Music and sound in the Japanese 'ghost' film:

cultural representation and transformation

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Doctor of Philosophy in Music

July 2023

Keele University

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of music and sound in Japanese 'ghost' films. Scholarship on contemporary Japanese horror cinema often examines culture-bound descriptions of spirits. Such discussion typically revolves around tensions between, on the one hand, traditional Japanese practices and values and, on the other hand, modernity and advancing technological developments. This conflict is often connected in these films to visual representations of 'ghosts'. A smaller number of studies, however, have begun to address audio representations in Japanese 'ghost' films through analysis of sound and music. These contributions suggest the value of a broader survey and in-depth analysis of the cultural connotations of sound and music in Japanese cinematic representations of 'ghosts'. This thesis provides that survey and analysis.

Earlier discussions of music and sound in Japanese 'ghost' films have considered the influence of theatrical traditions and music, traditional Japanese music, and multifaceted Japanese concepts such as *ma* and *sawari*. This thesis builds on these studies to demonstrate the pertinence of a wider range of Japanese musical traditions and socio-historical contexts. It examines the influence of Japanese art and aesthetics, while also noting the adaptation and hybridization of external influences. Close film music analysis and critical applications of screen music theory help further conceptualize the roles of sound and music in Japanese 'ghost' films through the ages. Two examples – *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (*Dark Water*, Nakata, Hideo, 2002) and *Ju-on: The Grudge* (Shimizu, Takashi, 2002) – demonstrate sound design relating to Japanese aesthetics; other important case studies include *Chakushin ari* (*One Missed Call*, Miike, Takashi, 2003) and *Kairo* (*Pulse*, Kurosawa, Kiyoshi, 2001). Finally, the roles of sound and music in Japanese horror remakes are examined to develop critical perspectives on the contrasting roles played by audio representations of 'Japanese' ghosts in transnational contexts.

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Glossary of Terms:

***Bakeneko*:** 'Changing cat', 'monster cat' or 'ghost cat'. The term refers to a mysterious cat that has the ability to change shape, transform and is a more general Japanese term for a paranormal cat.

***Benshi*:** Meaning orator/speaker. *Benshi* are Japanese silent film narrators/interpreters/commentators.

***Buddhism*:** The religion made its way to Japan from India and China. 'The goal of Buddhism is interior enlightenment; through "right thinking" and the denial of "earthly pleasures" the soul will reach Nirvana.' (Hume, 1995: 341). There are various sects of Buddhism that emerged in Japan including *Tendai*, *Shingon* and *Zen*.

***Bunraku*:** The traditional puppet theatre of Japan. Bunraku is performed by a narrator (*tayū*), *shamisen* player/s, and puppeteers. The *tayū* skillfully changes his voice as the story moves along, while the sound of the *shamisen* reverberates next to him. This type of musical performing art is called *jōruri*, and its leading example is *gidayū-bushi*, a style of narration created by Takemoto Gidayū, a master narrator who opened the Takemoto-za theatre in Osaka in 1684. It should be noted that *ningjyō jōruri* ('*ningyō*' meaning puppet and "*jōruri*" being a form of narrative music) is also used to describe this form of plays performed by puppets in *jōruri* style, but from the beginning of the 20th century, bunraku has been used internationally to describe the genre.

***Butoh (Butō)*:** In its basic form, it translates as 'dance step'. It is an elusive contemporary and transgressive dance form that is hard to define. Often described as avant-garde. It is a dance whose basic form relies on the body in various changing conditions; its minimalist movements place the body and face in a state of constant transformation. It has its origins in the dance experiments of Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–1986). The experiments were termed 'dance experiences' or 'terror dance' and then *ankoku buyō* (dark black dance), and later still *ankoku butō/butoh* ('dance of utter darkness'). Hijikata met Ohno Kazuo, an established modern dancer and the pair co-founded what is now called butoh (spelled also as butō) in 1959.

***Butsudan*:** Buddhist altars in Japanese households dedicated to the family's ancestors.

***Chanbara/chanbara eiga*:** swordplay/samurai film.

***Emakimono*:** Horizontal picture scrolls.

***Fue*:** A transverse (side blown) flute (more formally called *shinobue* or *takebue*, 'bamboo flute').

***Fukikiri*:** an overblowing technique defined as 'a special ending to a tone or phrase accentuating the sound with a sudden and strong breath of air.'

***Gagaku*:** Literally meaning 'elegant music/performance'. This term refers to the Imperial Court Music and Dance of Japan.

***Genzai noh*:** One of the two types of noh plays, described as present time noh. The story unfolds along with the passage of time. It is defined versus *mugen noh*.

***Geza-ongaku*:** Offstage music in the kabuki theatre.

***Hayashi-kata*:** Onstage music in the noh theatre.

***Hokotai*:** Basic butoh walk.

***Hayashi/noh-bayashi*:** Instrumental music in noh theatre.

***Hyōshi-awazu*:** Unmatched or non-congruent rhythm in a section of noh music where the drums and the vocals do not correlate with regards to beats and syllables.

Hyōshigi or ***Ki***: Wooden clappers used in kabuki theatre. They are two rectangular hardwood blocks that are clacked together to signal the opening and closing of the main curtain or to inform the actors and crew of timings and pending actions.

Hitodama: Translating as 'human soul'. *Hitodama* are described as visible souls of a newly dead person detached from their host bodies, appearing as red, orange, or blue-white orbs that float about slowly and close to the ground. They are never considered as individual spirits, as such, but as parts of the spirit itself.

Kabuki: Japanese drama form popular since the 17th century, the main form of entertainment during the Edo period, (its roots can be traced back to the early days of the Edo period – which is the 17th century). It combines music and dance and is known for its exaggerated and stylized methods which are used to achieve bold expressions. It is commonly described as the 'theatre of commoners/the ordinary people'. It evolved as a theatrical form in which men perform all roles. The actors playing female roles are known as *onnagata*, while those taking on male roles are called *tachiyaku*.

Kagezerifu: meaning 'shadow dialogue'. This narrative technique was delivered by actors who voiced their lines behind the projection screen in silent films.

Kaibyō: A term used in Japanese folklore to describe supernatural cats.

Kaidan: Made up of a combination of 怪 (weird/strange/mysterious) and 談 (to discuss or talk). 'The most literal possible interpretation of *kaidan* would be something like "a discussion or passing down of tales of the weird, strange or mysterious."' (Davisson, 2015: 214).

Kakegoe: rhythmic, but non-melodic shouts.

Kataru: A *benshi* vocal technique meaning 'speaking voice', made up of conversational and oratorical tones.

Katsuben: A term sometimes interchangeably used with *benshi* to refer to a motion film orator, more specifically a non-film orator as their narration provided a creative and critical reading of the film.

Keiyo ongaku: meaning 'descriptive music' used for the way in which music was more directly linked to the film image.

Kiyomoto-bushi: A narrative vocal style used in kabuki recited in very high-pitched tones, accompanied by *shamisen*. Known as one of the major musical styles accompanying kabuki dance (*buyō*). *Kiyomoto-bushi* is also used as a staging device or ruse to emphasise the realistic use of the offstage music.

Kōdan: historic storytelling

Ko-tsuzumi: shoulder drum. A small drum used in the noh theatre tradition.

Kowairo benshi/kowairoya: impersonators of voices trained as narrators in Japanese silent film to read the lines of kabuki texts and mimic in synchronization the voices of the actors.

Kowairo setsumei: 'voice colouring'. This is a mimetic vocal dubbing performance used by the *kowairo benshi*.

Kuse: Narrative dance song.

Kusemai: Storytelling with dance.

