ACT 1 SETUP</b>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	SS
0:02:42- 0:04:55	The narrative opens in a grimy, prison-like setting. To enter the prison cell, a man approaches the bars and dials a code. The man prepares a gun with a silencer for use while a girl is inside the room. The girl tells her executioner that she can see into the future and that everyone who aids them will perish. After brutally shooting her in the head, the attacker slashes off her scalp with a knife. He takes out some sort of sensor with a flashing light from her skull's core. The speaker announces that David Carmichael is free to leave after the test is over. The woman is then taken away	David, Robot Girl 1	Men are top of the food chain; Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Female Robots/ Women as disposable bodies; Victim; Man kills woman	A Man who appears as arrogant, overly confident, and cold- showing no emotions. Shows little emotional expressiveness. His figure is strong and his clothes suggest a rough aggressive and independent character DAVID- unshaved beard, leather jacket	2
0:04:55- 0:07:59	When David exists the cell he is faced by Joseph Veidt, who selects the candidates for missions. During the interview, Joseph asks David personal questions to see if he is a fit candidate	David, Joseph	Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Manufactured Woman		
<b>SECOND THOUGHTS</b> 0:08:02- 0:13:50	David is then brought to Marlon Veidt's castle, where he is invited into the dining room and given information about his daughter Melissa, who vanished three weeks ago. Marlon claims to know exactly where she is, but finding her will require a tactful strategy. Marlon admits to be the masterful creator of Zone 414 where androids and people can interact. Marlon hires David because he doesn't want the police to bother the peace in the city.	David, Marlon	hyper-masculine; divisions between lower and upper class; Powerful Male Boss		
<b>TURNING POINT</b> 0:13:50- 0:14:24	While he is assisted by his maid and dines, Marlon offers David a pass to the city and suggests he contacts Jane, his favorite android.	David, Marlon	domestic woman;		

<b>ACT 2</b>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	SS
0:14:44- 0:15:30	Area 414 becomes the current scene. Jane enters an underpass while she listens to a male voice that threatens to kill her. The scene shows an ad with her.	Jane, Man on Phone 1	Scared; Victim	an ad for Androids with a picture of her	1
0:15:50- 0:18:36	A wealthy male customer wants to buy an Android and looks at the female models. He chooses an Android black man. He thinks the female androids are good, but he is not content with their genuineness in professing their love for him.	Client 1, Royale, Slave Robots	Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Men are top of the food chain; male gaze; Naked woman; Man Orders Woman; Unwanted Touch; Women as prostitutes/ sex objects; Dehumanization of Ethnic Bodies; ethnic character as servants; silent ethnic character;		2
0:19:48- 0:24:24	Jane meets a male client. She gets close to him and briefly takes on the role of the girlfriend he once had. She then asks Alpha, her AI assistant if she has further appointments.	Jane, Client 2	Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive; male gaze;	SS 1 Jane smoking a cigarette, being confident, dominant and sensual. SS 2: wearing an opened silk robe that shows her crossed legs while smoking a cigarette and sitting on the bed. MALE GAZE	2
0:24:26- 0:27:46	David arrives in Zone 414. He goes to a hotel room, where he is welcomed by a female AI assistant and asked if he needs anything.	David	Orientalisation of Asian culture/ characters; domestic woman; Naked woman; Women as prostitutes/ sex objects	24:24 Asian Backdrop of an Asian woman making wok 25:07-25:35 SHOT WOMAN SWALLOWING A PILL. SHOT WOMAN UNDESSING, STRIPPING SEDUCTIVLY	2
<b>B STORY JANE</b> 0:28:19- 0:30:38	Jane tells her counselor about her encounter with the male client, while exuding warmth for him. She shows the voice messages of the man who wants to kill her. No one in the zone is permitted to do that, her counselor asserts.	Jane, Counselor	Women as prostitutes/ sex objects; Woman cries; identity struggle; divisions between lower and upper class; Men are top of the food chain; submissive;		
0:30:40- 0:34:53	Jane arrives home and tries to kill herself but she can't because she is a robot.		identity struggle		
0:35:00- 0:36:57	<b>David comes to Jane's place.</b> They talk about Melissa. David finds out <b>Melissa was pretending to be an android, because she wanted to get away from her father.</b>	David, Jane	Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive; Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Manufactured Woman	Jane leans on the window, half naked with a top and tight shorts and a drink in her hand	1

