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Joseph Campbell's Oriental mythology in *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and Occidental mythology in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017)

Qiao Li [1], Edwin L. Phil Tan [2✉] & Jianhua Yang[3]

Adaptation studies in media have been carried out for decades since the 1950s. When media is adapted between different forms, the narrative inherently changes; even more so when they cross a cultural divide between Japan and the United States. That is precisely the topic of discussion between the anime *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and its live action film adaptation *Ghost in the Shell* (2017). With narrative being a key focus for comparison in this article, Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey is applied. Taken from his seminal work *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the theory of the Hero's Journey has been the go-to reference for monomyth studies for decades which identifies the parallelism and common themes in diverse stories, from classic myths embedded in ancient cultures to film and other contemporary media based on popular culture. Yet, most studies stop there, and do not consider bringing in Campbell's other works—namely his follow-up collection of books *The Masks of God* which delves deeper into the mythologies of various regions. His books, *Oriental Mythology* and *Occidental Mythology*, zeroes in on the myths in the East and West, which would aid in conducting comparisons between materials originating from the two opposite regions, further supplementing its usefulness in adaptation studies concerning Japanese anime and their corresponding Hollywood adaptations. This article covers the changes in narrative themes corresponding to Campbell's Oriental and Occidental mythology between the anime *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and its live action film adaptation *Ghost in the Shell* (2017).

[1] School of Arts & Creative Industries, Edinburgh Napier University Merchiston Campus, 10 Colinton Road, Edinburgh EH10 5DT, UK. [2] School of Media & Communication, Taylor's University, 1, Jalan Taylors, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. [3] School of Communication, Qingdao University of Science and Technology Laoshan Campus, No.99 Songling Road, Qingdao, Shandong 260061, China. ✉email: edwintan1992@gmail.com

Introduction

Adaptations have been on the rise in Hollywood during the last decade. The box office numbers reported in news outlets during the 2010s give clear indications that building on preexisting creative materials due to their existing brand potential would effectively boost ticket sales, making adaptation practice a significant part of modern Hollywood (Si, 2018; Berkowitz, 2019). In 2014, no original material made it onto that year's top ten list of highest grossing films (Andersson, 2016). In 2015, the top ten highest grossing films of the year were derived from existing intellectual properties with the only exception being Disney/Pixar's *Inside Out* (Docter, 2015). 2019 especially was a big year for adaptations mainly from Disney dominating the box office due to their sheer number of remakes based on their own intellectual property (Alexander, 2019) (Alexander, 2019). That same year also saw the release of *Avengers: Endgame* (Russo & Russo, 2019) (Russo & Russo, 2019), which at the time was classified as the highest grossing movie of all time, reinforcing the monetary gains that adaptations have over original titles (Berkowitz, 2019) (Berkowitz, 2019).

Anime is also another media product that has been adapted in Hollywood, although anime adaptations are not as prominent as the other forms of adaptations circulating in the industry. The adapting of anime and manga especially in the West can be traced back to the 1940s. While the United States film industry had already been adapting works up to that point in time, they further expanded their coverage of other media to gain a better understanding of audience behavior and which products appealed to them (Freeman, 2015; Jin, 2019). The initial form of adaptation practice concerning anime was during the 1960s when Japan had preliminarily begun their penetration into the American markets. During the export process from Japan to the United States, anime went through an adaptation process known as dubbing, which involved replacing the original Japanese dialogue with translated dialogue to appeal to an English-speaking audience. In an effort to "Americanise" the anime to make them more "palatable" to American audiences, they took the dubbing process a step further by reediting each episode with new animation and overlaying an entirely new music score (Ruh, 2012).

The Americanising of live action anime adaptations could be seen in the 1990s with titles like *Guyver* (Wang, 1991) and *Fist of the North Star* (Randel (1996)) containing plots that strayed from the original anime. The low budget provided further diminished the filmmakers' efforts in fleshing out most of the stylistic elements present in the original (Rivera, 2014; Foster, 2019). Subsequent anime adaptation releases in the 2000s like *Speed Racer* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 2008) and *Dragonball Evolution* (Wong, 2009) have also suffered from a lackluster narrative that do not do the original anime justice (Honeycutt, 2008; Elvy, 2020).

Despite the advancements made in digital filmmaking to provide more photorealistic fictional worlds, modern anime adaptations continue to garner criticism for their inability to stay faithful to their source material. The live action film adaptation for *Ghost in the Shell* (Sanders, 2017) is one of the more recent films to receive negative reviews from critics and scholars. Angelica J. Bastien (2017) notes the lack of the 1995 anime film's "complex preoccupations" in the 2017 adaptation, with the latter exhibiting an individualistic tale of heroism typically found in American stories. Sara Haden (2020) calls 2017's *Ghost in the Shell* an act of cultural imperialism as it subverts the source material's optimistic outlook on technology and human identity in favor of a cautionary tale filled with American ideologies and places the protagonist in isolation. Michal Daliot-Bul (2019) refers to these changes made as Hollywood's preference, or reliance on, the Robocop formula. One article written by Chris Edwards (2021) attempts to place some worth in the *Ghost in the Shell* adaptation, like fleshing out some of the supporting characters and keeping the protagonist's past engaging.

