

Motoko Kusanagi: the Japanese Superwoman
A comparative film analysis of
Rupert Sanders' and Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*

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Abstrakti/Abstract

Tässä kandintyössä tutkitaan Mamoru Oshiin ja Rupert Sandersin filmatisointeja Masamune Shirow'n *Ghost in the Shell* –mangasta. Hollywood on kuluneiden aikojen saatossa tuottanut useita uudelleenfilmatisointeja japanilaisista kulttiklassikoista: usein vaikka alkuperäinen elokuva ja päähenkilöt ovat japanilaisia, hahmot sekä miljöö vaihdetaan amerikkalaisiksi. Tarkastelen *Ghost in the Shell* -elokuva, joka on uudelleenfilmatisointi samannimisestä japanilaisesta animaatioelokuvasta. Elokuva sijoittuu yhä Japaniin, mutta pääosa näyttelijöistä on kaukaasialaisia. *Ghost in the Shell* oli aikanaan merkittävä elokuva vahvan aasialaisen naispäähenkilönsä johdosta. Päämääränäni on tutkia, miten elokuvissa näkyvä orientalismi ja oksidentalismi, eli idän ja lännen stereotyyppiä, sekä elokuvan näyttelijöiden etnisen taustan muuttaminen vaikuttavat päähenkilön hahmoon. Tutkin myös päähenkilön identiteettiä aasialaisena naisena, ja miten se muuttuu, kun näyttelijä vaihtuu amerikkalaiseen. Katsoin alkuperäisen vuonna 1995 ilmestyneen elokuvan japaninkielisellä ääniraidalla ja englanninkielisillä teksteillä, ja uuden, vuoden 2017 filmatisoinnin englanninkielisellä ääniraidalla. Hyödynnän tutkimuksessani artikkeleita liittyen animen historiaan, sekä rodun ja sukupuolen näkymiseen animessa. Käytän myös lähteitä liittyen naisten työttömyyteen, sekä rooliin japanilaisessa yhteiskunnassa.

This paper studies the two different versions of the film *Ghost in the Shell* by Mamoru Oshii and Masamune Shirow. In recent years, Hollywood has produced numerous remakes of originally Japanese cult classics. Often, even though the original film and the characters are Japanese, the setting is changed to America and the characters are acted by Americans. The location of *Ghost in the Shell* remains in Japan, but the main cast consists of Caucasian actors and actresses. In the year 1995 it was a significant film due to its strong female lead. The films are studied through Orientalism and Occidentalism. The aim is to explore whether these stereotypes of the East and the West affect the main character and her role as an Asian woman when the actress's ethnic background is changed. The original film, which was released in 1995, was watched with Japanese audio and English subtitles, and the 2017 remake with English audio. This study will refer to studies about the history of anime, and ethnicity and gender in anime. Sources that study women's role in the Japanese society will also be used.

Keywords: *Ghost in the Shell*, Orientalism, Occidentalism, Gender identity, Ethnic identity, anime, film studies

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1 Introduction

Hollywood has a long history of remaking Japanese films. Many viewers are familiar with titles like *Ring* (2002), *Godzilla* (2014), *Hachi: A Dog's Tale* (2009) and *The Grudge* (2004). Are we, however, familiar with the films' Japanese roots? The remakes often re-cast some, if not all of the originally Japanese characters as Caucasians, thus changing the ethnic background of the characters entirely. Some films do it more subtly. In *Godzilla*, the location of the film remains in Tokyo but the heroes are re-cast as Caucasian men. Some films take Americanisation to the extreme, like *Hachi: A Dog's Tale*, the Hollywood remake of the popular Japanese story and film about Hachiko. Hachiko is a dog who waited for the rest of his life for its owner to come home from work. One day, his owner passed away while at work as a result of a heart attack, but the dog continued to wait for him to return. The film's setting was moved to Rhode Island, the role of professor was played by Richard Gere, and the only Japanese character in addition to the dog itself was a colleague of Richard Gere. His sole purpose was to read and interpret the meaning of Hachiko's name and explain the dog's Japanese characteristics to the main character. Even the name Hachiko was shortened to Hachi to make it easier to read, or maybe easier to understand for the Western audience.

The new *Ghost in the Shell* falls in the middle of these films in terms of Americanisation. Rupert Sanders' *Ghost in the Shell*, released in 2017, is a remake of Mamoru Oshii's cult classic anime film *Kôkaku Kidôtai - Ghost in the Shell*, released in 1995. The story of *Ghost in the Shell* is based on a popular science-fiction manga *Ghost in the Shell* by Masamune Shirow, which was published in 1989. The remake is an Americanised version of the original: it keeps the location of the film as Japan, but almost all of the characters are played by Caucasians. Only a few characters are played by Japanese actors. Most noticeable change to the original is that the main character is played by the popular actress Scarlett Johansson instead of an Asian woman.

The original 1995 anime film has inspired many science-fiction films that have been box office hits, like *The Matrix* (1999) and *Avatar* (2009), both of which are considered classics in terms of American sci-fi films. Both of them are adventure films which play with the concept of reality and projections of the human consciousness in different "shells". In the original *Ghost in the Shell*, the "shells" are artificial cyborg bodies with implanted human brains, but human consciousness remains. The brain can also be enhanced with cybernetic parts. The term "ghost" in the anime film refers to human consciousness, and with "shell" the film refers to the body in which the ghost is implanted. From now on, these terms will be used to describe the relationship between the body and the mind. In *The Matrix*, the ghost travels between a computer-generated world and the reality, and in *Avatar*, the shell in which the ghost is implanted is a shell made to mimic a different species. In the original *Ghost in the*

Shell the shell exists in the reality, but the ghost can travel to various computer-generated networks with the help of a cyber brain, which allows the characters to communicate via telepathy, view maps and even hack into other cyber brains. In the computer-generated world, the ghost can access maps, control cars, and even enter other people's consciousnesses. This idea of the mind traveling between different realities separately from the empty shells might have influenced *The Matrix* and *Avatar*, both of which include similar concepts. It can be said that the original *Ghost in the Shell* has influenced these films, and thus the original film has influenced the genre of sci-fi films as we know them today. The original *Ghost in the Shell* itself represented a new kind of science-fiction anime at the time. *Ghost in the Shell* was an animated film which is directed towards mature audiences instead of children. The storyline featured adult themes like terrorism and the question of what defines humanity: can a machine that gains sentience become a human? In addition to those themes, the main character Motoko Kusanagi is also different from the average female lead. She is an Asian woman and a major who outranks all her colleagues. She is not the only cyborg that exists in the world that the film is set in, but Kusanagi is a bit unusual since humans often choose to only enhance their bodies with cybernetic parts. Kusanagi's body, instead, is fully replaced with an entirely cybernetic one. This is what is behind the original Kusanagi's identity crisis: can she be considered as a true human since she is just a brain, a "ghost" in a shell?