0:36:57- 0:39:51	David asks Jane to take him to Royale but Jane accepts only if he helps her with her staker. She shows him the voice messages when David sees a man at her window. He tells her not to open the door to anyone and leaves to catch the stalker.	David, Jane	hyper-masculine; Protective Man; Scared; Damsel in Distress; Manufactured Woman		1
0:40:01- 0:44:45	David doesn't catch the staker. He finds a camera with pictures of Jane. Jane realizes she is being watched and is scared. Because of that, David stays over.	David, Stalker, Jane	Scared; Damsel in Distress		
44:39	SHOT WITH WOMAN BEING SUFFOCATED BY MAN. SCREAMING.		Female Robots/ Women as disposable bodies; Victim		1
<b>B STORY ROYALE</b> 0:45:20-0:50:20	Next day Jane and David see Royale but she doesn't want to talk next to Jane because she is the help. Royale warns David about Jane saying that she should be reprogrammed, but Marlon is against that since she is his unique creation. Royale reveals herself as part of the upper class where she works	David, Jane, Royale	Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Manufactured Woman; Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive;		
	with rich people. She doesn't know who follows Jane and advices David to find Melissa and leave the city. Royale gives David a contact.		Men are top of the food chain		
50:27 45	50:27 SHOT WITH WOMAN HELD HOSTAGE WITH HER MOUTH TAPED, CRYING.		Victim		1
<b>MIDPOINT</b> 0:51:36-0:52:28	<b>David and Jane arrive at the address, George's place. They meet George that presents his servants Hamilton and Jaden- a female robot who has a bruised and cut face.Jaden sits silently on her knees at George's feet.</b>	David, Jane, George, Jade, Hamilton	submissive; Powerful Male Boss; Women as prostitutes/ sex objects; Victim; Man torturing women; hyper-masculine		1
0:52:28-0:55:20	David finds out that Melissa was at George's place but only for 24 hours. George suggests he can give more information if he can use Jane for 2 hours. He thinks that she is a unique beautiful model but he doesn't want sex, he likes more subtle things.	David, Jane, George, Slave Robots	Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Woman portrayed/described as physically attractive; Women as prostitutes/ sex objects; Belliteling of women	George's looks and facial expression suggests that he likes to torture his robots .	
0:55:20-0:56:20	In horror, Jane grabs the glass next to her, breaks it and puts its broken edges on George's throat. She threatens to kill him if he doesn't her the whole truth about Melissa. George tells them where Melissa is and Jane and David leave the room.	David, Jane, George, Slave Robots	RAGE WOMAN; Independent Woman		
0:56:30-0:59:32	David and Jane arrive at a junkyard Before entering one of the hangars, David tells Jane to wait for him outside. He sees a woman's feet hanging. Jane follows David and looks terified. The shot moves to Melissa's body hanging. Mellisa is dead. Jane runs away scared.	David, Jane, Melissa	hyper-masculine; Protective Man; Damsel in Distress; Victim; Scared	SHOT WITH DAVID FINDING MELISSA HANGED. SHOT WITH JANE RUNNING AWAY.	2
END MID.		David, Interogator			
0:59:52-1:04:25	David returns to Marlon's castle. They talk while Melissa's body lays on a table. David suggests this wasn't a suicide. Marlon, who considers himself the God of Zone 414 doesn't want to research further because he doesn't want to break the city's peace. He then threatens David that he will destroy him if he tries to ruin his kingdom. David reminds Marlon of his payment.	David, Marlon	Powerful Male Boss; divisions between lower and upper class; hyper-masculine		
1:04:49-1:05:39	<b>Jane asks Royale to make her stop suffering after Melissa. Royale suggests she should just stop thinking.</b>	Jane, Royale	Woman cries		1
<b>B STORY JANE &amp; DAVID</b> 1:05:48-1:13:37	<b>Jane visits David. They get into a conflict with Jane trying to hurt David by talking about his wife's death. Feeling guilty, David tells her to leave his room but she continues to humiliate him, He then smashes her against the wall and grabs her by the throat. Jane reminds David to find who wants to kill her. David suggests that Jane's wish is to die because she doesn't want to feel like a prisoner anymore.</b>	Jane, David	Independent Woman; hyper-masculine; aggressive behaviour; man feeling humiliated ; man feeling hurt; Protective Man; identity struggle; Manufactured Woman	1:11:30 SS1 David grabs Jane by the throat appearing clearly bothered by Jane bringing up his wife he feels guilty about. Because he feels humiliated and hurt, he reacts aggressively toward her.	1

