



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tangled up in Fear: Excavating the Matrophobia in Women's Horror Cinema Umma

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jan 9, 2025	In recent years, an increasing number of films have explored the intricate dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship, with female directors utilizing cinema to express women previously suppressed "rebellious" feelings. Despite its importance, "matrophobia" remains overlooked in feminist cultural studies. It is crucial to reintroduce and understand this concept within feminist discourse. The American supernatural horror film <i>Umma</i> (2022) centered on a three-generation mother-daughter dynamic, Amanda and her daughter lead a quiet life on a rural American farm, but the arrival of her estranged mother's bone ashes from Korea, coupled with her daughter's desire to go to college alone, heightens Amanda's deep-seated fear of becoming like her mother. The daughter evolves from an initial apprehension regarding the resemblance to her mother to a brave acceptance, thereby visually portraying a complex manifestation of matrophobia. This research builds on Adrienne Rich's concept of matrophobia in of Woman Born to analyse this film. It examines how female directors portray matrophobia through audio-visual language and explores the communication of feminine culture through film. In this study, the researchers conducted a feminist critical discourse analysis of scenes centered on the main female characters in <i>Umma</i> (2022). The focus will be on the character of Amanda, concentrating on how she breaks through her ego and matrophobia through the denial of her own mother, which leads to a new transformation. This research aims to elucidate the portrayal of matrophobia and reevaluate the portrayal of mother-daughter dynamics within contemporary women's cinema.
Accepted: Feb 27, 2025	
Keywords Women's cinema Matrophobia Feminist critical discourse analysis Horror film Feminist studies	
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INTRODUCTION

Since the year 2000, the number of women in horror film production has dramatically increased, and women who made horror in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s have also begun to receive more recognition. Throughout the history of cinema, men have been the dominant practitioners of various genres, but few people realise that women have been creating and consuming the horror genre from 1900 to the present day (Stockton, 2024). In recent years, the global rise in the number of female directors has been accompanied by a notable diversification in women's filmmaking, with many expanding their creative boundaries into the horror genre. In accordance with the findings of Lupher's (2022) survey, since the year 2000, the number of women in horror film production has dramatically increased, and women who made horror in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s have also begun to receive more recognition. However, there are scholars who take a pessimistic view of the genre, such as Almwaka (2021), who argues that the horror genre is and remains an underdog, and even more so is the women of horror.

Released by Sony Pictures in the US in 2022, the horror film *Umma* is the first full-length feature film by a Korean female director Iris K. Shim, and the word 'Umma' comes from the Korean word for

'mother' (Raimi et al., 2022). The box office grossed about \$2.3 million. Women made up 57% of the audience during its opening. Despite the film's mixed reviews, the portrayal of women that the director attempts to present is one that is very typical of women in feminist issues, namely matriophobia. As stated by Rich (1994), matrophobia refers to the profound fear or anxiety associated with the possibility of resembling one's mother, particularly in ways that may threaten one's sense of identity and autonomy. This concept is often explored in feminist and psychological literature, as it highlights the tension between individual self-development and the traits inherited or perceived from one's mother.

The film *Umma* (2022) which is centred on a three-generation relationship between women, tells the story of Amanda, a Korean immigrant to the United States who lives with her daughter in a remote rural village where she sells honey for a living. Amanda asserts that she must refrain from utilizing electronic devices, which has resulted in her daughter being compelled to reside in a state of social isolation. The relationship between the two is characterised by a distinctive form of symbiosis. As her daughter matured, she developed a keen interest in the wider world and expressed a desire to pursue her education independently. In the context of this internal conflict, Amanda's mother passes away, and her ashes are brought to her by her uncle. Amanda's uncle counsels her that it is imperative to inter her mother in a proper manner, otherwise, her spirit will be adrift. Things start to happen at the farmhouse, as Amanda must confront the trauma of her past or run the risk of turning into her mother, both literally and figuratively (Taylor, 2022).

Amanda's character gradually transforms, becoming increasingly paranoid and fearful that she is turning into her mother. After being haunted by her mother's spirit for an extended period, she eventually confronts her past in a conversation with the undead. This resolution leads her to realize that her daughter, Chrissy, needs independence and the freedom to live her own life.