Kyūha or ***Kyūgeki***: A cinematic form known as 'old school drama'. From the early 1920s onwards, these terms were replaced by *jidaigeki* (period pictures)

Ma: Made up of a combination of 門 (door/gate) and 日 (sun or, in earlier use, the moon), *ma* roughly translates as 'space'; 'interval'; 'pause.'

Mie: A distinctive expression in kabuki theatre. When the actor after making several rhythmic movements strikes and holds, or 'cuts' a powerful or emotional pose, crossing his eyes for a greater effect, in order to draw attention to a particularly important moment in the performance.

Min'yō: Folk Song (*min*: 'folk, the people'; *yō*: 'song').

Maesetsu: Discourse/introductory remarks delivered by the *benshi* on the film's background/content or the marvel of the moving image.

Muraki: An overblowing technique (uneven or intensive breath), applied at the start of a note or during results in an exclamatory, dramatic airy sound which involves the use of 'very strong air pressure, relaxation of the cheeks and tongue and a slightly larger lip opening.'

Mono-no-aware: The pathos of things. 'A slightly sweet and sad quality as appreciated by an observer sensitive to the ephemeral nature of existence.' (Richie, 2007:72).

Mugen noh: Also known as phantasmal noh, meaning fantasy or dream noh. In contrast with *genzai noh*, there are frequent leaps forward and backward through time and space. These are plays of dreams or allusion that feature ghosts, spirits and phantoms, or other beings that encounter the *waki* (secondary character in the play), who is generally found to be visiting the place where the *shite's* (main character) spirit resides in the play.

Nagauta: Music used for the accompaniment of acting and dancing in kabuki theatre. It is used by the majority of dance dramas in kabuki and is performed by an onstage group of musicians called the *debayashi* consisting of several *shamisen*, *fue* (flute) and drums that originated from the Japanese noh theatre tradition: the *ko-tsuzumi* (small drum), *ō-tsuzumi* (large drum) and *taiko* (stick drum). The *nagauta* is classified under the *utaimono* group, performing lyrical *shamisen* music expressing the emotions of the actors on stage should they sing about their feelings, or accompany them as they perform a dance (*buyō*).

Narimono: An instrumental ensemble in kabuki providing musical accompaniment and sound effects besides *shamisen*.

Noh (Nō): Described as one of the classical theatre of Japan. It dates back to the 14th century perfected into the art form as it is known by Kan'ami and his son Zeami, based on various genres popular at the time. It has folk origins but it was refined under the patronage of the samurai aristocracy and became the performing art of the warrior class. It has roots in both Buddhist and Shinto philosophy. Noh plays often recall past events through elaborate song and dance. The Noh master Zeami notes the following three principles of the theatrical form: the use of two main characters called the *shite* and the *waki*, the classical tripartite structure of *jo*, *ha* and *kyū*, and three levels of understanding which lead to unity, noh's metaphysical aim. It should be noted that noh has a long history with kyōgen – a spoken comedy theatrical performance that revolves around conversation. Performed on the same stage, noh and kyōgen are collectively referred to as *Nohgaku*.

Obake/Bakemono: Made up of a combination of お化け (changing) and 物 (thing). This term does not specifically refer to yūrei but translates as something closer to supernatural creature. 'Obake and bakemono use the kanji 化 (bakeru), which carries the meaning of "to adopt a disguise or change form," with the implication of changing for the worse.' (Davisson, 2015: 215).

Onryō: a ghost who died with some lingering grudge and seeks revenge against those who wronged them. A grudge spirit. A vengeful spirit.

Onshoku: A term that is often defined as 'sound colour': 音色: 'sound' and 'colour'. The word *neiro* is also used to describe 'sound colour' as both terms are made up of the same kanji characters. *Onshoku* is suitable for educational or professional contexts for musicians. It is associated with objective sound qualities such as bright, dark, hard, and metallic.

Ō-tsuzumi (大鼓): Hip drum. A large drum used in the noh theatre tradition.

Rakugo: Comic narrative storytelling.

Rensageki: Meaning 'joined/chained drama'. This hybrid form of cinema used actors who voiced their roles from behind the screen. It combined film scenes with scenes delivered on stage from a play that included the actors' voices from behind the screen.

Sabi: Described as meaning loneliness. A tone of sadness and desolation used to described a mood, but also associated with images or physical items of a withered monochromatic nature. It is a sad quality appreciated by an observer sensitive to the ephemeral nature of existence. *Sabi* is a beauty that comes to the fore with time because of age.

Setsuwa/setsuwa monogatari: defined as didactic tales or anecdotes delivered as spoken or written tales.

Setsumei: Vocal narration delivered by the *benshi* or group of *benshi*. Other appellations, including *nakasetsumei*/*nakasetsu* were also used for the narrative art that the *benshi* created. However, the term *setsumei* is the word most frequently used in the contemporary sources discussing the late silent era. It also translates as "explanation" which is most relevant for the discussion in this thesis.

Shamisenkata: *Shamisen* players.

Shingeki: meaning 'new drama'. This theatrical form appeared in the early 20th century as a reaction against kabuki and shinpa and was modelled after contemporary modern Western theatre.

Shinpa or Shinpageki: 'new school drama'. It is a dramatic theatrical genre that adapted Western ideas, tending to be melodramatic/sentimental and can be traced back to at least 1908. It later become a popular film form up to around 1920 when the term *gendaigeki* (pictures set in modern times) replaced these terms.

Shinto or Shintō: Also known as *Shintoism*, it is the indigenous religion of Japan. Emphasis is on the worship of *kami* (gods, deities) or spirits, nature, ancestors, the Emperor. It is a system of ritual practice based on the natural world, which observes that everything has a spirit, whether inanimate or living, and is regarded as being part of a unified single creation.

Shinrei-mono eiga: 'ghost story films'. The term is made up of the kanji 心 (heart) and 靈 (spirit). 'Shinrei is the term preferred by spiritualists in Japan. It carries a more mystic feel.' (Davisson, 2015: 215).

Shite: The main actor/character of a noh play.

Shosa-ongaku: On-stage music in the kabuki theatre.

Soetsumi: defined as 'the inserted pick,'

Suizen: 'blowing meditation'.

Suri-zumi: literally meaning 'scraping pick/stroke'.

Takemoto: Similar to *nagauta* it is used to enhance actor's performances in kabuki theatre but via a narrative vocal style which was developed from a form of narrative music used in puppet plays (bunraku). This is called *gidayū-bushi* and features a chanter (*tayū*) and a *shamisen* player. The sung narrative enhances the actors' performances, delivering advanced plot lines and describing scenery. The actor's words are often unified with the narrative music whenever they deliver their lines in synchronization with the *takemoto* rhythm. This produced the expression 'ito ni noru', meaning 'get onto strings', referring to the *shamisen* strings.

Taiko: Stick drum.

Tayū: Chanter. Traditionally in bunraku (traditional puppet theatre) the *tayū* narrates the story, accompanied by a *shamisen*.

Tokiwazu-bushi: a type of narrative music used in the kabuki theatre that is made up of chanters and *shamisenkata* (*shamisen* players) that uses a *chūzao* (medium-neck *shamisen*) to perform accompaniment for dance. It is distinguishable for its slower-pace and solemnity, as well as its reliance on the voice.

Ukiyo-e: Literally meaning 'pictures of the floating world'. Woodblock prints.

Wabi: A philosophical concept concerned with process and direction. It is 'a cultivated aesthetic that finds beauty in simplicity and an impoverished rusticity'. (Richie, 2007: 72). It is commonly paired with the term *sabi*. Together, *wabi sabi* is the acceptance of imperfection, transience and impermanence. This includes characteristics such as asymmetry, roughness, asperity, irregularity and simplicity.

Waki: Secondary actor/character in a noh play.