This article will conduct a non-biased study investigating the differences between the 1995 anime film and the 2017 live action film. Due to the presence of technology, and attitudes towards technology, previous studies of the original *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii, 1995) have connected the anime to transhumanism (Komel, 2016; McLernon, 2019; Tong, 2019). This article takes a different philosophical direction in giving both iterations their artistic merit, as stipulated in Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013 *A Theory of Adaptation* and their concept of adaptation intertextuality. Identity is one concept that is repeatedly brought up with *Ghost in the Shell*; and while the cultural gap is mentioned in these articles, they are not extensively tackled. With those two concepts in mind, Joseph Campbell's Oriental and Occidental mythologies are applied to this article. Both of these have built upon Campbell's original work *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and will address the differing Eastern and Western ideologies between the two versions of *Ghost in the Shell*.

Theory of adaptation

Change is a natural part of the media adaptation process. At its core, it is a retelling of the same story but in a different form (Jenkins, 2011; Wall, 2020). What makes adaptations appealing to audiences is the pleasure derived from repetitive viewing (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). However, adaptation is more than just simple repetition – it is "repetition with variation" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). This is in part due to the necessary adjustments made for the story to better suit the grammar of the new medium.

It is not only a shift in medium that results in differences between adaptations, but also differences in culture that culminate in inevitable differences between adaptations. When adapting stories from one culture to another, it is more than a simple translation of words: the stories need to transform, and engage with the audience on a cultural and social level (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). Another way of phrasing this is the adapters would need to "indigenise" the stories to fit the new cultural locale (Friedman, 2004).

Werner Habicht (1989) recounts one instance of cultural appropriation during World War II when the Germans held reservations about exhibiting the plays of an "enemy's culture", namely Shakespeare. To qualify for viewing in their society, the Germans altered Shakespeare's works to prioritise political values such as reverence for leadership and submission to a higher power in times of hardship (Habicht, 1989). Stenport, Traylor (2015) also covers the differences between the Swedish and American film versions of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, made in 2009 and 2011 respectively, with the former emphasising the mystery in the plot and the latter focusing on the characters' development throughout the film.

Changes made in media adaptations lead to the discussion of the fidelity debate, which takes precedence in adaptation studies. During the early days of the field, George Bluestone (1968) primarily focused on fidelity between adaptations, or how faithful the narrative in the adaptation follows the original. The flaw in Bluestone's studies is the bias caused by the hierarchy of arts which favours written text as a higher form of art with film being considered as a lower art form which only appeals to generic audiences (Philips, 2007; Eberts, 2012). Later in the 2000s, the dynamics of adaptation studies shift as scholars began advocating for intertextuality to be the primary focus between adaptations, allowing adaptations to stand on their own merits (Bane, 2006; Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). Debates between which of the two positions should take priority have been carried out.

More recently, Adam-Petros Gkikas (2016) and Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto (2019) have stressed the importance of both positions in modern adaptation studies. Fidelity provides the foundation for comparisons, while intertextuality explains how or why those differences exist; one cannot exist without another. Building on that, Gkikas (2016) and Yoshimoto (2019) propose for the inclusion of a comparative factor—like Gkikas' analysis of poetics between adaptations and Yukari Yoshihara's (2016) study of feminism between Shakespeare's works and their manga adaptations. This article will also follow the same blueprint by analysing the 1995 *Ghost in the Shell* anime with its 2017 live action adaptation, using Campbell's Oriental and Occidental mythology as the chosen comparative factor.

The study of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey in the 21st century

Joseph Campbell's theory of the Hero's Journey, originally founded through his 1949 seminal work *Hero with a Thousand Faces* after years of conducting anthropological studies, has been the cornerstone for identifying common themes in various mythologies and narratives. The emotionally charged journey of a hero leaving the confines of his own familiar world to venture on a quest into the unknown searching for an answer to both a communal problem and inquiry to his personal identity can be observed in various creative works including *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977), *The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Jackson, 2001, 2002, 2003), and *Dune* (Villeneuve, 2021).

Since the founding of Campbell's monomyth studies in 1949, Campbell's theory has been challenged by other scholars, the first of which is directed at the issue of gender. Maureen Murdock (2020) first met Campbell during the 1980s, and felt disappointed with Campbell's belief that women are merely assigned a secondary role in a male hero's journey. Murdock argues that women also have their own journey to follow, and that the goal of this Heroine's Journey is to reconnect with her feminine side in a male-dominated environment. Although, according to Catherine Bailey Kyle (2014), Murdock's Heroine's Journey is still confined to binarism as it defines what it means "to be a woman". Gail Carriger (2020) notes that in the current social and political landscape, strict classifications for the Hero's Journey or Heroine's Journey are blurred; males, females, and other non-binaries can be identified as heroes. The recent films *Wonder Woman* (Jenkins, 2017) and *Captain Marvel* (Boden & Fleck, 2019) also feature strong, female protagonists who lead the charge, empowering women in real life (Burke, 2017; Williams, 2017; Itzkoff, 2019; Puentes, 2019).