The relationship between mothers and daughters has consistently been characterised by a complex and multifaceted nature. The transmission of motherhood as a vital link between generations encompasses at least three generations of experiences that inevitably awaken ancient fears and conflicts, which can be observed in the experiences of the mother, the daughter, and the granddaughter. This study aims to analysing the representation of the conflict between mother and daughter and the ways in which the fear of becoming one's mother is presented.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this article is to undertake an analysis of the film *Umma* (2022), with a particular focus on the ways in which it portrays matrophobia. This paper seeks to understand how this fear and conflict is represented in the film *Umma* (2022), using feminist critical discourse analysis to explore the following research questions:(1) How does the mother-daughter relationship portrayed in horror films directed by women; and (2) How does the film *Umma* represent matrophobia portrayal?

In examining these issues, this article re-examines the matrophobia of the female director's lens from the perspective of women's filmmaking, and the challenges they face as mothers and daughters. Furthermore, it re-evaluates this feminist concept, thereby offering insight into the broader thematic exploration of identity, autonomy, and maternal influence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women and horror cinemas

In recent years, the role of women in horror films and their creative contributions have become an important topic in film studies. With the increase in the number of female directors and the change in the demand for horror films by female audiences, there has been a growing number of academic studies on how women are represented and portrayed in horror films and how female directors express gender issues through horror films. A number of scholars have analysed the particular portrayal of women in horror films and attempted to identify the feminist issues involved.

Almwaka (2021) examines the role of women in the classic horror film of the Final Girl. She analyses three main horror films and offers a critique of the vulnerable position of these female characters in the narratives. The study demonstrates how the dual role of gender representation serves to subvert and reexamine patriarchal norms. Similarly, Creed (2022) revisits the notion of the monstrous-feminine as she explores the ways in which contemporary female filmmakers are rebelling against patriarchal structures through new wave cinema.

Furthermore, Harrington (2018) offers an analysis of the concept of 'gynaehorror' in her study, *Women, Monstrosity, and the Horror Film*. The concept of 'gynaehorror' examines the construction and deconstruction of the image of women as monsters in horror films. Harrington highlights that the female monster is not merely a manifestation of apprehension towards the female body and gender, but also a representation of women's self-assertion and empowerment in the face of gender-based oppression. By examining a number of horror films, the author demonstrates the diversity of female monster images in different cultural and social contexts, and highlights their profound social significance.

In *From Women's Cinema to Women's Horror Cinema*, Lupher discusses the history of feminist cinema, in which the horror film is an important tool for rethinking women's cinema. Among other things, the author argues that "Women's horror cinema frequently turns to representations of self-destructive violence in order to confront and explore the traumas wrought by patriarchal ideology." (Lupher, 2022).

It is evident that research on women and horror films has become increasingly comprehensive in recent years. Scholars have investigated the portrayal of women in horror films, the creative practices of female directors, and the interactive experiences of female viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds and theoretical perspectives, respectively. However, there is a paucity of studies on horror films with mother-daughter themes, and no article on the significant feminist concept of 'matrophobia' has been published in film studies to discuss it.

Matrophobia

The term "matrophobia," originally coined by poet Lynn Sukenick, was substantively elaborated upon by feminist maternal theorist Adrienne Rich in her pivotal 1986 text, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. Rich's exploration provided a critical academic framework for understanding the dynamics of matrophobia within the broader discourse of feminist theory. Matrophobia describes the fear or anxiety associated with resembling one's mother in ways that may threaten individual identity and autonomy. It can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free (Rich, 1994).

Rich frames matrophobia as a complex psychological and cultural phenomenon. It involves a tension within mother-daughter relationships underpinned by patriarchal constraints that prescribe restrictive female roles. Consequently, the concept of matrophobia has been employed by subsequent feminist researchers to analyse the mother-daughter relationship in a multitude of literary works.

