

MASTER'S THESIS

The representation of the mothers in J-horror

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The Representation of the Mothers in J-horror

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

J-horror, a new type of horror films emerging in Japan in the late 1990s, is known for its unconventional film style and narrative. Mother is one the key motifs found in many J-horror. This thesis chooses three films – *Dark Water*, *Ju On II* and *One Missed Call* as the subject for the scrutiny of the relationship between the representation of the mother and the Japanese patriarchy. The mothers in these films refuse to be positioned as objects. By transgressing the rigid boundaries of space, identity and gaze, these “horror” mothers signify the vulnerability of the patriarchal rules that discriminate against mothers. Mothers in these films are represented as complex personae with conflicting needs and desires. Based on the psychoanalytic concepts and feminist criticism on mothering experience, this thesis examines J-horror’s treatment of the “multivocality” of the mother and her related universe. It also inquires the ways cinematic forms and style makes the visible sub-text of J-horror invisible. J-horror unmasks how the privileged patriarchal discourse is reflected in the films through plot design; in addition, it shows how the mother figures or their related environment are used to reshape that discourse. It is found that the three texts redefine mother’s identities and the way they experience mothering. The thesis concludes that though the films aptly articulate the mothers’ complex experience, desires and fantasies, the mothers fail to escape from the coda of separation with daughters.

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