The protagonist of *Ghost in the Shell* is a female cyborg named Motoko Kusanagi, or Mira Killian in the 2017 live action film; therefore, it would be logical to apply Murdock's Heroine's Journey in this scenario. But Kusanagi does not conduct any activities that would be deemed maternal in nature, nor does she sit back while the men do the dirty work; she is as involved in the action as her male colleagues, even more so since the narrative is focused on her. It should be noted that there is a short reference to the discovery of the female identity in the 2017 film where Killian inspects another woman in a semi-erotic manner. This is not featured in the 1995 anime film; although, it is presented in the pioneering 1991 manga and 2005 *Stand Alone Complex* spin-off series. Suffice to say, Campbell's Hero's Journey can be applied to the female protagonist of *Ghost in the Shell*.

Another criticism directed at Campbell's theory is its universality. Rachael Lefler (2018) disputes the practicality of gathering the plethora of narratives under one umbrella since common themes alone would not be enough to draw a complete

comparison between them. Bond, Christensen (2021) claim that Campbell selectively chose certain myths that would support his theory in order to make his theory functional, with Robert A. Segal (2000) piling on about how Campbell rarely puts his theory through interpretive testing and instead bends the myth to fit his theory. Regardless of the criticisms, Campbell's blueprint still finds practicality in various academic fields in the 2020 s, including anthropological studies carried out by James K. Beggan (2020) and Mahoney, Nickerson (2022).

Houman Sadri (2020) also notes the continued relevance of Campbell's Hero's Journey in the creative fields. While Vogler (2020) may have written a guide on writing screenplays with Campbell's theory as a guide, Sadri (2020) reiterates that the Hero's Journey is not a blueprint meant to be followed, but that the pattern has always existed deep within the subconscious of human experience. The authors Neil Gaiman and Philip Pullman did not go out of their way to implement Campbell's pattern into their stories, but they simply arrived at the pattern in a natural manner (Sadri, 2020). In fact, people are comfortable developing a sense of familiarity with the Hero's Journey because its patterns and archetypes resonate well with the majority of the global population. Sadri (2020) accordingly states that the Hero's Journey remains valid and useful both as a storytelling device and as a "critical tool for evaluating the methodologies of such storytelling".

Cultural representation of Japan through anime

Another thing that must be addressed in this article is the comparisons of Eastern and Western cultural elements since the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise consists of Japanese productions containing Japanese elements, and the 2017 film adaptation has been adapted from the East to the West. The concept of representing a nation or culture's identity through film and other media was founded by Andrew Higson (1989) who states that national cinema corresponds to where the films are made and by whom, which extends to the content of the films produced in that nation state, be it geographical or political. Wimal Dissanayake (2017) follows up on Higson's concept as he brings it to the modern era of cinema through discussions of modernity, feminism, colonialism, and urbanisation; all of which are distinct based on a specific nation's history and experiences.

The situation in the current cinematic landscape that may pose a problem to Higson's definition of national cinema is the shift from national cinema to transnational cinema, especially in Asia. Olivia Khoo (2021) touches on the practice of Pan-Asian filmmaking, where multiple nations across Asia pool together their monetary resources to gather film talent from various nations for the purpose of targeting a wider regional audience, even stretching beyond their regional boundaries to appeal to a global audience. While the current state of film productions leans towards the transnational, there is still room for discussing the national in transnational. It is not that the boundaries between cultures have been transcended, but rather the lines between cultures and nations are blurred; hence, new configurations of cinema can both favour the acquisition of transnational resources and the preservation of "territorial identities rooted in the national" (Wada-Marciano, 2012).

This leads us to the cultural disposition of Japan. For centuries, Japan had perpetrated their idea of "Japaneseness", setting them apart from the rest through their pure and untouched bloodline (Ko, 2010). That was until the end of the 19th century when Okinawans and the Ainu people, along with Korean and Taiwanese immigrants, began to be assimilated into Japanese society. Although, despite their claims for equality and unity under the emperor, the Japanese' sense of militarism and colonialism during

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Table 1 The lyrics for the choral theme song of *Ghost in the Shell*.	
Japanese romanization	**English translation**
A ga maeba, kuwashime yoinikeri	Because I had danced, the beautiful lady was enchanted
A ga maeba, terutsuki toyomunari	Because I had danced, the shining moon echoed
Yobai ni, kami amakudarite	Proposing marriage, the god shall descend
Yo wa ake, nuedori naku	The night clears away and the chimera bird will sing

the first half of the 20th century leading up to World War II led to discrimination and oppression by the Japanese against the minority groups (Ko, 2010; Misono, 2021). That mindset changed after the war as Japan pushed for progressiveness through the embrace of democracy, and consumerism and the adoption of multiple cultures. The result places Japan in a unique position of culture hybridity, where internationalism and nationalism become a part of the Japanese identity (Ko, 2010).

The same can be said of the contents in anime. Right after the release of the first *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977), there was an emerging flux of science fiction genre of anime which are specifically catered to include overseas viewers as their target audience. This includes having the anime focus on themes featured in a wide array of social structures across the globe and beyond (Ruh, 2012). This is exhibited through various anime series like *Trigun* (Nishimura, 1998), *Code Geass* (Taniguchi, 2006–2007, 2008), *Psycho Pass* (Shiotani & Motohiro, 2012–2013), and long-running mecha series like *Macross* and *Gundam*.