In *The Matrophobic Gothic and Its Legacy*, a significant assertion is made that "matrophobia"—encompassing the fear of mothers, the dread of becoming a mother, and the anxiety surrounding both identification with and separation from the maternal figure—serves as a central metaphor in women's relationships within a patriarchal culture (Rogers, 2007). Similarly, placing matrophobia in the context of feminist intergenerational relations is discussed in *The Rhetorical Consequences of Matrophobia in Contemporary White Feminist Analyses of Maternity*, an article which mentions that, few people recognise Rich's powerful summary of motherhood in society, namely that, maternity is constituted by both institutionalized motherhood and a potentially empowering relationship. We must recognize and accept our own internalized matrophobia, if we are to understand fully contemporary maternity, and, we must conceive a daughters-and-sisters subject position that is grounded in both a mutuality and reciprocity between daughters and sisters (Hallstein, 2007). This

is instructive for the conclusions of this study. This fear extends beyond the personal, rooted deeply in patriarchal societal structures. It emerges from a complex interplay of admiration and identification with the maternal figure, juxtaposed with a compelling imperative to resist emulating her traits and life path, thereby reflecting and contesting the broader societal expectations placed on women.

Furthermore, Hirsch believes that matrophobia “exists not only in the culture at large, but also within feminism, and within women who are mothers, ourselves, who have spent a good part of our academic careers thinking about motherhood” (Jetter et al., 1997). Kella's (2019) study investigates the narrative strategies utilized by post-war women writers in the UK, USA, and Canada to explore the representation of maternal sexual agency and vulnerability in their literary works. It concludes that these writings have been shaped by the influence of matrophobia and oedipal complexes. As one theorist of matrophobia puts it: “Ambivalence necessarily resides in the matrophobic equation” (Rogers, 2007).

Although there is a growing body of scholarship on matrophobia, the existing literature focuses predominantly on feminist theory and women's literature, with little attention paid to the visual representation of matrophobia in women's cinema. Consequently, this study aims to address this notable gap by examining the representation of matrophobia in the film *Umma* (2022). This paper represents the inaugural attempt to integrate this theory with film studies, with the objective of elucidating the mother-daughter relationship in women's horror films and, moreover, of further deepening the understanding of the emergence of the phenomenon of matrophobia in East Asian societies through the analysis of these female figures.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher used Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) in qualitative research. According to Lazar (2007), Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis is a political perspective on gender, concerned with demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power, and ideology in discourse. FCDA as an interdisciplinary research method and way of analysing things, focuses on the critical analysis of discourse from a feminist perspective in an attempt to understand the ideology, image of femininity or situation of women in texts. Such texts include both written and still or moving image content (Wodak, 2015). Recent scholarship demonstrates that Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) has increasingly permeated various forms of textual representation, particularly those related to social practices, including portrayals of women in media platforms such as the social media, books, magazines, and films (Dalton, 2019; Harkness & Cheyne, 2019; Rapo, 2021).

This study is inspired by the research methodology used by Wahyuni and Adnan (2022). The study will also employ a two-stage analytical approach to examine the portrayal of women in films. In the initial phase of the study, Stanton's (2007) research is employed to identify 4 pivotal scenes, with a particular focus on the underlying motivations of female characters in cinematic narratives. To identify the mother-daughter relationship dynamics in the film, factors such as arguments, behaviours and character discussions through actions (super objectives, main objectives and main actions) will be considered. The specific scenes selected for analysis are shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Scenes are chosen based on motivational characteristics.

Act	Action Character	Scene	Describe
I	Super Objectives	00:28:13	Amanda discovers that her daughter is secretly submitting college applications on her own and is conflicted as she recalls her conversations with her mother.
	Main Objectives	00:28:15	Amanda didn't want her daughter Chrissy to leave her.