The film industry changed a lot during the last 20 years. In 2017 we are more familiar with the concept of a female lead, and nowadays female superheroes play a bigger part in films of the modern superhero genre than they did in the 1990s. New superhero, sci-fi and action films are released that feature female leads. The superheroes are popular characters like Wonder Woman, Wasp, Scarlet Witch and Black Widow. However, despite all these new film releases and the changes in attitude towards female leads even in 2017 they rarely play the role of a protagonist. This study will focus on how Killian carries the part of a modern female superhero in comparison to Motoko Kusanagi. The plotlines differ significantly, but what factors make the protagonists so different from each other? Furthermore, are these changes positive or negative? This is why her role as a female character will be taken into consideration in addition to her role as an Asian, as it is what continues to make the film different from other sci-fi films. The films will be looked at through the ideas of the Orient and the Occident and how these ideas affect Motoko Kusanagi as a main character. Orientalism and Occidentalism, shortly put, are harmful stereotypes of Asia and the Western world that are present in both films. A conclusion that Kusanagi's role in the original film as a modern-day female superhero changes when the storyline, ethnic identity and her portrayal as a woman change in Rupert Sanders' version was made by close viewing of the two films and with the help of relevant literary sources.

2 Materials

This chapter will provide further information about the materials used for this study. This chapter includes the storylines of the two films. The primary source materials are the original *Ghost in the Shell* directed by Mamoru Oshii and the 2017 remake of *Ghost in the Shell* directed by Rupert Sanders. The original *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) was watched with Japanese audio and with English subtitles, and the 2017 remake in English. Both of these are the original languages that the films have been directed in. The quotes from the films are derived from the English subtitles.

2.1 Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)

The film starts with a police operation organized by Section 6, a police group force operated by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The operation is interrupted by Kusanagi's Section 9, operated by The Ministry of Internal Affairs. Section 6's attempt to catch a villainous diplomat who is accused of poaching programmers and kidnapping them abroad in the name of protecting them fails when Kusanagi kills a diplomat. After Kusanagi disappears to the night, the opening credits play, where Kusanagi's creation is shown. Her body is intricately animated, and the process of creating a cyborg is described carefully. When the cyborg has finally been finished and she is ready to open her eyes, Kusanagi wakes up.

The film continues with the hacking of a foreign ministry's interpreter, which Kusanagi starts to investigate. She finds out that the hacker is known as The Puppet Master, and that this is his first appearance in Japan. To catch the hacker, Section 9 chases after a garbage driver who was involved in the case, and it turns out that his cyber-brain had been manipulated by The Puppet Master. This scene introduces Togusa, an officer who only uses a revolver and does not have a cyber-brain, thus being the most human of them all. According to Motoko, he was hired since she thinks that specialising in cyborgs only will only lead to a slow death. After this, the garbage driver is interrogated. It turns out that his whole life is a set of false memories implemented by The Puppet Master. During the interrogation, Batou and Motoko ponder the role of information.

The film then cuts into a diving scene where Motoko lies in the ocean, looking up at the world. She is found by Batou, with whom she discusses the issue of her identity. If she were to quit her job, she would have to turn in her parts, her memories, and she would be left with nothing. Batou is a character that is shown interacting with Kusanagi even outside work. They seem to be friends, and in the end Batou even saves her from dying.

The camera cuts to a scene showing the everyday life in the city Kusanagi lives in. In the rainy streets, a truck crashes into a young naked woman. The woman, a cyborg, turns out to be The Puppet Master, who has escaped Section 6's firewall. Section 6, operated by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Section 9, operated by The Ministry of Internal Affairs, clash when it turns out that the hacker was Section 6's creation. The creation is called Project 2051, and it turns out to be what has been referred as The Puppet Master by the police forces.

The Puppet Master possessed a female shell produced by Section 6 to be able to seek refuge from Section 9. It wants to talk to Motoko Kusanagi, who is also consciousness trapped in a completely unnatural body. Motoko, like The Puppet Master, is trapped in a completely cybernetic shell making it difficult to tell whether she is actually human. The Puppet Master seeks Motoko in an attempt to find shelter, since like The Puppet Master, Kusanagi struggles with her identity as someone, or something that falls in between a human and a machine. The Puppet Master is then stolen back by Section 6, but Motoko manages to find it. She fights with a spider tank to get possession of The Puppet Master. During the fight in a desperate attempt to open the hatch, she loses an arm and a leg. The tank is destroyed by Batou, and Motoko is saved. Motoko lies on the ground and asks to speak to The Puppet Master. He convinces her about fusing with The Puppet Master. Together, they would create the peak of evolution, and Motoko would finally be free from Section 9. Motoko chooses to co-operate, and they fuse right before their bodies are shot by the police. Batou carries Motoko's head that survived the police attack to safety, and gets her a new cybernetic body, a body of a child. The new Motoko then ventures off to explore her identity.

2.2. Rupert Sanders's *Ghost in the Shell* (2017)

Rupert Sanders starts the film with the portrayal of Killian's creation. She is carefully crafted into a smooth-skinned, beautiful woman, who is played by Scarlett Johansson. Doctor Ouélet strokes Killian's face and calls her perfect. Killian does not know it yet, but she is the 98th experiment of attempting to connect a human brain to a cybernetic body. Her real past is erased from her memory, and these memories are replaced by ones of terrorists killing her parents. This is why she becomes an officer who fights against terrorists at Section 9.

The Puppet Master, the main antagonist of the original film, is replaced by Kuze, who is Kusanagi's childhood friend. He does not appear in Oshii's version at all. Kuze is a character from the spin-off series *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, an anime series directed by Kenji Kamiyama. In the new *Ghost in the Shell*, Kuze is a childhood friend of Killian, who has become a known hacker. He turns out to be the 97th failed experiment. His body is rugged, ugly, and coming apart. In *Ghost in the*

Shell: Stand Alone Complex, young Kuze's racial background is Japanese, but in the new film, he was played by Michael Pitt. During the film we find out that Kuze and Killian were originally Japanese rebels. They went through the same experiment of connecting human brain to cybernetic bodies, and Kuze was considered a failed experiment. These changes in character backgrounds shift the focal point of the film from the line between human and machine to the morality of human experiences.