On the subject of mythology, Cheraifia Djihed (2022) examines the forementioned hybrid nature of anime through the Greco-Roman and Japanese mythological symbols in the anime *Fullmetal Alchemist Brotherhood*. Djihed (2022) finds that the reoccurring theme of alchemy holds mythological undertones, acting as the "magical trail" leading to the formulas for the creation of precious metals like gold or silver. This means that the ancient art of alchemy requires combing through the ancient texts and myths to unveil these recipes for metallurgy. Alchemy is also connected to the content and symbolism of both Greco-Roman and Japanese mythologies, as various texts hint at the deities' ability to "control the earthly creatures"—the Greek god Poseidon, or Roman god Neptune, having dominion over the sea; and the Japanese god Kagutsuchi having power over the element of fire (Djihed, 2022). Djihed's paper may not mention Campbell's theories, but his study on an anime like *Fullmetal Alchemist Brotherhood* containing traces of both Greco-Roman and Japanese mythology provides some connection to the comparative study of mythological elements in anime.

This concentration on the global appeal of anime is apparent in various anime, but there are also studies discussing the portrayal of Japanese national identity, and national issues, in anime. Maria Grajdian (2019) notes how the classic anime *Rurouni Kenshin* (Furuhashi, 1996–1998) not only depicts Japanese history and tackles the "idiosyncrasies and contradictions" of Japanese cultural imperialism, but also how an anime produced in the mid-1990s foreshadows the risk of the people losing their national identity in the rush for progress and development to achieve comfort and certainty. *Samurai Champloo* (Watanabe, 2004–2005) is also an illustration of Japan's hybrid identity as it combines both traditional Japanese Edo-period culture with contemporary hip-hop. From this, Po-Lung Huang (2021) views *Samurai Champloo* as having a unique characteristic that retains its Japanese identity and tackles real world issues, while simultaneously having an international appeal through hip hop.

Rurouni Kenshin and *Samurai Champloo* may be set during the feudal days of Japan and balances the national and the transnational of Japanese identity, yet there is room for analysing the

Japanese essence in them, re-establishing Higson's (1989) concept of national cinema as media made in Japan inherently portray Japanese national identity. In light of this, there is no reason to doubt whether some of the Japanese national properties can be carried over to science fiction anime. In the case of the *Ghost in the Shell* media, the creators of the anime and live action film are from two opposing regions of the globe, raising the possibility that the mythological philosophies contained in them are different as well.

This brings us back to Joseph Campbell, who did not overlook the differences in culture when constructing the narrative of the hero. Lays Farra (2017) points out that there are multiple models of highlighting the pattern of hero stories, stating that "polymyth" would be a more appropriate term for describing these different tales of the hero. Campbell does not deliberately mention the idea of a polymyth in his works, but he followed up *Hero with a Thousand Faces* with *The Masks of God* anthology, which serve as a continuation of the concepts from Campbell's original book applied to different regions of the world. Two books from the series, *Oriental Mythology* (Campbell, 2014) and *Occidental Mythology* (Campbell, 2017), touch on the myths in the East and West respectively. Young et al., (2016) note the lack of literature on the subject of comparative mythology concerning the Orient, to which they cite Campbell's *Oriental Mythology*, despite being an old source, as the ideal modern reference on the subject matter.

Oriental mythology in the *Ghost in the Shell* anime (1995)

The *Ghost in the Shell* 1995 anime film directed by Mamoru Oshii is in itself an adaptation of Masamune Shirow's original manga serialised from 1989 to 1991. However, the tone of the manga is completely different from the anime film, featuring a more comical ambience than the sombre atmosphere of the various *Ghost in the Shell* series that come after it. On top of that, the 1995 anime film dives straight into the case of the Puppet Master, filtering out most of the other chapters which act as fillers while keeping the philosophy of the series intact. Hence, the analysis portions would concentrate on the 1995 anime film and 2017 live action film.

First, the iconic theme song that plays at the start resembles the Japanese percussion and prayer bells one would hear at Japanese Shinto shrines, cementing the underlying presence of Shinto in the *Ghost in the Shell* anime. The theme song is, according to the composer's description, a wedding song which channels the idea of unity which can be seen from the lyrics of the song (Table 1). The word "dance" in the song is a reference to one of Campbell's (2014) stories involving a Western sociologist and a Shinto priest meeting at an international religious conference. The Western sociologist, guided by logic, finds it difficult to grasp Shinto's lack of concrete personifications and abstract concept of spirits, calling it nothing more than "crude polytheism" (Campbell 2014, p. 481). Upon hearing the Westerner's confounded remarks regarding the lack of ideology in Shinto, the Shinto priest simply responds, "We do not have ideology. We do not have theology. We dance" (Campbell, 2014, p. 481). The idea that the priest was putting