Wayō gassō: meaning 'Japanese and Western ensemble' this music ensemble was very popular in Japan in the 1910s, using a variety of instrumentation from different national traditions in response to different genre needs. Consistent in these ensembles was the use of traditional Japanese instruments, including the *shamisen*, and various kinds of Japanese percussion, such as the *taiko* and bell-like *kane*.

Yamanba: mountain crone/hag, literally 'mountain old woman'.

Yūrei: Often translated as 'dim spirit' – (*yū*; dim, hard to see and *rei*; spirit). *Yūrei* can be interpreted as a ghost classification that is much more specific than a Western interpretation of a ghost. It is the most common Japanese term for ghost. They are a spirit of the dead that is a distinct creature of folklore.

Yōkai: Strange, supernatural creatures and phenomena from Japanese folklore.

Yūgen: There is no exact equivalent for this word in English. It is difficult to define or translate. It primarily means 'mystery' and is considered to be across all of the arts, the mark of supreme attainment. From an etymological perspective, *yū* means 'dim', 'dark' or 'difficult to see', while *gen* 'originally describing the dark, profound, tranquil color of the universe, refers to the Taoist concept of truth.' (Hume, 1995: 351). Referencing the Noh master Zeami, his idea of *yūgen* combines the term's conventional meaning of elegant beauty with its original meaning of the profound and mysterious truth of the universe.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my esteemed lead supervisor Professor Nicholas Reyland for his invaluable supervision, guidance, and encouragement throughout my studies. Even after his departure to the Royal Northern College of Music he has continued to support me to the highest level, and I will forever be so thankful for his wonderful tutelage and mentorship. I am also very grateful for the excellent support and guidance from Professor Alastair Williams who took up the mantel of becoming my lead supervisor at Keele following Nick's departure. Both Alastair and Nick taught me as an undergraduate, with Nick becoming my MRes supervisor and inspiring me to pursue my research ambitions. I am immensely grateful for the immeasurable contributions they made to my development. I would also like to thank Dr Neil Archer and Professor Barbara Kelly for their advice and guidance, particularly during the early stages of my Ph.D. Barbara, thank you for also inspiring me to pursue my academic goals. I am also greatly indebted to Teaching Fellow Tobe Hitomi for her invaluable Japanese language tuition during my postgraduate studies at Keele.

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to Professor Emeritus Hosokawa Shūhei who became an additional supervisor during my research fellowship. I am so grateful for his feedback and the expertise that he kindly shared with me during my time at Nichibunken and beyond. I would also like to extend sincere thanks to the archivists, librarians, researchers, staff, and fellow doctoral students that I met at Nichibunken. I will never forget librarian Egami Toshinori's assistance and enthusiasm when it came to locating books, periodicals, and digital resources in the library, and especially helping me to access rare materials in the amazing archives. Thank you also to Kotoura Kayoko and Hayashi Hiroko for helping me to feel at home while on my placement. I feel so privileged to have met some wonderful researchers during my time in Japan. There are too many to name, but I would like to extend special thanks to Dr Emilia Chalandon, Professor Luciana Galliano

A Note on Japanese Names and Terminology

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to ensure that all Japanese proper names are presented in the traditional Japanese order, with family names first or as quotations. Where any ambiguity has occurred as to which order names should be presented, I have done my best to ensure the order is correct. Japanese words and place names written in Standard English dictionaries are written in Roman script with no macrons, such as Kyoto and Shinto. Other Japanese words are written with macrons to indicate long vowel sounds in their pronunciation. Japanese words, particularly those relating to subject specialism such as *gagaku* (ancient court music of Japan), are italicized throughout the thesis, except in quotations where the author has chosen not to use italics for Japanese words.

All film titles are given in Japanese, with an alternative English title presented afterwards in brackets.

I use Western-style dates in the thesis but reference several of the major Japanese time periods and eras.

For consistency and following The Society of Writers, Editors and Translators *Japan Style Sheet* for English-language publications about Japan, footnotes will also be presented in the order of family name first. [1]

> Quotations are written out as they are presented in their original textual sources. This may result in the use of non-traditional spellings or misspelt words in the case of texts that have been written or transcribed where the writer's first language is not English. To keep true to the sentiment of the text, all original spellings have been kept.

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[1] See *Japan Style Guide 3rd Edition: The SWET Guide for Writers, Editors, and Translators* (Tokyo: Society of Writers, Editors and Translators [1983] 2018).

Introduction

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a rising tide of ghostly narratives in Japanese cinema. Characterized by a syntax of isolation, emptiness and unrelenting dread, and set in urban and domestic environments, these films enacted a friction between traditional and modern Japan, plus a pervading anxiety around social change and its impact on the family in contemporary society. More specifically, they 'often depicted child characters who existed at the center of frequently horrific scenarios involving genetic mutation, vengeful ghosts, spirit possession, dangerous machines, and the more earthly problems of abandonment, neglect, and bullying.' [2] Nakata Hideo's *Ringu* (1998) merged these themes and effectively started a thematic trend whose emergence coincided with the emerging technological worries of the new millennium. Shohini Chaudhuri describes this development as a 'genre [that] typically combines technology with the supernatural.' [3] Alternatively, in *J-Horror: The Definitive Guide to The Ring, The Grudge and Beyond*, David Kalat identifies these films as being closer to 'an art movement' [4] rather than 'a traditional kind of movie genre' [5]. Kalat labels this movement 'the Haunted School', likening it to impressionism and surrealism, in the sense of 'a group of like-minded people come together at the right moment to inspire each other to explore the same set of artistic concepts in the same fundamental way.' [6]

A number of scholars have been united by the desire to write about Japanese cultural and ideological conceptions of the ghost in the films of 'the Haunted School'. Discussion of these spirits typically revolves around a conflict between traditional Japanese practices and values, on the one hand, and the modern social structures of Japan, including its technological advancements, on the other. This conflict is often connected by scholars, in research on these films, to visual representations of 'ghosts'. Indeed, the majority of existing scholarship on Japanese 'ghost' films focuses analysis on the visual, with only brief comments on the sound design and music, or on the audio-visuals central to the chilling cultural specificity of the productions. This study examines existing research touching on

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[2] Lindsay Nelson, 'Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future: Monsters, Children, and Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', *Cinemascope* V.13 (July-December 2003): 2.
[3] Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary World Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 107.
[4] David Kalat, *J-Horror: The Definitive Guide to The Ring, The Grudge and Beyond* (New York: Vertical, 2007), 12.
[5] *Ibid.*, 12.
[6] *Ibid.*, 12.

sonic and audio-visual content in the Japanese 'ghost' film – contributions that suggest, in turn, the potential value of a broader survey and in-depth analyses, filmic and contextual, of these productions.

One aim of my thesis is to provide that survey and analysis. Its distinctive and in-depth critical assessment challenges the theoretical hierarchies underpinning earlier audio-visual scholarship on Japanese horror films, which focused on theories derived from the analysis of examples of globally dominant, Hollywood-influenced modes of storytelling. In doing so, it engages critically with film music theory that challenges and supplement theories of Hollywood film scoring practices. Many of the 'ghost' films have subsequently been remade in the USA. Valerie Wee notes that '[t]he surge in Hollywood remakes of Japanese/Asian horror films since the late 1990s offers an opportunity to compare the original Asian films and their Hollywood remakes', and that '[s]uch an approach would provide significant insight into both the similarities and differences that characterize each culture's contemporary values, beliefs and ideologies.' [7] The Japanese horror films closely examined in this thesis are prominent examples that were remade in Hollywood, as part of a 'millennial horror cycle' [8]. While transnational remakes of Japanese horror films continue to be released post 2010, latter examples often rework the key tropes 'that characterize the contemporary cycle of [these] cross-culturally linked Japanese and Hollywood horror films' in such similar ways to earlier remakes, in keeping with a franchise cycle that is copied and repeated. For example, Takashi Shimizu's 2002 film *Ju-on: The Grudge*, analysed in this thesis, was remade in the US in 2004 by Shimizu, titled *The Grudge*. In 2020 another Hollywood film also titled *The Grudge*, was directed by Nicolas Pesce. The film used similar visual hauntings to the 2004 remake and maintained many of the key tropes. However, the storyline is heavily diluted, with the curse being transferred to a house in the US and to a mother who kills her husband and daughter after she enters the original *Ju-on* Saeki family house in Tokyo. The deceased American family then inflict violence on their victims or possess individuals to harm their loved ones. We are informed that the mother, Fiona Landers, was the social worker to Emma Williams before Toyama Yoko – both of whom are characters in the 2004 film, suggesting that this 2020 version could be a prequel of sorts, but this also suggests a repetition of similar storylines.