Kuze, as a revenge to Hanka Motors that made him the rugged cyborg that he is, becomes a terrorist who attacks Hanka Motors by hacking a robotic geisha and by murdering scientists he considers responsible for his creation. Meanwhile Killian struggles with her identity and suffers from glitches in her ghost that remind her of her real past. Dr. Ouélet tries to erase this image of a burning temple, but it continues to appear throughout the film. Killian is convinced that finding this temple is the key to solving the struggles with her identity. Killian chases after Kuze when he continues to murder his creators. She realizes that Dr. Ouélet is his next target.

When they meet again, she confronts Dr. Ouélet about her real past. Against Hanka Motor's CEO Cutter's wishes Dr. Ouélet reveals Killian her real identity. She tells her that the temple she keeps seeing is the place where she was kidnapped along with Kuze, and that her real name is Motoko Kusanagi. After this, Dr. Ouélet is killed by Cutter, and Killian is declared a failed experience and she is ordered to be terminated. After a visit to her mother and the temple she resided in as a teenager, she remembers that Kuze used to be her childhood friend. Kuze finds her at the temple, and they engage in a conversation. Meanwhile, a spider-tank is sent by Cutter to kill them both, and Kusanagi protects him. They both lie on the ground nearly dead, and Kuze offers to fuse with Kusanagi to create a new kind of cyborg. She refuses, and Kuze is shot by a sniper and dies. Kusanagi is rescued by her team and survives. Section 9 leader Aramaki initiated the rescue attempt despite the entire section being outlawed by Section 6. During the last scene Killian decides to embrace her newly discovered identity as a Japanese woman in a Caucasian body and continues working for Section 9.

In sum, the storylines of the two versions are rather different. The difference between the two endings are the most drastic differences between the two films, and this study will show how this change in ethnicity affects the storyline and consequently, the differences between Kusanagi and Killian's character and identity as an Asian woman. Despite the revelation that Killian is just a fake identity of Motoko Kusanagi, the characters will be referred to as Kusanagi and Killian.

3 Background literature

This chapter introduces the background literature have been used in this study. This section starts with a short summary of the history of science-fiction anime and manga, which led to the making of original *Ghost in the Shell*. The genre has changed a lot during its short history, and it is important to know its roots to understand how children's morning cartoons became complex films directed towards adult audiences.

Contrary to the popular belief, anime and manga are not recent phenomena, even though they were popularized in the USA in the 1990s. According to Gilles Poitras, roots of anime and manga lie in the Meiji era, a time period located between the years 1869 and 1911. In the 1950s, anime started to become what it is nowadays: a popular genre of animated films with varying themes. In his article, Gilles Poitras introduces what he considers to be the most influential science-fiction mangas. Every one of these mangas have contributed to the creation of *Ghost in the Shell*. One of them is the *Astro Boy* by Osamu Tezuka. It was published in the 1950s, which is considered to be the first science-fiction manga. *Astro Boy* is an action-packed story where the main character is a robot boy who fights for justice. *Astro Boy* introduced the theme of humanity and pondered the line between artificial and human. *Astro Boy's* struggles with robot's rights was Tezuka's way of introducing the current issue of civil rights struggles in the United States. (Poitras, 52)

These themes of humanity and the cyborg's rights to their own bodies can be seen also in the original *Ghost in the Shell*, although they are presented in much more adult way. In the 1970s, a new type of robot manga was created: *Mobile Suit Gundam* series. As described by Poitras, it "took the brightly coloured toy-selling vehicle of the past and transformed it into a multifaceted and highly political tale of civilians caught up in a war between space colonies and the earth Federation. Low sales of the sponsor's toys led to a rushed ending for the series" (52). After this groundbreaking anime, a new audience of adults was introduced to the Japanese anime industry, and the storylines took a more serious turn and started to mature. (53)

The main characters were no longer omnipotent: they faced struggles and were flawed. As an example of this new genre of anime, Poitras mentions the 1995 release *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Shinseki Evangelion* in Japanese, a story that continues the tradition of the robot genre, but with more adult themes. The year 1995 was also the year that the original *Ghost in the Shell*, originally named *Kôkaku Kidôtai*, was released. It too is in a way a traditional robot anime, but it introduces a completely different kind of main character: Motoko Kusanagi, who is a female Japanese army

major with cybernetic enhancements. It was a new kind of anime, since it was designed for mainstream consumption. (56–57)

All in all, it can be said that science-fiction anime's development through the Meiji Era has culminated in the original *Ghost in the Shell*. Science-fiction anime has become something quite different from what it originally was: it developed from manga and anime like *Astro Boy*, a children's cartoon with an omnipotent main character with a purpose to sell merchandise to something that reflects society's issues in a way that attracts mature audiences. The flawed characters make stories more interesting like in the original *Ghost in the Shell*, which is often regarded as a classic science-fiction anime.

3.1. Orientalism and Occidentalism in manga and anime

The two key terms used for analysing the films are Orientalism and Occidentalism. To tie these terms to manga and anime specifically this study will use the article “Internalization of Anime and Manga” by Amy Shirong-Lu, in which she explains the terms in the context of the Japanese culture. Japanese anime has been influenced by Western animation, and according to Lu, this is why anime includes international elements. (Lu 170)

Signs of Western influences are Motoko Kusanagi's ambiguous appearance and characters with names that are of Western origin. As Lu puts it, anime reminds us of Hollywood films due to its editing style and multicultural elements, and therefore, it becomes an easily approachable product without cultural boundaries. Some of these international elements that appear in anime, such as female superheroes, can be seen as positive influences, but they can also be read as harmful stereotypes of the Occident. According to Shirong-Lu, Occidentalism and Orientalism are central when analysing *Ghost in The Shell* and the character of Motoko Kusanagi, since they were a common motif in the mid-1990s. In the original *Ghost in the Shell*, the antagonist was made in the United States. Occidentalism, in short, is the phenomenon of introducing harmful stereotypes about the Western world, the Occident. It can be concluded that Occidentalism as a term is the reversal of the term Orientalism. The term was first introduced in 1979 by Edward Said. In Japanese anime Occidentalism appears as stereotyped characters. Most commonly the strongly stereotyped characters are Americans, all of whom have blonde hair and blue eyes, voluptuous bodies and are loud and rude. Lu describes the effects of Occidentalism in anime as something that results in demonization of the West. It often includes references to existing nations, like the United States, which is often shown as a nation with a goal of world domination, when Japan acts as the saviour. This theme of Occidentalism and Orientalism appear in both the original and the remake *Ghost in the Shell*. According to Lu, the

antagonist of the film, *The Puppet Master*, was made in the United States since it is the default place of origin for characters that are manipulative or evil. (175–178)