TURNING POINT 2 1:13:54-1:13:37	29. David meets with Joseph Veidt to receive the payment. David intimidates Joseph who reveals that he killed Melissa. Joseph is confident David can't do anything. He suggests Royale will be blamed for Melissa's death. Joseph then shows him a bloody disfigured mannequin, breathing in pain and contemplated on how to kill Jane.	David, Joseph	Female Robots/ Women as disposable bodies; aggressive behaviour; Dehumanization of Female Bodies; Female Robots/ Women as disposable bodies; Victim; Naked woman; Man kills woman; Man torturing women; Dehumanization of Female Bodies; victim	1:18:55 SS 1 A disfigured and dismembered female robot with blood on her upper body, no legs and a cut arm appearing as screaming and being alive.	1
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<b>ACT 3</b>					
TIMEFRAME	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	CODES	MISE-EN- SCENE	SS
<b>CLIMAX</b> 1:23:47- 1:26:46	1. When Jane comes home Joseph mobilises her with a remote and opens his surgery tools while she cries.	Jane, Joseph	Woman cries; submissive;Victim; Man torturing women; Damsel in Distress;		
1:26:46- 1:28:36	David runs to save Jane. Jane manages to push Joseph away and starts beating him, screaming that she can feel.	Jane, Joseph, David	Reversal of Damsel in Distress;	1:27:44 SS1: JANE CRYING SS 2: SHOT WOMAN APPEARING TO BE RAPED / FORCED INTO unconsensual SEXUAL ACTIVITY. CRYING HALF NAKED ON A BED, HANDS IN FRONT OF HER TRYING TO PROTECT HERSELF. MAN LAUGHING	
<b>FALLING ACTION</b> 1:28:36- 1:30:46	David comes. Jane asks David to kill her, however David gives the gun to Jane who kills Joseph.	Jane, Joseph, David	Woman cries		
<b>RESOLUTION</b> 1:30:49-1:30:52	David is interrogated. He confesses he didn't find Melissa and that she is already back with her dad and uncle.	David, Interrogator			
1:30:53-1:32:06	The scene changed to Marlon's castle. Marlon just created his new daughter Melissa.	David, Marlon	Manufactured Woman		
1:32:43-1:33:13	The gates of the city open. Jane leaves Zone 414 where David awaits for her.	Jane, David			

## Appendix D: Overview of Themes, Sub-themes, Codes and Sub-code

Theme	Sub-Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
<b>Stereotypical representation of women</b>	<i>Gender roles</i>	Damsel in distress	
		Weak	Underestimated
			Sexist remarks
		Domestic	
		Submissive	
	<i>Emotional expressiveness</i>	Victim	
		Rage	
		Scared	
		Woman cries	
		Vulnerable toward their love interest	drops everything for a man
	<i>Sexualization of female characters</i>	Woman described as physically attractive	
		Male gaze	
		Women as prostitutes/ sex objects	Unwanted touch
	<i>Female cyborgs as manufactured women with damaged independence</i>	Dehumanization of Female Bodies	
		Women as disposable bodies	
Identity struggle			
Manufactured woman			
<i>Reversal of gender roles</i>	Independent woman		
	Reversal of damsel in distress	Protective woman	
<b>Stereotypical representation of men</b>	<i>Gender roles</i>	Protective Man	Over-protective father
		Powerful Male Boss	
	<i>Emotional Expressiveness</i>	Hyper-masculine	
		Aggressive	
		Teaching her	
		Man feeling hurt	



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	<i>Toxic masculinity</i>	Hyper-masculine Man seeks to/ kills woman Man torturing women
	<i>Reversal of gender roles</i>	Caring man Dude in distress
<b>Narrow representation of ethnic characters</b>	<i>The invisibility of ethnic characters</i>	Silent ethnic character Ethnic character as supporting & flat Ethnic character as servant
	<i>The commodification of ethnic characters</i>	Orientalisation of Asian culture/ characters Ethnic character as servant Ethnic characters as prostitutes
	<i>Cartesian dualism and racial discourses</i>	Ethnic bodies as disposable Dehumanization of ethnic bodies Manufactured woman
<b>Class conflicts</b>		Divisions between lower and upper class Desire to climb the class ladder

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