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[7] Valerie Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, [2014] 2016), 215.
[8] *Ibid*., 205.

Besides clippings of the original murders being shown in *The Grudge* (2020), the original *onryō* (grudge spirit) Kayako only has one appearance at the beginning of the film, a moment that, while paying homage to a scene from Shimizu Takashi's direct-to-video 2000 film *Ju-on: The Curse*, reduces the original premise of the film and its central vengeful spirit to passing references. Therefore, the ending point of this study is 2009, as the examples of Japanese millennial horror films that dominate existing scholarship, with a particular focus on the visual elements – *Ringu* (*Ring*), *Kairo* (*Pulse*), *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (*Dark Water*), *Ju-on: The Grudge* and *Chakushin ari* (*One Missed Call*) – were all remade at this point. [9]

By also addressing the popularity of these transnational remakes and the emerging body of scholarship in this research area, my thesis will take a case study-based approach to answering the following question: How do the roles of sound and music in Japanese horror remakes enable us to develop critical perspectives on the contrasting roles played by audio representations of 'Japanese' ghosts in these transnational contexts?

A more fundamental aim of this thesis is to demonstrate, through its surveys and in-depth case studies plus the theories I utilise and adapt, how examples of the Japanese 'ghost' film evoke specifically Japanese cultural representations, in sound and vision, in order to create the unique audio-visual style of their haunting cinematic narratives**.** The thesis will also draw attention to the importance of music and sound design in augmenting tensions between a pre-modern Japan continuing to uphold various traditional cultural values and a modern Japan that seeks to encourage economic, cultural, and political technological advancements. I seek to achieve this, first, by building on existing studies that indicate the pertinence of a wider range of Japanese cultural traditions and socio-historical contexts that have influenced the 'ghost' film scores. This approach encourages a greater consideration of how sound design choices invite a deeper understanding of socio-cultural contexts in case studies that have mainly been addressed previously through analysis centred around the film visual. I then focus on examining the representation of different Japanese arts, musics, and aspects of their aesthetics

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[9] While Oikawa Ataru's 2007 film *1303 Gou Shitsu* (*Apartment 1303*) was remade by Canadian-American production company MonteCristo International Entertainment in 2012 by director Michael Taverna as *Apartment 1303 3D*, this Japanese 'ghost' film has not been focused on as much as other earlier film examples in scholarship. It is often discussed in relation to its predecessors, *Ringu* and *Ju-on: The Grudge* and the visual similarities it shares.

in these films, while also addressing their assimilation and hybridization of external influences. Such scores and sound designs demand alternative critical approaches to film music, responsive to their challenging of hegemonic scoring practices, primarily those evolving from the classical Hollywood tradition. Analysing Japanese 'ghost' films and their American remakes, in this context, reveals a further vein of understanding regarding these relationships. The thesis will therefore also examine the relationship between industrial and commercial factors effecting the soundtracks for these films, and consider further themes suggesting routes for future research beyond the remit of the present study – such as the continuing evolution of Japanese 'ghost' filmmaking and the rise of television streaming services. Throughout the course of this study, when discussing the Japanese 'ghost' film, I place the term 'ghost' in quotation marks. This is because there are multiple terms for ghost and other ghostly phenomena in Japanese culture. As Zack Davisson notes, 'a country as obsessed with the supernatural as Japan is obviously going to have more than a single word for ghost.' [10] This study responds to the scholarly need for in-depth, critical, socio-culturally contextualised case studies examining the audio-visual and musical ramifications of that obsession and its role in, arguably, Japanese cinema's most significant strand of work in the last fifty years.

Chapter One will examine the current scope of scholarship on sound and music in Japanese 'ghost' films before providing a comprehensive overview of the development of scoring approaches across cinematic examples from the 1920s through to the late 2000s. The chapter provides distinct examples of sonic practice in a number of film examples that cannot straightforwardly be comprehended through critical approaches developed for dominant scoring practices such as those of (and in Japan influenced by) classical and later Hollywood styles. The examples discussed here particularly draw attention to how sound design and music are used to emphasise the porous boundaries between the living and the dead, as well as the liminal audio-visual spaces that represent a site of meeting between human and spirit. This is something that I argue is particularly unique to Japanese 'ghost' films, and as highlighted throughout this thesis, is tied to religious beliefs and cultural practices. In order to address and situate the complex nature of music and sound in the Japanese 'ghost' film, this chapter engages with scholarship from other non-Hollywood film scoring

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[10] Zack Davisson, *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost* (Seattle: Chin Music Press, 2015), 213.

traditions, including theoretical work by Annette Davison, Miguel Mera, David Burnand and Anna Morcom, as well as studies by Hosokawa Shūhei, Brooke McCorkle and Michael W. Harris specifically focusing on Japanese film music. The aim of this chapter is to draw attention to signature nuances of the Japanese 'ghost' films examined and the role that their culturally-specific stylistic treatment of sound and music plays, channelling new definitions of sonic haunting and the supernatural in non-Hollywood film productions.

Chapter Two examines traditions of representing the ghostly and the horrific specific to Japanese arts. It explains how particular examples of sonic practice in the 'ghost' films, drawing on specific film examples from Chapter One, can be heard to relate to Japanese art and music aesthetics. Definitions of the key aesthetics will be provided before the chapter addresses how they develop in relevant cultural forms. I then demonstrate the application of these aesthetics in different Japanese 'ghost' film scores. This chapter principally focuses on the importance of timbre in traditional Japanese music and how this translates into the treatment of sound design and music in Japanese horror film scores. One of the key points that is explored is the diverse range of sounds and concepts in Japanese sound aesthetics, which often challenge the boundaries between sound-design and music. In exploring the ambiguous range of patterned sound phenomena in Japan, Henry Johnson observes how social and historical factors bring about 'a diverse variety of ways of referring to what we would term "music," while sonic phenomena and references in other areas of culture suggest aspects of sound aesthetics that further undercut our distinction between "music" and "sound" or "noise."' [11] The blurring of these boundaries, as I argue throughout this chapter and across this thesis, invite new and unique readings of the film case study scores and audio treatment.