Motoko Kusanagi is a female cyborg who fills all the characteristics of a superhero. She solves crimes, has almost supernatural strength and uses multiple gadgets to her aid. In 1995 and even nowadays she is a pioneer in the action genre, since she was one of the first characters to challenge the tradition of a white male lead in action films. Her body, like that of a Western superhero, is a hypersexualised version of a female body, meaning that it is an extremely feminine version of a female body with large breasts and hips, and a small waist. Her facial features further make her appearance racially ambiguous. Lu states that it is common for many anime characters to have big eyes, deep orbits and a high nose bridge. (Lu, 171) All of these characteristics have features that do not seem Japanese. She adds that, as a result, “it is hard to detect any typical Japanese physiognomy from the characters – instead, a kind of hybrid global ‘look’ hovers on their faces and bodies. (171)” Kusanagi fits this description perfectly. Her naked body is often shown on the screen, enhancing the fact that she is indeed female. Her body has cybernetic enhancements, which make her athletically very capable. The fact that Kusanagi is an Asian woman who is a major in the Japanese military and intelligence services empowers the Asian female audience of *Ghost in the Shell* is what turns the traditional role of an Asian woman upside down.

3.2. “Ryôσαι Kenbo” and the traditional role of an Asian woman

To lay the basis to later analysis, this section will introduce the traditional role of an Asian woman, to which Kusanagi is compared. This stereotype will be based on articles by Sinhja Mukherjee and Fumika Sato, who have studied female employment in Asia. An article by Carl Silvio that focuses strictly on Kusanagi’s role as an Asian woman is introduced as well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, her gender role is vastly different from the traditional role of a female superhero who only acts as a sidekick. These articles provide background to the analysis of Kusanagi’s status as an Asian woman and thus are relevant to the study.

The traditional Japanese woman should represent what is called the “ryôσαι kenbo”, a good wife and a wise mother. Ryôσαι kenbo describes the traditional East-Asian gender role set for women, who often choose to stay at home as wives and mothers than study or work. In a study conducted by Sinhja Mukherjee in 2015, only “35.83% of Japanese females who had a junior college degree and 30% of those who had college, university or graduate school degrees were not participating in the labour market (GOJ 2015c) (Sinhja Mukherjee, 852).

Fumika Sato's article provides some background to women in the Japanese military. According to Fumika Sato, 5.2% of the employees in the Japan's Self Defence Forces (SDF), were female by 2010. In 1995, when *Ghost in the Shell* was first released, 4.24% were female. (Sato, 2–3) This is what has created the stereotype of a ryōsai kenbo, and it is what sets Kusanagi apart from the male leads in Japanese anime. In the context of Japanese military, according to Sato, in 1992 when National Defence Agency of Japan allowed female students to enrol, and in 1993 the Japanese prime minister Kantaro Suzuki stated that letting female students enrol on the National Defence Academy will cause people to change their view on SDF, making young men enrol in the NDA so that they could find good wives. Sato states that this logic does not come from desire for gender equality, but from the use of concepts, like a ryōsai kenbo, literally translated as “good wife, wise mother”. (11–12)

These kinds of comments are the reason why the fact that Motoko Kusanagi was an Asian female major was so meaningful. Kusanagi is a strong female character, whose athletic body, though her body has been enhanced with cybernetic parts, has allowed her to achieve the rank of a major. In the film, Kusanagi's role and how she achieved it is not addressed, but it is something special in a society where only 4 % of army employees are female. In a way, the original *Ghost in the Shell* introduces the future Japan as a more equal country, and this is what sets a positive example to female audience: in the future, they can achieve anything despite their womanhood which is sometimes viewed as a hindrance in Japan, judged by the employment numbers in the SDF.

Kusanagi's significance becomes apparent in Carl Silvio's article *Refiguring the radical cyborg in Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell*. According to Silvio, Kusanagi's competence as a major and her positioning as the protagonist invert the conventional gender roles of fictional characters. She becomes the narrative agent, but this part is bound up with her cybernetic construction. She is more competent to do her job than anyone else and she is the central protagonist. According to Silvio, this extraordinary power granted to her by her cybernetic augmentations inverts the conventional gender roles and gives her a degree the role of a narrative agent in the story. It is what sets her apart from other women, but it is strongly tied to her role as a cyborg. This role is what grants her freedom in the end, but during the first half she also faces the loss of her subjectivity due to the role set to her by Section 9. The antagonist, The Puppet Master, also transcends the prescriptive limits of our society through technology, but in a simpler manner. (Silvio, 57–59)

These theories offer the views I will use when analysing the two film versions of *Ghost in the Shell*. Orientalism and Occidentalism will offer views on analysing the character of Motoko Kusanagi as a cross-section between the Oriental and the Occidental stereotype of an Asian and a female character. Kusanagi is more of a traditional depiction of the Occidental stereotype female superhero than it

would initially seem as she does have elements that go against the Oriental stereotype, like her employment as an army major at the time when the percentage of females in the army was low. These make her a non-traditional female lead, but she falls a victim to sexualization because of her feminine body that responds to Western beauty ideals. These contrasts between Kusanagi and the traditional role of an Asian woman as ryô sai kenbo are what makes the original *Ghost in the Shell* significant, and this is what will be taken to consideration when analyzing and comparing the new film against the original *Ghost in the Shell*.

4 Analysis

As summarised in the previous chapter, Kusanagi exists as a hybrid of the traditional stereotype of an Asian woman and Western woman. In the original film, what made her special was that she portrayed an Asian female superhero, offering the superhero genre a character to which Asian women can relate. She is a type of character with a background rarely seen in films, and this was something that had not commonly been seen before in 1995, especially in the Western world. Even the fact that she is a lead character is something new. In 2017, the Western film industry and even the anime industry has created many female superheroes, but they were rarely seen as the lead character. Although they are essentially the same character, in the study the Kusanagi from the 1995 film will be referred to as Motoko Kusanagi and the new 2017 version as Mira Killian. The study aims to analyse and compare the gender issues and the issue of Kusanagi's changing ethnicity in both of the films with the theories of Orientalism and Occidentalism in mind.