	Main Action	00:28:51	Amanda escapes reality by working.
		00:31:25	She put on her insect-proof hat and saw the deceased Umma.
		00:32:19	Amanda recoils in horror at the application Chrissy is writing. She sees bees covering the windows and Umma reappearing. Regaining her senses, Amanda is shocked and angered to find her daughter wearing her dead mother's clothes.
II	Super Objectives	00:48:55	Amanda wants to be closer to her daughter. Getting her daughter to understand her behaviour.
	Main Objectives	01:04:31	She's hosting a game night at her house.
	Main Action	00:45:04	Amanda looks into the camera as she brushes her daughter's hair.
		00:49:01	Amanda confesses her feelings for Umma to her daughter before she goes to bed, making it clear that she promised her daughter that she would never become like Umma.
		00:54:05	The daughter's cover letter was destroyed.
		00:56:23	Amanda argued with her daughter.
III	Super Objectives	01:02:13	Amanda was possessed by Umma.
	Main Objectives	01:04:31	Amanda's deepest aspirations overlap with those of Umma: to pay our respects to the culture and the ancestors.
	Main Action	01:04:40	Amanda put on the traditional Umma dress and laid out the offerings to honour her ancestors.
		01:06:20	Amanda/Umma lets her daughter, Chrissy, experience the pain of her own childhood by pinching the wires of an electric light.
		01:07:34	Umma turns into a nine-tailed fox and tries to hurt Chrissy.
		01:10:20	Amanda confronts her mother's dead ghost head-on, allowing her to recognise her pain and put it behind her.
IV	Super Objectives	01:17:02	Amanda reconciles with the deceased Umma, releases her and lets her daughter go to university alone.
	Main Objectives	01:10:20	Amanda flashes back to her childhood and sees the music box that Umma gave her. It brings back warm memories.
	Main Action	01:11:42	Amanda tells the truth about Umma's pain and resolutely leaves, crawling out of the dirt.
		01:15:40	Amanda and her daughter Chrissy wore traditional dress to bury Umma and honour their ancestors.

In the second stage of the study, the researcher employed an analytical approach to selected scenes using critical discourse as outlined by Sara Mills (1992) to examine power dynamics in mother-daughter relationships, and how women's horror films represent the female characters' matrophobia.

Adopting Sara Mills' (1992) analytical approach, this study attempts to analyze scenes and images shot from a variety of female discourses and perspectives to explore more deeply the power dynamics of mother-daughter relationships in cinema, the symbolic meanings in women's horror cinema, and the representation of the image of matrophobia. As Sara Mills (2004) stated: "Structuralist theorists and in turn post-structuralists saw language as a system with its own rules and constraints, and with its own determining effect on the way that individuals think and express themselves." Drawing inspiration from Michel Foucault, believes that all discourse is empowered. Knowing the perspective of a text and how the position of women is placed in the text (subject/object) and how the reader is positioned in seeing women in the text is how Sara Mills examines women's discourse linguistically (Ayustin & Christin, 2022). The following Table 2 is the framework for the study that Mills developed in 1992:

Table2.The FCDA framework developed by Sara Mills (1992).

No	Position	Things that should described
1	Subject-Object	a. What is the presentation style of the person or event? b. What or who is being watched? c. Who is the text's subject(person/event) who tells the story? d. Who is the main character (person or event) in the text?
2	Audience	a. How are the audience's positions depicted in the text? b. How do the text's audience see themselves? c. With whom do the audience identify?

In recent years, some researchers have adopted this framework in their analyses of various film genres (Afifulloh & Wijayanti, 2023; Ayustin & Christin, 2022; Darta & Kristina, 2018; Wahyuni & Adnan, 2022). However, to date, no study has employed this framework to analyze women's horror films and the representation of matrophobia. Therefore, in this study, the researcher will analyse the characters in it from the position of the female character in the text and from the perspective of the audience. By collecting a variety of scenes depicting mother-daughter relationships as the main scenario, the collected data were processed using established feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) to identify the power relations and matrophobia in them, and then descriptive discourses were used to communicate the results of the data analyses and to derive the corresponding results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mother-daughter dynamics in horror cinema

The film's narrative revolves around three generations of an East Asian immigrant family, comprising the protagonist Amanda, her mother Umma, and daughter Chrissy. As the plot progresses, the characters' motivations and power dynamics undergo a transformation, intersecting with one another in a complex web of relationships. In order to ascertain the director's creative intentions, this article employs the research framework of Sara Mills, as previously mentioned, to analyse these passages.