The chapter is framed by a theoretical consideration of aesthetics and semiotics relevant to these audio-visual interactions. The ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and Philip Tagg are incorporated into a semiotic model described as an 'orientation, information, inspiration' system adapted from the work of Michael Hardt, which I use to present each Japanese aesthetic principle in a clear and critical

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[11] Henry Johnson, 'The Sounds of *Myūjikku:* An Exploration of Concepts and Classifications in Japanese Sound Aesthetics' in *Musicological Research* 18 (1999): 303.

manner. Screen music scholarship [12] has previously drawn attention to the continued adoption of semiological perspectives, particularly when it comes to the dominance of Hollywood filmmaking and its power to define models of film music scholarship. Miguel Mera and Anna Morcom identify this in their own critical survey:

> While this work has, of course been valuable and necessary, the lack of commensurate attention to other filmmaking, scoring or performing traditions has created a misleading imbalance. The focus on goal-orientated narrative structures, particular kinds of composers, ideas related to the concept of the 'leitmotif' and focus on semiotic analysis may eventually be understood as a consequence of these approaches. [13]

This study will provide a detailed response to the critique above, drawing on the research of Mera and Morcom, however at this stage it is important to highlight that this study recognises a multi-methodological approach to film music and sound analysis outside of the Hollywood tradition that combines semiotic analysis with an ethnographical perspective. By this, I mean approaching film music as social practice by engaging in both ethnographic fieldwork and in historical research presented in a semiotic model of audio-visual analysis. For example, many of these cultural form examples presented in the 'Information, Orientation, Inspiration' classification model in Chapter Two come from various Japanese performing arts, identified following field visits during an International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellowship. This fieldwork forms part of the thesis' methodological framework, with further detail of the methodology provided at the end of the Introduction. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how Japanese aesthetic concepts that have not previously been discussed in relation to Japanese 'ghost' film music offer a wealth of new critical and contextual information, particularly considering the co-existence of pre-modern and modern Japanese cultural aspects, with which future analysis should engage.

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[12] The term 'screened music' is used here when introducing Mera and Morcom's research over others such as 'screen music', 'music on screen' or 'music and the moving image'. This is in order 'to draw attention to issues of *agency*, of process, active or contrived representation or re-representation, and of mediation and media-isation.' They also 'hope that this term will allow broader and more multi-disciplinary approached to emerge.' See Miguel Mera and Anna Morcom, 'Introduction: Screened music, trans-contextualisation and ethnomusicological approaches', *Ethnomusicology Forum* 18.1 (2009): 5.

[13] Mera and Morcom, 'Introduction: Screened music, trans-contextualisation and ethnomusicological approaches', 9.

Chapters Three and Four begin that work of analysis, by closely reading and interpreting the use of sound and music in two substantial film case studies in light of Chapter One and Two's findings: *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* ('Dark Water', Nakata, Hideo, 2002) and *Ju-on: The Grudge* (Takashi, Shimizu, 2000). These analyses examine how several of the Japanese aesthetic principles presented in Chapter Two highlight representations of spirits unique to Japan through audio treatment which, in turn, engage with wider cultural, social and technological contexts in Japanese society. Chapter Three's case study of Nakata Hideo's *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* tells the story of a mother-daughter relationship and the encounters they have with a vengeful child ghost after moving into an apartment building inhabited by the ghost child. The chapter demonstrates how sound design in the film ties the role of the monstrous child ghost to wider societal and national anxieties centred around the Japanese family. A number of Japanese aesthetic principles will be highlighted in relation to the film's score and sound design, including the culturally-distinctive Japanese sensitivity to timbral transformation, the multi-faceted concept connected to time-space known as *ma*, and a connection with traditional Japanese theatre through *mugen noh* (phantasmal noh). [14] The influence of the highly codified musical drama of noh [15], in particular *mugen noh*, opens up various forms of ghostly representations visually and aurally that manipulate the concepts of time and space on the stage – manipulations which, in turn, are translated into various manifestations in Japanese 'ghost' films. The meeting of two realities in the form of the natural human world and the spiritual plane of somewhere else is a staple ingredient of typical phantasmal noh drama, and as demonstrated throughout this thesis also highlights a significant meeting of premodern Japan, through the traditional visual representations of the spirits in the films, with modern Japan through the current world settings that they haunt. Komparu Kunio notes how phantasmal noh is the most common type currently performed and has come to represent Noh in modern times: 'Phantasmal Noh [plays] are representative of the usually held image of Noh, and the overwhelming majority of plays performed at present are of this mode of production.' [16] The examples presented in *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* reinforce the continued

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[14] *Mugen* (夢幻) translates as dream-vision. *Mugen noh* was created by Zeami (1363-1443).
[15] Nō is also used as a transliteration of the Japanese character. The Hepburn romanization is used throughout this thesis.
[16] Komparu Kunio, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives* (New York: Weatherhill, 1983), 79.

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importance of theatrical origins in Japanese horror films into the 00s, and the meetings of premodern and modern Japan.

Chapter Four's case study, *Ju-on: The Grudge*, presents a traditional Japanese supernatural narrative through the figure of a variety of ghost known as an *onryō* (grudge spirit/vengeful ghost), combining it with a modern take on the haunted house, and incorporating a curse created by a husband who has murdered his wife, the family cat, and most likely his son. The film is told through inter-connected vignettes named after individual characters, presented as a non-linear storyline. The chapter analyses the film's culturally encoded sonics of haunting by drawing attention to the non-linearity of remembered space that is symbolised by the house, including ambiguous sound sources and off-screen sounds connected, I argue, to the concept of *sawari*. The contemporary art form of butoh is also applied to analysis of the movement and sounds of the central *onryō* and murdered wife, Kayako, and combined with the concept of *yūgen* (an aesthetic concept of beauty) to critically analyse the sounds of the ghosts of Kayako and her son Toshio. This will demonstrate the significance of the ideas of embodiment that are captured through butoh, extending beyond the carefully delivered movements in order to communicate with the audio-viewer on a more primal and emotional level that can also be connected to a theoretical model based around prosthetic memory and trauma, introduced in Chapter Three. The analysis of music and sound in this chapter is framed by a consideration of the musical and thematic leitmotif, developed to highlight how *Ju-on: The Grudge* complements and challenges Hollywood approaches to scoring horror. Both case study chapters aim to exemplify some of the ways in which non-Hollywood approaches to Japanese horror scoring are distinctive, and to draw attention to nuanced, culturally specific insights that require in-depth analysis and criticism of the kind represented by the chapter in order to provide a more profuse and comprehensive appreciation of the films' folkloric stories, storytelling, and significance.

Chapter Five addresses the rise in popularity of Japanese transnational horror film remakes. It demonstrates how, by examining the role of music and sound in both the original films and their US remakes, new understanding can be developed of how socio-cultural contexts are represented by audio in transnational film remakes. The chapter presents a case study of the Japanese 'ghost' film *Kairo*

(*Pulse*, Kurosawa, Kiyoshi, 2001) and its American remake *Pulse* (Jim Sonzero, 2006). [17] This case study is the first in-depth comparative sonic analysis written about these two films. Its analysis aims to highlight how attention to culturally-specific representations in sound and music lending distinctive nuances of sound to the Japanese 'ghost' film can be tracked, revealingly, in terms of their fate in the remake. Their persistence or disappearance represents, in turn, transforming contextual meanings. The audio-visual analysis of this chapter also – and I argue, importantly – examines the industrial contexts and commercial factors that inform this transnational remake. The chapter will conclude by offering further considerations that draw attention to developments in the global film and television market, in particular the digital market and rise of streaming services, by addressing the first Japanese Netflix original horror production, *Ju-on: Origins* (Miyake, Shō, 2020), which adapts thematic material from Shimizu's *Ju-on* film franchise. This final part of the chapter critically engages with new scholarship on transnational film and television to suggest how scholars engaging with this new territory might also productively analyse music and sound in audio-visual Japanese 'ghost' narratives by building on the distinctive and, I hope, useful contributions of the approaches and examples presented in this thesis.

This thesis aims to combine close film music analysis with research on Japanese arts, music and Japanese culture, plus broader film music theory, in order to draw attention to the culturally encoded roles played by sound and music in Japanese 'ghost' films. As noted earlier in this Introduction, the research presented here is shaped by a multi-methodological approach that also recognises the importance of ethnographically based study in order to 'provide more detailed and nuanced insights into the relationship between the soundtrack and image track within a variety of specific production and cultural contexts'. [18] This methodological approach is reflective of an ethnography that is multi-layered in practice and adopts a critical definition from the ethnographic scholarship of Karen O'Reilly:

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[17] In Japan *Kairo* is also known by the English title *Pulse*. However, due to the comparative nature of the audio-visual analysis carried out in Chapter Five with its American remake of the same name, the alternative Japanese title *Kairo* is used for the purpose of clarity in this thesis.