4.1 Projections of the East and the West and racial identity in *Ghost in the Shell*

According to the original *Ghost in the Shell*, Kusanagi was created to be a human weapon. When taking a look at her, she seems like nothing special. She looks like a regular woman as her special augmentations are hidden inside a mass-produced shell. The exact same shell can be seen in a montage sequence that takes us through her home city. While making her way home, Kusanagi sees multiple shells that look just like her going on about their lives as regular citizens. She walks past a shop window filled with mannequins, a reflection of herself shown to the audience after the diving scene where Kusanagi questions her role as anything more than a puppet. The mannequins represent her in a way: she is in no way unique, and her body is only a component that can be bought by anyone who can afford it. Thus, it can be said that the "shell" is only her artificially created mass-produced body, and it does not necessarily have to resemble an Asian woman. As mentioned in the article about the internalization of anime by Amy Shirong-Lu, the appearance of Motoko Kusanagi is racially ambiguous in the original anime and manga, and therefore it is not necessarily wrong to cast her as a Caucasian woman.

In the new version, Major Mira Killian, unlike the original Kusanagi, is most definitely something special. This is highlighted by the scenes which portray Dr. Ouélet stroking Killian's face and calling her Ouélet's most beautiful creation. She is the first of her kind, and the result of many failed experiments. This strips away the identity crisis that defined the original Kusanagi. Instead, her identity crisis is built around the past that she has forgotten. This is why the original film chooses to ignore Kusanagi's background; in the new film it is revealed that Killian was originally a Japanese

teenager, which is why she keeps seeing images of a burning temple. Perhaps Scarlett Johansson was cast since she is an actor that many viewers are already familiar with, but this leads to the loss of a major part of Kusanagi's identity. Kusanagi's identity could have been changed to make the film more appealing and potentially more profitable to Western audiences. The original *Ghost in the Shell* is known for implied nudity, and this premise of seeing Scarlett Johansson in the nude could seem intriguing to male audience. She has all these aspects that make the film seem more interesting: she is a big name in the superhero scene, well-known for her beauty and she has acted in similar parts before. Scarlett Johansson is most known for her role as The Black Widow. Her character in the Avengers films is fairly similar to Major Kusanagi: The Black Widow is a cool and collected character, similarly to Johansson's version of Kusanagi. It can be speculated that she was cast because of the resemblance between the two characters. Johansson is also an actress that the science-fiction- and superhero film audience are already familiar with due to her continuous appearances in the Marvel cinematic universe. She represents the current beauty standards with her big eyes, heart-shaped face and pointy nose. These characteristics also are the definition of beauty in anime. There is no denying that her facial features remind those of Motoko Kusanagi. Scarlett also has a petite, feminine frame, fitting to modern beauty standards. In conclusion, she sells well.

All of these are valid reasons for casting Johansson, but it does not erase the fact that Kusanagi was originally an Asian woman and thus, should have been cast as one. The film could have been truer to the original film if it had featured an Asian woman in the lead, and it also might have attracted a different kind of audience. If Kusanagi was cast as an Asian woman, she would have definitely been something different for Hollywood. The audience could have seen a new kind of superwoman, and especially the Asian audience would have had someone to relate to. On the other hand, this would have rendered the revelation of Killian being originally Japanese unnecessary. It would have been interesting to see a remake of a Japanese classic with an all-Japanese cast or a cast that follows the original. In *Ghost in the Shell*, only a few important roles are played by Japanese actors. The background characters, for example the scientists, are Caucasian. Only the yakuza's lair is filled with Japanese characters, which is a negative stereotype of Japanese culture that is very familiar to Western audiences. The only Japanese characters that have relatively significant roles are Lieutenant Colonel Aramaki and Section 9 officer Togusa. Togusa, played by Chin Han, is a Section 9 officer that is stuck in his old-fashioned ways. He is an officer who chooses not to use any other weapon rather than his revolver, even though it has a serious chance of jamming in the middle of a battle. Aramaki, played by Takeshi Kitano, speaks only Japanese to his employers. He existed in the original *Ghost in the Shell*, but Sanders's choice of keeping him as the only Japanese officer was a conscious choice, much like his choice of replacing American antagonist with the yakuza. Representation matters, and

the 2017 *Ghost in the Shell* leaves the audience wondering about what kinds of roles are Asians cast in.

However, Sanders chose not to replace Kusanagi with Killian entirely, and so a point was made where it is revealed that she indeed is originally Japanese. It seems like a peculiar choice since the revelation is very surprising: the child version of Kusanagi looks completely different from Killian. This may be confusing to the audience since there is a major difference in looks between the child version of her and the adult, cyborg Kusanagi. However, it can also be said that this might have been done to make the revelation of her character's actual background more surprising, or to tie the film to the original. The main character's Western name also might make the film more approachable to a Western audience since the main character is someone they can relate to. It is easier to relate to characters of your own cultural background, and the new *Ghost in the Shell* was a version directed towards the Western audience. In the original film this storyline does not exist, and Kusanagi's real identity is not discussed.

Mamoru Oshii's version of *Ghost in the Shell* focuses on the dispute between the Section 6, the Treaty Bureau of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Section 9. Project 2051, also known as The Puppet Master, is a new kind of artificial intelligence, created by Western scientists. He gained consciousness against the scientist's intentions, and throughout the film he speaks to Kusanagi through a connection between their cyber brains. He is described as a dangerous terrorist, who has never been caught or seen by anyone. In the end when the viewer finally sees him, his body is that of a woman. This is meant to come as a surprise to the viewer since the feminine shell makes a strong contrast to his masculine voice. The shell that he is trapped in is a blonde woman with bright blue eyes, a body that has typically Western features. She is a negative stereotype of the Occident: a threat to Japan conducted by foreign scientists. This terrorist is protected by the crooked Section 6, the illegal arms dealings of which The Puppet Master aims to expose. Interestingly, in the new *Ghost in the Shell* the stereotypes switch places. Americans are portrayed as heroes while Japanese people are generally not represented in a very positive way. Killian is created to combat terrorism. In this film, the antagonists are Japanese. First, they are after the yakuza, which is how the Japanese mob is called. The other enemy is Killian's Japanese childhood friend Kuze, who is shown to resent his new artificial Western body. The dialogue below is exchanged in the new *Ghost in the Shell* between Mira Killian and Kuze in the scene where he had kidnapped Killian with intention to reveal her origin to her.

Kuze: "Who made you?"

Kuze: “What have they told you, that you were the first? The first cerebral salvage? You were born of lessons took from my failure.”

Mira Killian: “What are you talking about?”