1.ACT I

Subject-object

In this act, Amanda is both the main character and the subject. As Umma's ashes are brought to Amanda by her uncle, Amanda's sealed memories and traumas are awakened by her mother's death as the story unfolds. Meanwhile, her daughter, who was Amanda's constant companion, secretly applies to college, causing a double shock for Amanda. Amanda tries to hide her fears in her work, but Umma's ghost appears frequently. When her daughter unknowingly wears Umma's old clothes,

Amanda scolds her and removes them, still able to assert control over her child and resist Umma's influence. Through scene planning and dialogue design, the discourse creates power in the action, and power is shaped and emerges in the discourse. As described by Belenky et al. (1986): "In the context of mother-daughter relationships, discourses are stories that create a communal understanding of power in relationships, and appropriate rules of conduct."

Audience

Amanda's behaviour engages the viewer, offering insight into her internal struggles and anxieties through subjective perspective, behavioural cues and mnemonic fragments. The audience is forced to question whether her fear of all things electronic stems from her relationship with Umma.

2.ACT II

Subject-object

In this scene, the main character and the subject are changed to the daughter Chrissy, whose motivation is to leave home, go to college, and get in touch with society. She discovers in this act that Amanda's 'illness' of not being able to access electricity has been a lie. Amanda organizes a family social event, "Game Night", and invites friends to attend. Her underlying motivation is twofold: to explain her behavior to her daughter Chrissy and to reduce Chrissy's potential desire to leave. Amanda's confession to her daughter reveals a paradoxical struggle against intergenerational trauma. While explicitly renouncing the prospect of emulating Umma, Amanda inadvertently perpetuates familial patterns through her interventions in her daughter's academic and personal autonomy. As Douglas and Michaels state in their book, the media have been and are the major dispenser of the ideals and norms surrounding motherhood. Many of us, in fact, preferred media advice to the advice our mothers gave us. We didn't want to be like our mothers and many of us didn't want to raise our kids the way they raised us (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Amanda's isolationist tendencies create a microcosm that inhibits her daughter's social development. In a pivotal scene, Amanda attempts to recalibrate the power dynamic by revealing her vulnerability and acknowledging her matrophobia, the fear of becoming like her mother. This self-reflection marks a narrative turning point, as Chrissy's ascendancy in their dyad is observed. The subsequent act portrays Amanda's countermeasures, which, in a paradoxical manner, mirror Umma's methods of reasserting dominance and perpetuating the cycle of intergenerational conflict.

Audience

The dialogue between Amanda and her friend reveals her aversion to beekeeping and underlines the fact that her beekeeping efforts are motivated solely by maternal obligation. At 00:45:05, a pivotal scene unfolds: as Amanda prepares her daughter for an upcoming social event, she looks directly at the camera, breaking the film's fourth wall. The notion or definition of a "fourth wall" is taken from the original context of an invisible wall between audience and actors stated by Diderot in 18th century theatre (Bell, 2008). This concept has since been applied to film, television and literature, where breaking the fourth wall is a creative technique and narrative in which the creator attempts to break down the illusion of spectatorship and communicate directly between the actor and the audience. The audience thus learns that by this point Umma may have begun to control Amanda's mind, and that power is slowly shifting through the actors' performances and the design of the scenes.

3.ACT III

Subject-object

In this act, the main character and subject is Umma, or rather Amanda, who is possessed by Umma; having lost her daughter's respect and understanding, Amanda's will tends to break and she smashes her mother's portrait and ashes, and is then punished and possessed by Umma. Amanda, dressed in traditional dress, begins to worship her ancestors in the spirit of umma and asks her daughter to do the same. umma, in saying 'to pay our respect to culture and ancestors', is actually trying to reconcile discourse and traditional culture with herself as an elder, but the balance is one of disempowerment

and lack of esteem. As observed by Tam (2014), the family as a culture mechanism, structure, and symbol has persisted as the dominant force in determining the experience of gender in contemporary East Asian society. The younger generation, exemplified by Amanda, is seeking emancipation from the perceived damage caused by their family. This has resulted in a decline in traditional rituals and a waning interest in the transmission of cultural heritage. Conversely, Umma deploys ancestral authority and maternal potency to assert dominance, thereby inadvertently fostering rebellion and alienation. Amanda/Umma has her daughter, Chrissy, pinch the wires of an electric light in order to experience the pain of her own childhood. This can be seen as a power shift and a struggle for power.