[18] Mera and Morcom, 'Introduction: Screened music, trans-contextualisation and ethnomusicological approaches', 9.

Ethnography is then more a theory about how research should be conducted than a recipe for techniques that can be employed. It draws on a family of methods, usually including participant observations, in-depth interviews and conversations. It gains an understanding of the social world through involvement in the daily practice of human agents, and it involves immersion in the context, the building of trust and rapport with agents, both phenomenological and hermeneutic interpretations, and recognition of the complexity of the social world. It does not attempt to reduce this complexity to a few statistical or typographical representations. It is reflexive about the role of the researcher and messiness of the research process. [19]

The framework that I apply therefore not only consists of the close analysis described above, presenting through a semiotic model each aesthetic concept and its use in traditional Japanese performing arts and later film music and sound, but adopts the use of an ethnographic and reflexive methodology. In Chapter Two the specific examples of Japanese performing art forms that informed a deeper understanding of the cultural aesthetics applied to Japanese 'ghost' film music and sound design were informed from fieldwork visits as part of my five-month International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellowship. This research fellowship was undertaken at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto – one of the five National Institutes for the Humanities in Japan. [20] The immersive experience gained from participating in a number of cultural festivities and observing a number of traditional Japanese art forms, including butoh, bunraku, kabuki and noh, from a participant-observational approach informed a number of analytical conclusions in this thesis and corresponds with what Mera and Morcom note is a 'a welcome shift away from analyses that solely rely on close readings of the completed text to explorations that more accurately reflect, as Ron Sadoff puts it, the "constitutive nature" of screened musics (2006,165).' [21] Analyses in Chapters Three and Four are partly informed by interviews with film composers Kawai Kenji and Ashiya Gary, and not only provide insider knowledge of the Japanese film music industry more broadly, but highlight how

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[19] Karen O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods: Second Edition* (Routledge: London and New York [2005] 2012), 10-11.
[20] This International Placement Scheme (IPS) fellowship was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.
[21] Mera and Morcom, 'Introduction: Screened music, trans-contextualisation and ethnomusicological approaches', 14-15.

'the medium of the interview is also used to bring into focus the practitioners themselves, their experiences, and questions of process.'[22] By applying a framework of methods that ties together close analysis with field visits and interviews, I hope my thesis can open the way for further critical applications of the kind for which it advocates, in order to promote new conceptualizations and readings of the nuanced roles sound and music play in the Japanese 'ghost' film.

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[22] Mera and Morcom, 'Introduction: Screened music, trans-contextualisation and ethnomusicological approaches', 15.

Chapter One: Development of the Japanese 'Ghost' Film Score

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will briefly examine the current scope of scholarship on music and sound in Japanese 'ghost' film case studies before providing a comprehensive overview of the development of the Japanese 'ghost' film score across the decades. Since the early days of filmmaking in Japan, directors have adopted cinematic approaches that present specific cultural and ideological conceptions of the ghost. This has been guided by Japan's rich heritage of ghost scroll paintings and woodblock prints, as well as the tradition of storytelling known as *setsuwa* (fables delivered as spoken tales), which amplified visual descriptions of the spirits and their hauntings. The placement of these historical ghostly images into film has generated several publications discussing the cultural background of the visual representations and their meaning in Japanese film narratives. [23] These publications are dominated by analysis that primarily focuses on the influence of cultural mythology on the films' visuals, making little reference to music and sound. Yet Japan has a long-established folkloric tradition of ghost iconography in the performing arts [24], including musical arts, which in turn has influenced cinematic representations. Therefore, it is surprising that scholarly discussion has not been extended further to examine the role of audio in portraying conceptions of ghosts in Japanese film. Do these films draw on an established history of ghost archetypes in both the visual and performing arts to create culturally encoded concepts of sonic haunting?

In order to address this question, a broader survey on Japanese 'ghost' film scores will be carried out in this chapter. This will draw attention to striking examples of sonic practice in a number of film examples that cannot straightforwardly be comprehended through the established critical approaches developed for hegemonic scoring practices, namely, the classical Hollywood tradition. In order to engage critically with the survey, the chapter will therefore first introduce two dominant

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[23] See Jay McRoy, *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005); McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (New York: Rodopi, 2008); Jim Harper, *Flowers From Hell: The Modern Japanese Horror Film* (Hereford: Noir Publishing, 2008); Choi Jinhee, *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).
[24] See Nogami Toyoitiro. *Japanese Noh plays: how to see them* (Board of Tourist Industry. Japanese Government Railways, 1934); Miyake Shūtarō, *Kabuki Drama: Tourist Library Vol. 7* (Tokyo: Japan Travel Bureau, 1959); Zvika Serper, '"Between Two Worlds": The Dybbuk and the Japanese Noh and Kabuki Ghost Plays', *Comparative Drama* (2001): 345-376; Susan Blakeley Klein. 'When the moon strikes the bell: Desire and enlightenment in the noh play Dojoji', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 17.2 (1991): 291-322 and John E. Petty. 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic' (MSc. diss., University of North Texas, 2011).

theoretical models in research on Hollywood and non-Hollywood scoring, based on Annette Davison's distinctions of these practices in her 2004 publication *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice: Cinema Soundtracks in the 1980s and 1990s.* Davison herself engages with a broad assessment of scoring practice and theories that inform the definitions of her theoretical model for non-Hollywood scoring practice. This alternative theoretical approach, along with other interpretations of film music and sound from outside of the US, will provide a framework that will highlight how examples of Japanese film music and sound do not necessarily fit within the 'standard' operating procedure of narrative film. The second half of this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which, over the course of Japanese scoring history, practices emerge which cannot be understood within traditional Hollywood practice and theory. This is especially the case for Japanese 'ghost' films, where cultural musical practices not necessarily explored in existing non-Hollywood theory need to be considered.

1.2 Developments in Non-Hollywood Film Music Theory

Drawing on theoretical conceptions of classical Hollywood filmmaking, a number of musicologists - including Gorbman (1987), Kalinak (1992) and Flinn (1992) - have described the classical Hollywood film score as defined by a set of structural conventions originally institutionalised as a set of filmmaking practices in the 1930s and 1940s. These practices were united in the aim of heightening the fictive reality of a film's narrative. [25]

The primary means of heightening the film narrative's fictive reality via music – a key function of Hollywood scoring practices identified by Davison in the above quotation – was achieved by using non-diegetic scoring as a continuity device to create smooth scene transitions and fill in the gaps between bits of dialogue – thereby contributing to the immersive nature of classical Hollywood storytelling, and the extent to which it functions as a narrative medium that only exceptionally, for special effects, calls attention to its nature as fiction. To explore this, Davison, quoting recent theorists of classical Hollywood scoring, draws particularly on the work of Claudia Gorbman and her seven principles of 'music composition, mixing, and editing in the classical narrative film.' [26] In summary, Gorbman identifies the role of film music as not drawing attention to itself, with non-diegetic scoring

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[25] Annette Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 2.
[26] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: The British Film Institute, 1987), 73.

giving way to the priority of dialogue and sound effects, but also providing narrative cues and expressing the moods and connotations of the on-screen events in conjunction with the visuals and other sound. Similarly, music of the classical narrative film should not draw the spectator's attention to the physical formation of the cinema itself. Gorbman states that

> [C]inema constructs its spectator ideologically, along with his or her desires to know. This is achieved predominantly through classical editing strategies, which attempt to mask the traces of filmic discourse and the role of cinematic apparatus in narration: the aesthetic of transparency. [27]

This description is in line with the function of classical cinema, which should tell a story as transparently as possible. Analysing films including *King Kong* (1933), *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *Mildred Pierce* (1945) etc. Gorbman draws attention to how music encourages the filmgoer to indulge in the fiction of the screen.