Kuze: “I was conscious while they dismembered my body and discarded me like garbage. I was lying on a table listening to doctors talk about how my mind had not meshed with the shell that they had built. How Project 2571 had failed, and they had to move on.... To you. What a beauty you are. They have improved us so much, since they made me. They thought that we would be a part of their evolution, but they have created us to evolve alone. Beyond them.” (Sanders, 2017)

In the dialogue Kuze has captured Killian, and now he tells Killian his origin story. Her creation is entirely due to countless failed experiments. He too, is a Japanese man trapped in a rugged cybernetic body, who has been cast aside by Dr. Ouélet. Like Kuze, most of the main characters are Western. The evil does come from Western countries in the form of scientists, but the fact that Kuze is represented as a Japanese man cannot be ignored. This means that the evil visible to the audience is from Japanese origin: in addition to Kuze being Japanese, right at the beginning of the film Hanka Motors is attacked by robotic geishas (see Fig. 1).



Fig 1. *The robotic geisha.* MMXVII Paramount Pictures and Storyteller Distribution Co., LLC.

(2017)

Geishas are Japanese entertainers, and the appearance of these robots is stereotypically Japanese. It correlates with the stereotype of a geisha: they have small white faces, slanted small black eyes, tiny red eyebrows and red, heart-shaped lips. In the centre of her face is a light red circle, most likely to represent the Japanese flag, as if they could not be identified as Japanese without it. The mechanic

geisha is dressed in a flashy red kimono, wears its hair in a flamboyant hairstyle. These details however, make her *a maiko*, a geisha apprentice, not an actual geisha. A geisha values simplicity, unlike maikos. Maiko is how Westerners think all geishas look, which makes this a stereotype. With a little background research, these details could have been taken into the consideration when filming the film. This would have shown respect towards Japanese culture.

The terrorists behind the geisha attack are then traced to a club hosted by the yakuza. Killian goes undercover and enters the club, where the viewer is shown projections of skimpily clad Indian-looking women dancing to entertain Japanese mobsters whom are there either to drink or to buy illegal knock-off cyber augmentations. To add on to the list of stereotypes, the original, Hong Kong -inspired backgrounds that create the atmosphere of a dystopian city filled with slums are changed to consist of skyscrapers, neon lights and gigantic ads featuring geishas and cherry blossoms. To many people these stereotypes represent the essence of Japan. They seem to exist only to bring exotic elements to the film. In addition to the selective casting of the main characters as Americans, these Orientalist stereotypes create a negative impression about Japanese people. It almost seems like the director chose to add Japanese elements to plant the film firmly in Japan since the cast was Western. This division of everything good and important being of Caucasian origin is further enforced by the fact that only a few meaningful Japanese characters speak Japanese while every other character speaks English, and act like they can understand Japanese. They do not bother replying in Japanese, but instead talk English to these characters. Furthermore, in important locations such as Kusanagi's grave or the temple, writing is in Latin alphabets instead of Japanese kanji, even though these texts were written by Japanese characters. This, of course, makes the film easier to follow for Western audiences, but it takes away the language, which is a big part of culture. Even The Puppet Master is replaced by a failed experiment by the government, removing the elements of critique against the human concepts of gender and Kusanagi's role as a birth giver. The new version seems to strip away everything that makes the original film a science-fiction classic. However, one positive stereotype can still be found amongst the negative stereotypes. Section 9 leader Aramaki is the one who chooses to believe Killian and saves her in the end.

3.2. The femininity and sexualization of Kusanagi and Killian

Kusanagi's femininity is hyperbolized in Mamoru Oshii's version. Kusanagi's cybernetic body is that of an ideal body of a western female superhero: feminine yet muscular. This concept of hyperbolized body refers to Kusanagi as an extreme representative of the two opposite sexes. A hyperbolized female body typically has unnaturally large breasts, small waist, and large hips. A male body would have emphasised shoulder and large, profound muscles. As referred to in the background literature,

Silvio describes it as Kusanagi being a hyperbolic female. She responds to the Western beauty ideal familiar from Western superheroes: her body is at the same time ultra-feminine and muscular enough to suit the role of an army major. (Silvio, 63)



Fig.2. Motoko Kusanagi in the opening scene of the 1995 *Ghost in the Shell*. Kodansha Ltd. 1995

Although her face is very androgynous and rarely shows any emotion, her body is often shown naked. She needs to remove her clothes to use her thermo-optical camouflaging ability, even though the existence of clothes with camouflaging abilities is established in a chase scene where a man escapes the police by pulling an invisibility cloak over his head. Her feminine form is emphasised, and throughout the film the sight of Kusanagi's perfect body is presented to the viewer. The camera subjects Kusanagi's naked body to the audiences' gaze. During the opening scene of the original *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), Kusanagi surprises the viewer by taking her clothes off and diving into the combat fully naked (see fig. 2). The sexualization of the female lead is what sets her character apart from the male leads in the film, since she is the only one shown naked. However, Oshii seems to challenge the conventional roles by setting a contrast between Kusanagi and Batou.

According to Silvio, Kusanagi and Batou represent the traditional role of male and female. Batou is hypermasculine, but the director does not focus on his overly masculine features in the same way as Kusanagi's femininity. He explains that these features exist as a necessary part of the narrative. This over-sexualization of Kusanagi, and in the end, her role as a birth-giver to a new existence make her fall into the traditional role of a female lead. (68) This seems strange considering Kusanagi's original role as a strong independent woman. The ending scene could be seen as a metaphor to the women who are seemingly equal but are still bound to be dependent on men in the end.

The nudity is also present during other scenes: for example, the opening credits, where her undressed body is subjected to the gaze of the audience. During the credits her creation is shown with intricate

detail. The camera lingers on her feminine curves and large breasts, while Kusanagi is presumably unconscious. These hyper-feminine features are what in the Western world are often seen as the ideal female body: her hourglass-shaped body has been seen as the definition of a beautiful body for centuries in the Western world. This also puts emphasis on the fact that in the original film, Kusanagi is a passive sexual object to be viewed by the audience. This is the only scene that remains almost unchanged in the 2017 remake as well. Later in the film there is a scene which shows Kusanagi diving. She rises to surface and meets Batou on the deck of a boat. She undresses her wetsuit slowly, revealing her naked body, passively looking away from Batou. This objectifying is balanced out by her wittiness, which in contrast emphasises her independence. The viewer can occasionally catch a glimpse of her cold, dry humour, for example when Batou stares at her taking her clothes off after the diving scene, from which the following dialogue is extracted.

Batou: “A cyborg diving on a day off. It is not a good habit. When did you start doing this? Aren't you afraid of the ocean? What if the floater does not function?”

Kusanagi: “Then I'll die. Or will you dive in the water and save me? I didn't ask you to accompany me.”