Fig. 1 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* anime film. A frame within a frame shot of Motoko Kusanagi "trapped" in her room overlooking the city skyline (Oshii, 1995). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.
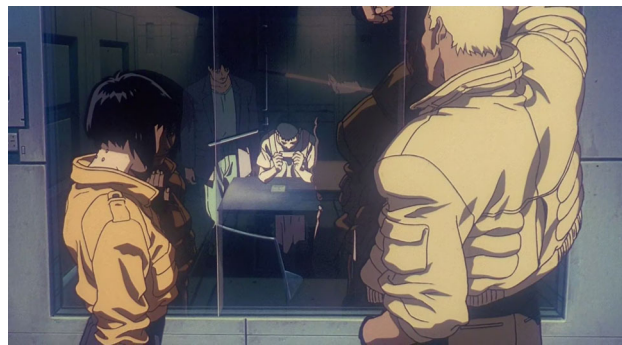

Fig. 2 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* anime film. Another frame within a frame shot signifying the mental prison felt by the suspect after learning of his lost identity (Oshii, 1995). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.

forth is that one should detach from the logic of the world and simply admire or "dance" to the wonders around them.

The concept of marriage in the song also holds a connection to Shinto's story of creation. Before the universe came into existence, pairs of deities were tasked with creating the island nations of Japan and the rest of the world. Campbell (2014) lists these pairs of deities: the Mud-Earth Lord and Mud-Earth Lady; the Spirit Elder and Spirit Lady of the Great Place; His Augustness the Male Who Invites and Her Augustness the Female Who Invites; and Izanagi and Izanami. While Shinto's creation story creates a distinction between Heaven and Earth, much like the stories in Occidental myths, Campbell still finds a relationship between the divine realm and the mortal world. The goal of Shinto, according to Campbell (2014), is for people to live in gratitude and appreciate the world around them as they become one with the *kami* that reside in nature.

At the beginning of the film, Kusanagi feels somewhat trapped in her cage, having uncertainty in her life and searching for meaning to her existence. At the end of the prologue, Kusanagi sits in the silent confines of her apartment overlooking the skyline of the city. As she stares out into the skyline, stretching for miles, she wonders if the state she is in can be considered freedom or restriction. The shot of Kusanagi's silhouette against the backdrop of the cyberpunk skyline in Fig. 1, which is set in a frame within a frame shot as the foreground contrasts against the background, further signifies this restriction of individual free-will.

Another frame within a frame shot can be seen in Fig. 2 involving another minor character who has his sense of self stolen from him. Throughout the film, a faceless entity known as the Puppet Master has been carrying out crimes, but has been covering his tracks through various individuals he hacked. A side effect of the hacking is those individuals lose their free-will and freedom of thought. One such person is a simple garbageman who has been going around thinking he is making calls to his divorced wife and daughter; when in actuality, he has been brainwashed as a "puppet" to set up hacking waypoints for the Puppet Master. Upon the revelation of his fake memories and lost real memories, the garbageman feels lost and trapped in his prison of a fake mind. The frame within a frame shot in Fig. 2 expresses that mental prison.

The next scene follows Kusanagi going for a dive in the harbour to clear her head. In the blankness of the ocean, she experiences freedom and tranquillity as she floats back up to the ocean surface. Figure 3 is reminiscent of Alice going through the looking glass; though instead of reaching into a world of fantasies, Kusanagi returns to face reality where she meets her partner Batou on the boat. Kusanagi and Batou hold a

Fig. 3 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* anime film. A shot of Motoko Kusanagi looking into the mirror as she rises to the surface of the ocean (Oshii, 1995). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.

philosophical conversation about the meaning of the self and what makes an individual truly unique in a society where everyone is engrossed with cybernetic enhancements. Furthermore, the cybernetic enhancements they currently wield belong to the government, which makes them properties of the government as well. In the vastness of the digital information network, an individual is but a mere speck in the crowd. Only by looking beyond what is visible to the naked eye and deeply process the information laid forth can one's individual identity shine and give his "ghost" meaning. It is evident that Kusanagi still clings onto logic in order to make sense of the questions floating around in her mind at this point in the anime. She has not fully developed an awareness, and the acceptance, of "the sigh of things" associated with Japanese mythology (Campbell, 2014).

Kusanagi's direct encounter with the Puppet Master slowly breaks down the walls of logic as the latter breaks down the ignorance of humans who claim to have a solid understanding of the technology they created. "Memory cannot be defined, but it defines mankind. How can you offer me proof of your existence when neither science nor philosophy can explain what life is" (Oshii, 1995). The vagueness of the Puppet Master's statement reflects Campbell's (2014) observations on the ambiguity of Shinto and Oriental mythology to the Western minds who have prioritised logic over obscurity. Another instance of ambiguity in accordance with Campbell's Oriental mythology lies in a second statement by the Puppet Master when contemplating the extension of his own life cycle:

"A copy is just an identical image. There is the possibility that a single virus could destroy an entire set of systems, and copies do

Fig. 4 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* anime film. The last image seen by Kusanagi before completely merging with the Puppet Master (Oshii, 1995). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.

Your skin deserves the best, and so do you.