Drawing the filmgoer into the fiction, Gorbman proposes, they are more likely to submit to the suturing effect of the film because the score directs their conscious attention away from the technological nature of the film and instead heightens the emotion of the events on-screen. Cuts are smoothed over, unity implied, and 'transparency' – the idea that, when audio-viewing a film, one sees (and hears) straight through the mechanics of the medium, attending only to the meanings of the story – is more likely. The score is also often constructed to deliberately yet subtly use an 'appropriate' musical example to set up Hollywood genre expectations or guide the filmgoer's opinion of a character. In order to do this, '[a] musical idiom must be thoroughly familiar, its connotations virtually reflexive knowledge, for it to serve "correctly," invisibly, in classical filmic discourse.' [28] In other words, if aspects of the scoring called attention to themselves by being somehow 'incorrect', the 'inaudibility' of the score, i.e., its own transparency would also be threatened. Hence, of course, the name of Gorbman's book, *Unheard Melodies*. The Hollywood non-diegetic score's chief additional purpose is then to 'control narrative connotation'. [29] Music is used to interpret and illustrate the

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[27] Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice*, 29.
[28] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies',* 79.
[29] Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), xv.

narrative events with cues that guide the engagement of the spectator's audio-viewing and the meaning they might read into the images – but without the audio-viewer becoming cognisant of the fact they are listening to music and being influenced by its significations, any more than they should 'see' (i.e., consciously notice and thus potentially critique) the cuts, lighting, zooms and so on. For Gorbman, this process is ideological: sutured into a subject-position and absorbed in a storyline, one absorbs the subtexts and politics of the narrative, as if by osmosis.

Another important aspect of Hollywood scoring practice related to Gorbman's inaudibility rule is David Neumeyer's research on the hierarchy of voice (i.e., speech and dialogue) in Hollywood cinema. Neumeyer asserts that the voice should be primary above music and sound effects in the classical Hollywood soundtrack to prioritise narrative clarity. Neumeyer's theory that the narrative sound film is vococentric derives from Michel Chion's initial discussion of the cinematic pre-eminence of the voice. Neumeyer extends Chion's definitions of voco and verbocentric, [30] adding that '"vococentric" also includes what I will call the grain of the voice (its sound and texture), where "verbocentric" would also include text presented directly on-screen, in signs, letter inserts, and so on. In the classical model, narrative-sound may be a set of relations, but it is first of all a hierarchy.' [31] The emphasis of the vococentric model highlights how dialogue, along with the visuals, which Neumeyer identifies as 'the fundamental property of a film', serves as the primary carrier of audible narrative information in classic Hollywood cinema. [32]

Moving beyond Gorbman and Neumeyer's studies, Davison explores later developments of Hollywood scoring practices following the breakdown of the studio system in the late 1950s. Her argument focuses on how the dominance of the Hollywood model is reflected in the re-emergence of the scoring techniques and orchestral forces of the 'New Hollywood' blockbusters that signalled the emergence of 'post-classical' [33] scores. In effect, the New Hollywood film score can be understood as

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[30] Michel Chion defines verbocentrism as prioritising the text of the audio-visual media, the language and meaning over other types of vocalizations. Vococentrism is defined as the privileging of the voice over all other sonic elements. See Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Claudia Gorbman (trans.), (New York: Columbia, 1994) and Chion, *Film, A Sound Art*, Claudia Gorbman (trans.), (New York: Columbia University Press, [2003] 2009).
[31] David P. Neumeyer, *Meaning and Interpretation of Music in Cinema* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015), 12.
[32] *Ibid*., 12.
[33] A term coined by Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 42.

a signifier of classic Hollywood scoring and soundtrack practice, bearing characteristic relations to studio-era practices:

> The return to classical scoring can thus be interpreted as operating in tandem with the films' references to the narrative techniques of classical Hollywood. As a result of adhering to classical conventions, this kind of scoring works hard to encourage the audience to surrender to the film and fully engage with the emotional worlds and action depicted on screen. [34]

Thus, Davison's exploration of how film music can be constructed in the context of film theory lays the groundwork for her primary theoretical contribution: mapping how music and sound can break with dominant scoring practices and ideologies through alternative practices – such as scores that refuse to remain 'inaudible', and which thereby threaten filmic transparency. Davison's examples are considered in more detail below.

While she does not analyse Japanese cinema in her work, Davison's theorising of non-Hollywood music and sound provides a valuable framework for the study thereof. As this chapter and later parts of this thesis will demonstrate, the distinctive qualities of Japanese 'ghost' film scores can also be identified and critiqued by examining them in relation to other scoring traditions, and particularly Hollywood and related mainstream practices of narrative cinema. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam note, the term *Hollywood* functions 'as a kind of shorthand for a massively industrial, ideologically reactionary and stylistically conservative form of "dominant cinema"'. [35] Maintaining a history of global expansion through the export of film from the early 1910s resulted in the establishment of America's global commercial studio system, which, in turn, has produced 'a set of audio-visual codes that have become a worldwide lingua franca.' [36] Taking into account Hollywood's global position, Hollywood practice is now, to a degree, hegemonic in mainstream narrative scoring worldwide.

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[34] Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice*, 3.

[35] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentricism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), 7.

[36] Jay Beck, 'Acoustic Auteurs and Transnational Cinema', in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media*, Carol Vernallis, Amy Herzog and John Richardson (eds.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 832.

Ever since mixing technology first allowed for it, ca. 1932-3, directors as much in Europe as in Hollywood did not hesitate to include in their work such music as seemed appropriate to a particular film's locale, time period, and characters. [37]

In their collection on *European Film Music*, Miguel Mera and David Burnand agree with this understanding of the dominant status of classical scoring practice: 'Movies most usually subordinate the artificiality of cinematography and editing to the pre-modern conventions of narrative realism.' [38] Yet while discussion on European film music and Hollywood scoring is often led by what Geoffrey Nowell-Smith identifies as economic rhetoric from the US side, positioned against a European culturalist rhetoric, Mera and Burnand note that the 'argument that European cinema is threatened by the external power of Hollywood is in reality much more complicated than polarized studies would initially suggest.' [39] This is followed by a note listing several publications that draw attention to the mediation of distance between Hollywood and European film music. [40] Consideration of these nuances will demonstrate, in later chapters, parallels between these European negotiations and Japanese scoring practices. Notably, for instance, James M. Doering, writing on music in the films of Kurosawa Akira, makes reference to a closer relationship between early American and European film music, noting how both used scoring techniques found in mainstream practice 'to serve the following purposes: 1) it helped establish the mood and location; 2) it helped establish continuity among different scenes in a film; 3) it provided sound effects; 4) it masked the sounds of the loud projection equipment for a more enjoyable viewing experience.' [41]

Examples of Hollywood practice adopted in mainstream scoring beyond America and Europe include Japan. Komatsu Hiroshi notes that from 1914 through 1915, 'Japanese cinema, under the

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[37] James Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (London: Routledge, 2009), 166.
[38] See Miguel Mera and David Burnand 'Introduction', *European Film Music*, Miguel Mera and David Burnand (eds.), (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2009), 4.
[39] *Ibid*., 4.
[40] The publications listed are: John Orr, 'New Directions in European Cinema', *European Cinema*, Elizabeth Ezra (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 299-317; *Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony*, David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes (eds.), (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994); Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Introduction', *Hollywood and Europe: Economics, Culture, National Identity 1945-95*, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Steven Ricci (eds.), (London: BFI, 1998), 1-16.
[41] James M. Doering, "A look at Japanese film music through the lens of Akira Kurosawa." Randolph-Macon College (https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=kpHhvkIAAAAJ&hl=en, 15 January 2017).

influence of American film, adapted the Western mode of narration.' [42] After 1914, the role of the film interpreter/narrator (*benshi*) in Japanese cinema changed, as 'Japanese cinema decided to adapt the representational mode of Western cinema in which cinema undertakes its own narration. The release of many American films also became a big factor in the alteration of Japanese cinema.' [43] This should not be taken as the standard model of practice across the entirety of Japanese cinema after 1914, as the examples presented in this chapter will demonstrate. However, it is helpful to recognise that many Japanese film scores adopted Hollywood scoring practices.