Batou: “I just...” (Oshii, 1995)

During the scene, Batou attempts to scold Kusanagi. He cannot finish because Kusanagi cuts him off, and the agitated Batou opens his mouth. Ashamed, he turns away when Kusanagi starts taking off her wetsuit. After this they strike a conversation about Kusanagi's liberty as a human consciousness trapped in a body owned by Section 9. She cannot be truly free, since a consciousness cannot exist outside of a physical body. Kusanagi's monologue about her identity crisis is commented by what later is revealed to be The Puppet Master, who much like her, is a consciousness without a body to go to. He calls Kusanagi his reflection, and promises that she will see the whole truth in the end.

Kusanagi: “Indeed, we have a right to quit. If we return our bodies and part of our memories to the government with great humility. Just like there are many elements for a human to be human, you need surprisingly many elements for you to be yourself. A distinct face, an unconsciously distinct voice, a hand you look at when you wake up, your childhood memories, foresight. But that's not all. A wide range of information and a network that I can access. All those are part of me, create my consciousness itself, and at the same time constrain me within a certain limit.”

The Puppet Master: “What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror. Then we shall see face to face.” (Oshii, 1995)

The scene cuts to images of a rainy city, where the viewer sees all these carbon copies of Kusanagi and blank-faced mannequins at a store window. This makes the viewer wonder whether that is all that Motoko is.



Fig 3. *Killian undressing in the opening scene of the new Ghost in the Shell.* MMXVII Paramount Pictures and Storyteller Distribution Co., LLC. (2017)

In the new version, the diving scene was handled quite differently. In the 2017 remake, Killian is represented as more bashful than her original version. Killian's nude body is not shown at any point. Instead, she wears a special suit to cover her body during combat, when in the original she is fully naked when using the optical camouflage-feature, making her nudity only an illusion (see fig. 3). Unlike in the original diving scene where Batou actively avoids looking at Kusanagi taking her clothes off, Batou throws a towel at her. Killian also does not take her clothes off during their conversation. In the original, Kusanagi stops taking her suit off, and we see Batou taking a short glance at her nude body. However, unlike Kusanagi whose sexuality is never discussed, Killian's sexuality is shown in the new film. She is shown in an erotic scene stroking a real human female's nude body. This is something wondrous to her since she is not able to actually feel anything as a result of her cybernetic construction. With this short scene, Killian's homosexuality is submitted to the audience instead of her body. The scene seems to fetishize lesbian sexuality. It is represented as something of a fantasy, and the scene itself feels like a stereotypical scene with couple of highschool girls searching for their sexual identity through gentle stroking and a shy kiss. It is a scene that is seemingly irrelevant to the plot, and it feels like it exists only to grab the attention of audiences representing sexual minorities. In addition, unlike Kusanagi, Killian does not have as hypersexualised feminine features. Her body is more androgynous and lacks the same kind of curves that Kusanagi's

body has. Killian retains her role as a feminine character throughout the film, unlike Kusanagi, who also has a more masculine form in addition to her hyperbolized male form.

It can be said that Kusanagi is not just her feminine features. She has her masculine side too, and this is how she got promoted to the role of a major. Kusanagi is strong, and she easily surpasses her male colleagues easily thanks to her cybernetic body. Her body is what enables her to push Togusa, who has minimal cybernetic augmentations, to the role of a sidekick in the car chase scene, where Togusa cannot do anything about Kusanagi overtaking the car via her cybernetic connection to the cars operating system (Silvio 57). Togusa is used as a driver only when it is convenient, and at other times he is left staring at Kusanagi with a baffled look on his face. Kusanagi's body, no matter how convenient it seems, is the main cause of Kusanagi's conflict with herself. Technically her body is owned by Section 9, and if she quit her job in an attempt to be free, she would have to give it up entirely. Thus she would let go of an essential part of her identity. Her body does have its limits though. During her fight against the spider-tank that was sent to destroy the both Kusanagi and The Puppet Master, she accidentally rips her arms and a leg off while opening the tank's hatch (see fig. 4).



Fig. 4. The hypermasculine figure of Motoko Kusanagi. Kodansha Ltd. 1995

As she attempts to pull the engine apart from the tank, her body shifts from the feminine, lean and well-formed body, to a hyper-masculine form that could be called almost repulsive. This, yet again, takes the viewer by surprise and emphasises Kusanagi's desperation to find out the secret behind The Puppet Master. In Sanders' version, Killian retains her lean, almost fragile looking feminine body throughout the film. She is never shown fully naked, and her body is always covered by a nude leotard, creating an illusion of nudity instead of being fully undressed like in Oshii's version. There are also no masculine features to be found, even in the end scene that shares many similarities with the original.

All of these examples show that Mamoru Oshii seems to challenge the viewer through breaking the natural laws of gender roles. Whereas Kusanagi and Batou are hyperbolized versions of the binary roles, The Puppet Master abandons gender roles completely. He is a sentient machine in a cyborg body, and therefore has no gender. This is shown to the viewer when The Puppet Master escapes the firewall and takes over a cybernetic body. This body that The Puppet Master is in is that of a female. The body is naked: her breasts are in the center of the shot, and attention is yet again drawn to her feminine features through a lingering camera. This body, however, is referred to scientists as a “he”. The voice of The Puppet Master is also that of a male.

According to Silvio, this is what creates a conflict against the hyper-feminine looks, and it acts to further confusing the viewer. He is linguistically a male, but visually a female. This represents cyber-technology’s capability to confuse the conventional deployment of gender. However, despite his technological origin, he in a way seems also very human. He needs to fuse with Kusanagi to create an offspring, putting Kusanagi in a maternal role even though the offspring is not birthed in a traditional role but is more of a fusion between Kusanagi and The Puppet Master. (Silvio, 62) This is what pushes her further into the traditional role of a female, a puppet whose sole purpose is to provide an offspring to continue The Puppet Master’s lineage. They turn out to be dependent on each other: neither of them can be set free without the help of the other. Their identities are bound to their lack of natural bodies. Kusanagi is bound to never be truly free since her body is owned by Section 9, and The Puppet Master cannot be liberated due to the lack of body to affix his now-sentient soul into. So, he acts to challenge Kusanagi’s role as a cyborg that was set by society. As Silvio puts it, what denies Kusanagi her freedom, are the limits set by society. Her body defines her identity, and as a consequence, she chooses to give up her physical body to create something new through fusion with The Puppet Master. Kusanagi is a soul affixed to a cybernetic body, and this is what defines her relation to Section 9. She cannot exist independently since she lacks a natural body. (60) It is interesting that Rupert Sanders picked Kuze as an antagonist over The Puppet Master. Kuze’s motive is vastly different from The Puppet Master: Kuze wants to take revenge on Hanka Motors for casting him aside after forcibly making him into a cyborg. In Sanders’ version, Killian’s struggle with her identity is solved by her meeting with her real mother, and thus she refuses to fuse with Kuze, leaving him to die. This takes a lot away from the ending, since Kusanagi remains as Kusanagi, without giving birth to something new like in the original version. Nothing is achieved besides Kusanagi now knowing her new identity as a Japanese woman in a Caucasian woman’s body.