Fig. 5 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* live action adaptation. One of the establishing shots in the film showing the "idols" standing amidst the city skyline (Sanders, 2017). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.

not give rise to variety and originality. Life perpetuates itself through diversity, and this includes the ability to sacrifice itself when necessary. Cells repeat the process of degeneration and regeneration until one day they die, obliterating an entire set of memory and information. Only genes remain. Why continually repeat this cycle simply to survive by avoiding the weaknesses of an unchanging system?"

(Oshii, 1995)

The Puppet Master has amassed a wealth of knowledge after becoming sentient; yet despite the vast knowledge he has accumulated while surfing the Net, including the concept of life and death, he is still confined within the parameters of his current form as a computer program. The final act of the anime is where Kusanagi and the Puppet Master hold the answer to each other's predicament—the Puppet Master can provide enlightenment to Kusanagi's questions about the meaning of identity and "ghosts"; and Kusanagi acts as a gateway for the Puppet Master to reach the next stage of his evolution. Figure 4 shows the last image seen by Kusanagi right before the merging of the two characters, which is that of an angel descending. The symbiosis of Kusanagi and the Puppet Master can be seen as a convergence between Heaven and Earth in Campbell's Oriental mythology. But before the both of them can transcend their own boundaries, they would have to "die" first before being reborn. Campbell (2020) considers the death and rebirth of the hero to be metaphorical, likening the cycle of life to a battlefield where something needs to die within the hero before completely accepting any new knowledge. *Ghost in the Shell* also depicts this process in a physical manner where their initial bodies are destroyed before merging together, symbolised by Kusanagi's vision (Fig. 4).

Upon reawakening, the Kusanagi/Puppet Master hybrid finds her consciousness uploaded into the body of a child cyborg. This rebirth symbolises the new childhood Kusanagi gets to experience, starting over from a new beginning as she has finally found the "freedom to live", a sentiment shared by Campbell (2020) when discussing the end of the Hero's Journey, without being possessed by the government. This second life does not necessarily reflect the fresh slate associated with childhood but comes as a form of enlightenment to Kusanagi bundled with the newfound knowledge gifted to her through her merge with the Puppet Master. Thus, Kusanagi has become what Campbell (2020) refers to as the "master of two worlds", combining the familiar experiences held in his familiar world with the newfound knowledge gained through his journey in the unfamiliar world. Kusanagi says to Batou regarding her own spiritual growth:

"When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child. Now that I am a man, I have no more use for childish ways. Now I can say these things without help in my own

voice because now I am now neither the woman known as the Major nor am I the program that is called the Puppet Master."

(Oshii, 1995)

The last line Kusanagi utters is, "And where does the newborn go from here? The Net is vast and infinite" (Oshii, 1995). This quote provides a very ambiguous end to the *Ghost in the Shell* anime with no clear resolution in sight and leaves it to the audience to form their own conclusion. In hindsight, this ambiguity provides a sense of poeticism to the entire anime as Kusanagi achieves a form of enlightenment. This connects the narrative to the Oriental mythology, and Japanese Shinto, declared by Campbell (2014) in which the rejection of worldly logic and acceptance of the wonders provided by the deities leads to enlightenment.

Occidental mythology in the *Ghost in the Shell* film (2017)

The *Ghost in the Shell* live action film adaptation takes a different approach from the anime by aligning itself more with Campbell's Occidental mythology than Oriental mythology. The core ideology of Occidental mythology, according to Campbell (2014, 2017), is that the hero cannot be aligned with both Heaven and Earth, thus having to choose one or the other. While the deities in Oriental myths reside in the celestial plains and become a part of the world they created, Occidental myths consider Heaven and Earth to be completely separate realms with no bridge to close the gap; they believe God created the world, but He is not part of the world. Campbell further elaborates this by saying:

"God and His world are not to be identified with each other. God, as Creator, made the world, but is not in any sense the world itself or any object within it. There can therefore be no question of seeking God and finding God either in the world or in oneself."

(Campbell, 2017, p. 104)

The setting in the *Ghost in the Shell* film reflects that separation of Heaven and Earth. The mega-corporation Hanka Robotics has created a monopoly over the global cybernetics industry where cybernetic enhancements are desired by almost everyone, becoming a figurative god in the digital age. Figure 5 shows the holographic advertisements put up by Hanka Industries displayed along the side of buildings, similar to the statues of gods towering over the people for them to gaze upon and even worship.

One of Hanka Industries' latest products is a fully cybernetic soldier transplanted with an organic brain. The first time we are introduced to this iteration of the protagonist, originally known as Motoko Kusanagi in the anime, is as the first fully functional cyborg infused with a human brain, the first of her kind, to roll out of the mega-corporation Hanka Robotics. Given the name Mira Killian, we witness her "birth" first-hand as she has no idea
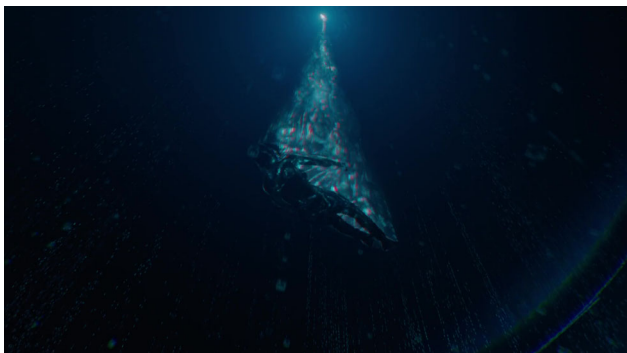
Fig. 6 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* live action adaptation. Killian making her first physical and metaphorical dive past the threshold into the unknown world (Sanders, 2017). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.