Audience

From the perspective of the audience, by this point in the narrative, Amanda and Umma have become a single entity. While Chrissy, who is currently on her return home, is still unaware of the situation. From an omniscient perspective, the audience can observe Chrissy's reactions. The interweaving of disparate episodes, such as Umma pinching the wires of the electric light and the subsequent transformation into a nine-tailed fox, along with the attempted assault on Chrissy by Umma, creates a sense of unease and evokes concern for her wellbeing. In the dialogue between Umma and Amanda, the audience is made aware that when the mother is in a state of helplessness and despondency overseas, she turns to the supernatural power of her own traditional rituals and ancestors in Korea to gain spiritual support. This makes Umma's image complete and more three-dimensional by replacing the perspective of the subject of the narrative, and also resolves the doubts previously held by the audience. The audience, on the other hand, can interpret the elements of meaning superimposed by the creator from a personal perspective. As stated by Bubel (2008), meaning in film discourse is co-constructed in a joint effort of recipients and the production crew—all drawing on their respective world knowledges and especially on their knowledge of communicative processes in everyday situations.

4.ACT IV

Subject-object

In the final segment of the selected act, the main character and the subject returns to Amanda. She reclaims the initiative by directly confronting Umma. For Amanda, the experiences of confinement, the administration of electric shocks, and the endurance of her mother's volatile personality have a greater impact on her memories than the companionship her mother provided during her childhood, such as the music box. Umma, a respected seamstress in South Korea, relocated to a foreign country with her husband as a young woman. Due to language barriers and the challenges of motherhood, she became increasingly isolated and lonely. While experiencing her own distress, she also transfers this pain to her daughter, Amanda. Umma stresses in her conversation with Amanda, 'I am your mother, I will always be part of you.' As Saber (2024) points out in the article: "The mother-daughter dynamic is far from simple, and when mothers and daughters come from the marginalized realms of race, class, and sexual orientation, the psychological structures of their bond are put in different contexts, leading to different conflicts and conciliations.

Audience

The film employs a technique of constant flashbacks to illustrate that the primary motivation behind Amanda's reluctance to engage with her mother and her past is rooted in her childhood experiences of physical abuse and other forms of punishment, including confinement. Interactions, as seen and heard by viewers, are the product of the whole film production team, the collective sender, who constructs meanings especially for recipients' benefit (Dyner, 2011). By learning more about the encounters in the life of the protagonist, the audience will form their own perceptions and develop their own understanding. The open-ended ending is also an attempt by the creators to leave room for the audience's imagination. Embracing horror as a tool to make sense of difficult material, not even limited to the genre and its more distinguishable features and tropes, can expand not only the

interpretations of more extreme and challenging films, but also can inspire growth and development in audiences who are willing and ready to participate (Patterson, 2018).

Representations of matrophobia portrayals

The influence of the Western feminist movement has prompted young women in East Asian societies to recognise the limitations of their position within patriarchal systems. Considering these developments, an examination of matrophobia in the context of horror film culture may offer insights into the challenges young women encounter in navigating their relationships with their mothers within a patriarchal social structure. While mother-daughter relationships in East Asian families exhibit some differences from those in Western families, the underlying dynamics and core conflicts are nevertheless similar. Consequently, the feminist concept of matrophobia, which originated in the West, has been employed by numerous scholars to elucidate mother-daughter relationships in diverse cultural and environmental contexts.

The maternal semiotic remains ambivalent and, as Hirsch (1989) persuasively argues, "female development is the gradual and not always successful process of identification with and differentiation from a mother who remains an important inner object for the maturing daughter, and a process shaped by the fluctuations of symbiosis and separation." This struggle gives rise to a fear known as 'matrophobia'. In relation to the setting of Amanda cultivating a beehive and selling honey, the director spoke in an interview about how bees and beekeeping reflect motherhood, which can be experienced as either a positive or negative force. This duality of motherhood is precisely the concept that she wished to convey (Taylor, 2022).