To put it shortly, the two films have very different approach to the issue of Kusanagi’s and Killian’s femininity. Whereas Kusanagi is a hypersexualized female with a masculine side, Killian falls into the middle. Killian is not hypersexualized in the same way as Kusanagi is, and unlike Kusanagi who

represents both sexes, she does not seem to have a masculine side. Her character seems to change completely between the original and the new version of *Ghost in the Shell*. Motoko Kusanagi has only little in common with Mira Killian. Her witty character is erased from the film, and she is overall more serious and robotic in nature.

4 Conclusions

Both the new and original *Ghost in the Shell* feature harmful stereotypes of both Orient and the Occident. The two films have different viewpoints: the original features Occidental stereotypes, and the new film features Oriental stereotypes. The stereotypes found in the new *Ghost in the Shell* are also more prominent in comparison to the original version, where they are seemingly hard to find. Kusanagi is also more of a hyperbolized representation of the female sex than Killian, whose look is more androgynous. Kusanagi spends a big portion of the film nude, subjecting her hypersexualised body to the gaze of the audience. In contrast to Kusanagi's role as a hypersexualised female, Kusanagi also has a role as a hyperbolized male in the end of the film. Killian does not have that kind of different form, and her lean, petite look stays similar throughout the new film. Killian never takes off her clothes completely. But, unlike Kusanagi whose sexuality is not shown on screen, the new film includes a homoerotic scene featuring Mira Killian. Thus it seems like in both versions of *Ghost in the Shell*, the main character's bodies and sexualities are treated as points of focus. However, the films do it differently. Whereas the original Kusanagi is not shown to feel embarrassment about her nudity, Killian is treated as something delicate by the camera. The audience is shown glimpses of Killian's nude body, but the camera does not seem to linger on it like it did linger on Kusanagi's naked body in the original.

All things considered, Kusanagi is more of a revolutionary character Mira Killian. She is a strong Asian woman, and her being acted by Scarlett Johansson takes away her revolutionary role as a new kind of Asian woman. What made Kusanagi so different from the traditional Asian woman was that she worked in the army as a major, had superhuman physical strength and acted due to her own interests. She chose to fuse with the antagonist despite her affiliation to the Japanese special unit which intends to destroy The Puppet Master. She is different from the stereotypical 1990s female lead characters, and changing her ethnic background has significance to the story. Her being specifically Asian is important to the genre of science fiction, even today when an Asian character is rarely seen in the lead role. Kusanagi's role as a new kind of superwoman and her role as a different Asian woman need to be present in the *Ghost in the Shell* to make the main character as meaningful as she is. This is what makes the original film a classic, and how the new film falls short from the original. Asian characters are often treated as an exotic feature, and they are often shown speaking the Japanese language presumably to add some mystique to the characters. One example is a character called Katana. She was played by Karen Fukuhara in *Suicide Squad* (2018). Way too often these kinds of films feature Asian characters only playing minor roles or the role of the villain. The beforementioned films like *Hachi: A Dog's Tale* are just a few examples of films where the films are set in Asia, yet

the main actors casted are Caucasian. These films use Eastern mystique as a selling point, much like the new *Ghost in the Shell*. In analysis, it was brought up that her role as a strong female lead affects the female audience by giving them a positive role model. Kusanagi's role as an Asian woman who goes against the Asian stereotype of a quiet and obedient woman affects audiences in a similar positive way as does her role as a powerful female character. Katana in *Suicide Squad* was an exoticized Asian, but she offered some much needed representation nonetheless. She was a character that the Asian audience could identify with. The modern Western films often feature powerful female characters, and these characters are popular.

Unlike Western films which have only recently started featuring powerful female leads, Japanese anime has featured strong characters like that for a long time. Shows like *Sailor Moon* (1991) are viewed as feminist cult classics with its almost all-female cast and a male character who is throughout the series kidnapped more often than any of the female characters lead. A strong woman is a common character type in shôjo manga and anime intended for girls, but this type of character is getting more common in shônen manga and anime intended for boys as well. Shônen mangas and animes often feature both male lead and a female lead who is nowadays often more than a love interest. *Kill-la-Kill* (2013) is a fitting example of this kind of anime. It is an action-packed shônen anime, but it features mostly female characters in the lead roles. These characters are continuously shown defeating men despite their skimpily clad appearances and are the epitome of female empowerment in shônen anime. However, Kusanagi is still something different, since she is the powerful female lead character in a science-fiction anime from the 1990s. Kusanagi also combines femininity and masculinity in a rarely seen way.

It would have been very interesting to study and compare the manga in addition to the two films. Kusanagi's character is very different from how she is first presented in the original *Ghost in the Shell* manga. The manga makes the Kusanagi from the original *Ghost in the Shell* film seem lame in comparison. The manga is more graphic, and so is Kusanagi's character. She makes slapstick jokes and is more tomboyish in general. Her lesbian relationships with other women are fetishized and shown as sexually explicit full-colour pictures featuring nudity. To put it shortly, she is very different character from the Kusanagi in the original *Ghost in the Shell* where she seems more robotic and serious than her manga counterpart. Other characters are more fleshed out too, and even the spider tanks speak and have a tight relationship with their companions. This makes machines even more human than they were in the two films. This, however, can be marked off as something to study in future research.

All in all, the original *Ghost in the Shell* broke the standards of action and science-fiction films. Oshii created something that was entirely new to the two genres. The new film falls short from the revolutionary role of the original. It has done some things differently in comparison to the traditional Hollywood action film, but it seems to mostly rely on riding on the ongoing trend of Japanese pop culture's popularity in the West. It keeps the bare minimum of what makes *Ghost in the Shell* the classic that it is considered, but without the revelation of Killian's actual identity as Kusanagi it would have had little in common with the original. This is a shame because it could have, like the original, broken the mold of a Hollywood-produced science-fiction film, but in the end, it is no different from any other action film, and just cashes in on the popularity of the original title.

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