Fig. 7 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* live action adaptation. The establishing shot shown before the epilogue lacking the "idols" that have been featured in establishing shots throughout the film (Sanders, 2017). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.

of who she is or any recollection of her memory while getting accustomed to her new body like a new-born baby. Like a new-born, she can be prone to impulsiveness and frustration as she deals with her internal struggles and confusion at times in contrast with her anime counterpart who is more rational and level-headed. The executives at Hanka Robotics also distance themselves from their creations like the Occidental gods by treating her as a product; a weapon without sentimental value.

There are Campbellian mentors who teach her the meaning of humanity: her medical counsellor Dr. Ouelet and her superior officer Director Aramaki. They teach her that in spite of her new body comprised of wires and circuitry, Ouelet reassures Killian that she is still her own person; that her "ghost" still exists deep down inside her. Only by embracing her uniqueness can she find peace within herself. The role of Killian's partner Batou is expanded in the film to provide a voice of reason for Killian since she can be impulsive due to her own internal struggles concerning the loss of her own identity. Some of his daily activities, like feeding stray dogs, are meant to open Killian's heart and mind who is under the notion that she is a weapon designed to enforce law and order throughout the first act.

Killian's first step in "answering the call" to find out more about herself is diving virtually into the memory banks of a particular victim from Hanka Robotics. Figure 6 shows the dive in a literal manner as Killian sinks lower and lower into the dark abyss that is the unknown world of Campbell's Hero's Journey. It is here that Killian first learns of the fugitive known as Kuze who leaves the message of warning against anyone who align themselves with Hanka Robotics. Encountering the "shadow presence" in her journey (Campbell, 2008), Killian takes a step out of her comfort zone and crosses the threshold into the unknown as Killian attempts to solve the mysteries behind the attacks on Hanka employees.

A side effect of venturing into the unknown are the glitches to her system in the form of hallucinations. These hallucinations pose problems for Killian as they interfere with her work. In one instance, Batou shields her from the explosion of a hidden bomb, resulting in the loss of his eyes and having to get cybernetic enhancements. Since he has to be admitted for some time, he asks Killian to take care of the stray dogs he regularly feeds. Upon direct contact with them, Killian's heart within her hardened exterior mellows as she experiences first-hand the amount of care Batou puts into the strays.

Killian eventually comes face to face with Kuze, initially viewed upon as a heartless antagonist; but through her conversation with him realizes that there is a deeper connection between the two of them. Kuze, as the Campbellian "shadow presence" throughout

the film, also opens up for Killian the black box known as Project 2571, one of Hanka Robotics' dark secrets involving past failed attempts at merging an organic brain with a cybernetic body and also holds the key to Killian's true identity and past. This brings her on a path back to her spiritual mentor Ouelet, who is revealed to be a key figure behind Project 2571. Ouelet understands the sins of her past and makes amends by pointing Killian in the right direction at the cost of her life by Hanka executives.

The information leads Killian to an apartment in the outskirts of the city. There, she meets a single mother who has been mourning the loss of her deceased daughter Motoko Kusanagi a year ago; around the same time that Killian was "born". According to the mother, Kusanagi was a rebellious daughter; but it is that maverick attitude that prompted Kusanagi to advocate against the use of cybernetic enhancements, claiming that they are detrimental to society. Similar acts of defiance against a higher power can be seen throughout the Occidental myths that emerged during what Campbell calls the Age of Heroes around 1500 to 500 B.C, like Prometheus stealing the fire of the gods and gifting it to humanity. As stated earlier, Occidental mythology does not give an individual room to pledge allegiance to both Heaven and Earth; and those who do not renounce their mortal condition would oppose the gods' divine judgment to preserve their own individual rationality (Campbell, 2017). Kusanagi emulates the same sentiment of these Occidental heroes by opposing the will of the gods, Hanka Robotics, instead of accepting their gifts, the cybernetic modifications. As a consequence, Kusanagi was abducted by Hanka Robotics for Project 2571 and "reborn" as Major Mira Killian.

Here at the climax, Killian finally learns of her true origins as Motoko Kusanagi and her connection with Kuze as childhood friends before their "death and rebirth" under Project 2571. With Kuze's life in critical condition, he offers Killian a chance to transcend with him to a network he created outside of the system where concepts of life and death do not apply. As tempting as it sounds to ascend to paradise, Killian decides to stay behind and finish the fight for justice against Hanka Robotics, abolishing the rule of the gods and bringing them down from their pedestal. Figure 7 shows a blank establishing shot devoid of any colourful advertisements unlike the previous establishing shots similar to Fig. 5; which signify the lack of presence from the gods.