The film portrays a parallel rejection and maternal fear in both daughters, stemming from the conflict between filial autonomy and maternal expectations. Amanda's possession-induced didactic attempt towards Chrissy exemplifies the coalescence of Amanda's volition with Umma's influence. This convergence is catalyzed by the resurgence of childhood trauma, precipitated by Umma's accidental demise, and Amanda's anxiety over impending solitude and loss of maternal authority. The resultant psychological complexity propels Amanda towards an unwitting embodiment of the maternal archetype she once vehemently rejected, illustrating the cyclical nature of intergenerational trauma and identity formation. As Robinson and Robinson (1998) states: "Mothers and daughters struggle to negotiate myths which set them against each other, enforcing internal misogyny, and undermining a potentially powerful alliance."

The ending of *Umma*(2022) is not a happy ending in the colloquial sense, although Amanda suffers deeply from the constraints of her mother's immigrant status and motherhood. But after experiencing her death, she does not choose to forgive or reconcile with her mother's abuse. Rather, she breaks through her demons, cuts off toxic memories, dresses in Korean clothes, leaves behind the culture her mother identified with, passes it on to her daughter, and lets it go with good wishes - sending her daughter off to school. Perhaps the way to get rid of matrophobia is to pass on the traits that are inherent in the nature of women and to continue to consciously eradicate the oppression that patriarchy brings to women.

In short, if women are to find their place in the evolution of communication, whether in horror films or any other media, it is necessary to recognise the means by which women are objectified and their own diversity destroyed. This includes the 'elimination' of the stereotypical role of mother and daughter in traditional culture. Only by recognising the diverse and rich nature of motherhood will we be able to achieve a deeper understanding and longer-term expansion of the female subjective self in the future.

CONCLUSION

A close analysis of the selected acts from the film reveals a clear power struggle between Amanda and her daughter Chrissy, which then shifts to Amanda and Umma, before ultimately returning to Amanda. This dynamic is evident throughout the film. Moreover, this study illuminates the complexities of the

relationship between East Asian mothers and their daughters, demonstrating that East Asian mothers demonstrate discernible influences of Confucianism. The ideology is evidenced by the high value placed on education, the high value placed on generational continuity, and the notion of children as objects to be directed and controlled by their parents.

Umma(2022) offers a visual reinterpretation of the concept of matrophobia. The creators of the film deliberately present the less favorable aspects of this mother-daughter relationship in a way that challenges traditional patriarchal and historical assumptions about motherhood. These assumptions include the idea that mothers in East Asian societies have always been selfless and virtuous, and that daughters have always been submissive and well-behaved. As the director said in the interview: "I was very mindful in terms of empowering these female characters to not only take charge of their own lives and their decisions, but to also not be to be perfect. To let them be flawed, and to let them be complicated." (Kwan, 2022). This cinematic practice also confirms the facts Mill (2004) wishes to express: "Where femininity as a discourse becomes most crucial is where it forms the focus of group activity by individuals – where women are not portrayed as simple dupes of an ideology, but rather as actively constructing positions for themselves, using discursive constructs. Female directors can establish their own discourse and utilising it to establish a position for themselves. Regardless of whether this position is positive or negative, they can facilitate the representation of women in a more liberated and nuanced manner.

The director effectively highlights the contradiction between women's feelings of resistance towards the mother-daughter relationship and their difficulty in escaping it. This makes the relationship more profoundly poignant and figurative. It would be beneficial to consider the role of mass media in relation to the empowerment of women once more. In both the history of art and film, representations of mothers have consistently exhibited a Madonna-like quality, characterised by a devotion to and self-sacrifice for their children. The circulation of these representations and the subsequent responses from the audience contribute to the constitution of female discourse and female experience as an ongoing, continuous and interactive text. This is as women endeavour to challenge and subvert the established codes and images of a patriarchal society. Further attention should be paid to the exploration of the dark side of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship, with particular consideration of feminist concepts. This will facilitate the reconceptualization of 'motherhood' and 'womanhood' and the possibility of rebuilding a new social order.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful Dr. Siti Aishah and Dr.LingYann Wong provided me with valuable advice and guidance.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Siti Aishah made revisions to the paper.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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