Paper / Proposal Title:


Author(s) Name:

Shana Sanusi

University or Company Affiliation:

Taylor's University, Malaysia

Presentation Method. I would like to:

i. present via pre-recorded film (with a written paper)

Abstract (300 words):

Contemporary Japanese horror films produced since the turn of the millennium often explore the politics of space, place and architecture to reflect upon the social and spatial conditions of the post-economic bubble period. This paper concentrates on the fictional apartment as a spatial motif to expound on the performance of femininity and motherhood in modern Japan. Through a close reading of Dark Water (2002) and Kotoko (2011), this paper examines the materiality and interiority of the apartment complex to consider how the female protagonists’ experience of the maternal are affected by urban (built) space. I suggest that the apartment structure possesses an anthropomorphic presence that enables it to spatially manipulate its occupants’ bodies, subjectivity and thought, hence immersing them into becoming one with it. My reading of Dark Water addresses how the apartment setting corresponds to Elizabeth Grosz’s architectural discussion of the chora based on Luce Irigaray’s view of the female body, or more specifically the womb, as a house that is placed under man’s subjugation. I contend that the protagonist’s surrounding space, thus, castigates her to usurp motherhood in adhering to Japanese patriarchal order. By using Julia Kristeva’s abject and Mary
Douglas’ insight on pollution taboos, this paper also briefly addresses the perpetual imagery of water penetration in the building that reveals not only a constructional flaw but an issue of contamination and corporeal boundary. Meanwhile, Henri Lefebvre’s account of the domestic space as a ‘mirror’ that reflects the formation of one’s identity informs my analysis of Kotoko. The porosity of the modern Tokyo apartment metaphorizes the decorporealization of the protagonist’s maternal body and the unraveling of her psyche. This paper concludes by delineating the apartment space as conflicting to Gaston Bachelard’s idea of the maternal house, for its interiority remains occupied by displaced ‘unmothering’ figures.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Shana Sanusi is a Lecturer in Film and Media Studies at the School of Communication, Taylor’s University, Malaysia. She is also a PhD candidate at the School of Arts and Social Sciences in the Malaysian campus of Monash University. Her dissertation examines the intersection between familial trauma and the domestic space in East Asian horror films. Aside from contemporary horror cinema, her research interests also include gender discourse, postmodernist films and the fantastic.