The rejection of transcension by Killian mirrors Campbell's (2017) statement, that is, those who believe in Occidental mythology reject the Oriental ways. Interestingly, Occidental mythology is not entirely restricted to the Western way of thinking, but rather Occidental mythology is a see-saw between two contrasting ideas or belief, swinging constantly from the East

Fig. 8 A screenshot from the *Ghost in the Shell* live action adaptation.
Killian returns to her site of death and rebirth in her journey (Sanders, 2017). The use of this image adheres to the Fair Use Agreement in Copyright Law.

to the West, and back to the East again before swinging once again to the West (Campbell, 2017). This see-saw motion can be traced to the Bronze Age of Iran where the area comprised of the Persian and Byzantine empires was located on the western part of the Asian continent while sitting right next to the Greek and Roman empires. This means the people's grasp on the Oriental was not as stringent compared to their Far Eastern cousins in China and the Korean peninsula. In addition, the development of agricultural technology during the Bronze Age of Iran instilled a sense of self-sustenance among the people, and in turn rationalising the role of the individual that is emphasised in Occidental mythology (Campbell, 2017). Therefore, if Killian had decided to ascend with Kuze, she would inadvertently be following the Oriental way as portrayed in the anime. Instead, she chose to walk her own path of justice and bring down the gods in her world.

At the end of her journey, Killian finally returns home and reunites with her mother; the idea of reuniting with the Mother Earth can be seen not only in *Oriental Mythology* (Campbell, 2014) and *Occidental Mythology* (Campbell, 2017), but also in *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell, 2008). Reuniting with her mother also establishes the redemption element of Occidental mythology. Dissimilar to the "optimistic" Oriental myths, Occidental myths implement flaws in the heroes, a corrupted soul inclined to evil, which cause them to fall before walking the path of redemption—like Heracles who murdered his own family and had to carry out his infamous 12 Labours as penance (Campbell, 2017). Killian also comes full circle back to her place of death and rebirth as she reembraces her true identity as Motoko Kusanagi (Fig. 8). Having found a balance between her human spirit and her cybernetic shell and its enhanced abilities, Killian has become the "master of two worlds" and achieved the freedom to live and carry out her duties on her own terms (Campbell, 2008). This point of self-realisation and self-actualisation is reflected through her closing narration:

"My mind is human. My body is manufactured. I'm the first of my kind, but I won't be the last. We cling to memories as if they define us, but what we do defines us. My ghost survived to remind the next of us that humanity is our virtue. I know who I am, and what I'm here to do."

(Sanders, 2017)

Conclusion
Film adaptations of popular anime like *Ghost in the Shell* have received criticism based on the fidelity aspect of adaptations, as further pointed out by Bastien (2017), Daliot-Bul (2019), and Haden (2020) on the film's various flaws concerning the lack of

faithfulness to the original. When looked through the scope of intertextuality in adaptations, like what Edwards (2021) had done, the film adaptation holds artistic merit, allowing the 2017 *Ghost in the Shell* film to stand on its own as a unique creative work (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). Furthermore, modern discussions have prioritised the focus of a comparison factor in later adaptation studies (Gkikas, 2016; Yoshimoto, 2019). Joseph Campbell's Oriental and Occidental mythology have proven useful in identifying the philosophical differences between the *Ghost in the Shell* anime and film.

The anime exhibits a poetic narrative exploring Kusanagi's exploration into what makes a person unique from one another through the existence of their "ghosts" in a world where cybernetic enhancements are a standard part of their lifestyle. The abstract nature of Campbell's Oriental mythology can be seen in the lyrics of the theme song and Kusanagi pondering the meaning of identity and her "ghost" in an age that does not accommodate self-reflection of the self; not to mention there is no clear indication of an antagonist as Oriental mythology believes that nature is neither good nor evil (Campbell, 2014). The unity between the secular and the divine in Oriental mythology is also reflected in the third act through the mergence of Kusanagi and the Puppet Master as a form of transcendence in which Kusanagi is gifted with the accumulated knowledge of the Net and has a firmer grasp on the concept of a "ghost" that has eluded her.

The live action film, on the other hand, follows a more straightforward narrative mirroring a superhero origin story, or following the standard Robocop formula (Daliot-Bul, 2019). But analysing the film under the scope of Campbell's Occidental mythology turns up with a number of creative insights. The overall setting holds a sense of separation between the corporate leaders and the people, much akin to Occidental mythology's separation between Heaven and Earth. More evidence linked to Occidental mythology can be seen in the third act through Killian's determination of bringing the gods down from their pedestal, and rejecting the gift of ascension to rely on her own skills and willpower to master both her human half and cybernetic half.

Regardless of the differences, the two forms of media display a journey undertaken by the hero. In fact, this article shows that the differences do not equate to one being better than the other; otherwise, it would adhere strongly to the fidelity aspect of adaptations. They are simply different iterations of the same narrative theme under the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise. In closing, the use of Joseph Campbell's *Oriental Mythology* and *Occidental Mythology* in this article adds more ways of comparative analysis in adaptation studies; as it bolsters and expands the application of Campbell's Hero's Journey, with supplementary materials from Campbell, in cross-cultural media studies.

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Additional information

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Edwin L. Phil Tan.

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