1.2.1 Two examples: blending traditions

Hayasaka Fumio's score for Kurosawa Akira's 1954 *chanbara* (swordplay) film *Shichinin no samurai* (*Seven Samurai*) is a representative example of a score that as Michael W. Harris notes, 'express[es] Japanese musical idioms via a Western orchestra.' [44] While adopting classical Western scoring practices, Hayasaka's compositional style is defined as drawing influences 'not only from Japanese and Western music, but also from music all over Asia, including Indonesia and China' [45]. He 'would continue to experiment and explore both Western forms and Japanese idioms in order to shape the music he wrote during his remaining years after the Pacific War.' [46] This section focuses on the influence of Hollywood scoring practices on the score of *Shichinin no samurai*, in order to highlight its wider influence on scoring outside the U.S. Hayasaka's score directed the film's pacing and was made up of recurring themes for specific characters and motifs. The recurrent thematic variations are all symptomatic of the nineteenth-century opera concept of the leitmotif, in which recurring musical ideas are used to help guide the audio-viewer in the narrative. 'Hollywood composers, particularly of the 1930s and 1940s were enamoured with this technique'. [47] This demonstrates the reach of Hollywood scoring practice not only in Europe but in East Asian cinema.

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[42] Komatsu Hiroshi, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I', in *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, Arthur Nolletti Jr., and David Desser (eds.), Linda C. Ehrlich and Yuko Okutsu (trans.), (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 229.
[43] *Ibid*., 257.
[44] Michael William Harris, 'Hayaska Fumio, Ronin Composer: Analysis and Commentary of Five Film Scores' (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 2013), 4.
[45] *Ibid*., 4.
[46] *Ibid*., 34.
[47] James M. Doering, 'A look at Japanese film music through the lens of Akira Kurosawa' (https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=kpHhvkIAAAAJ&hl=en, 15 January 2017).

For the film, Hayasaka wrote 'a number of character-based themes that capture the spirit of their on-screen counterparts and then transforms the tunes as the film progresses.' [48] The most prominent example is the 'Samurai Theme', which is heard as three variations throughout the film and captures the characteristics of each samurai in different situations. It is first heard when one of the samurai, Kambei, rescues a child who has been abducted, killing the man who took him hostage. As Kambei walks away from the rescue and heads to the next town, essentially away from his past of fighting in various wars, he is pursued by Katsushirō, a hopeful student. In this sequence, he is also joined by villagers and another wanna-be disciple Kikuchiyo and, more importantly, accompanied by the marching bass of a low string and harp ostinato. This is conventional of the Hollywood score style topic. The marching ostinato shapes the association of a military march as Kambei and the other samurai walk on to the next town. This is also an example of 'mickey-mousing' as the music is synchronized to the accompanying on-screen action. [49] The melody heard above the ostinato of this first variation of the 'Samurai Theme' is played by alto and tenor saxophones, trumpets and trombones and opens with a rising perfect fourth interval from G4 to C5, producing a fanfare-like, heroic opening associated with Kambei's brave actions. However, the sudden shift down into C minor captures the more sombre side to Kambei and his past failure to achieve a status of glory among the samurai.

Briefly, it is also useful to consider a case study from European cinema with a connection to the genre and scoring practices examined later in this thesis, due to the role of the supernatural and mixing of manifestly audible scoring practices with more conventional features in the movie. Robynn Stilwell's examination of Anthony Minghella's *Truly Madly Deeply* (1990) presents the British film as positioned between European and Hollywood cinema, not least through the film's representation of classical musicians. Nina is an amateur pianist who experiences the return of her deceased partner, Jamie, a cellist. As Janet Halfyard observes, 'Like Hollywood, the film combines both popular culture and high culture within its diegesis' [50], and because music is so integral to the characters' lives, it represents a significant aspect of how their relationship works and how they are understood. Stilwell, theorising the film's scoring, observes that

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[48] Harris, 'Hayaska Fumio, Ronin Composer', 68.

[49] See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies* (1987) for examples of mickey-mousing in classical Hollywood practice, including Max Steiner's score for *King Kong*.

[50] Janet Halfyard, 'Screen playing: cinematic representations of classical music performance and European identity', *European Film Music*, Miguel Mera and David Burnand (eds.), (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 83.

The use of music in the film transcends the boundaries of classical film scoring and gives psychological depth to the Utopian, but often emotionally static, musical number. The traditional functions of a non-diegetic score are to provide emotional inflection within a scene and continuity between scenes while doing its work unnoticed but the underscore of *Truly, Madly, Deeply* interacts with other cinematic elements and with other musics in the film to an unprecedented degree, generating a layer of purely musical symbolism. [51]

Nina and the ghost of Jamie are classical musicians. Their union is symbolised by J.S. Bach's Adagio from Cello Sonata No.3 in G minor throughout the film. The couple also perform pop songs diegetically, including Bob Dylan's 'Tangled Up in Blue' and The Walker Brothers' 'The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore'. These pop music numbers performed in *Truly Madly Deeply* are a covert message from Jamie to Nina. However, unlike the 'utopian' moment that Richard Dyer describes regarding the musical number [52], they reveal the emptiness in Nina's life. Clearly, the audio-viewer is meant to hear and attend to the layered meanings of the songs and these performances. They cannot be inaudible for the film to tell its story.

In this context, Barrington Pheloung's non-diegetic underscoring performs functions akin to conventional, mainstream narrative scoring. It unites the film across scenes, bridging the variety of musics used in the film in order to maintain the momentum of the central narrative: the story of the relationship between Nina and Jamie, and in particular, how, not least through musical catharsis, Nina is able to work through her terrible grief. In this way, the non-diegetic scoring establishes continuity for the audio-viewer, a classical scoring convention. As Stilwell notes, 'The underscore is so transparent it is almost invisible (inaudible), lightly eliding scenes and providing a symbolism that can only truly be decoded by those with musical knowledge.' [53] These functions contrast to moments in the film when the Bach excerpts move between the diegetic and non-diegetic score, which can be seen as a challenge to – or at least a nuancing of – Hollywood scoring convention, representing the suspension between this world and the next that Jamie finds himself in. Nicholas Reyland highlights how the connection of Bach's 'Adagio' with Jamie is 'more than a symbolic foil for his journeys

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[51] Robynn J. Stilwell. 'Symbol, narrative and the musics of Truly, Madly, Deeply', *Screen* 38.1 (1997): 60.
[52] See Stilwell, 'Symbol, narrative and the musics of *Truly, Madly, Deeply*', 68.
[53] *Ibid*., 75.

between life and death and limbo.' [54] Reyland draws attention to an unusual musical manifestation that occurs later in the film after Nina is shown playing the piano part to the movement singing the cello line Jamie would have played early in the film. As Reyland writes, 'Nina, finding herself unable to play on in an enactment of this ritual, is suddenly prompted by a cello note, as Jamie apparently manifests to perform the cello line, and more generally, to help her move forward from her grief.' [55] This is both 'a suspension between this world and the next' [56] for Jamie and a musical manifestation that creates ambiguity between the diegetic and non-diegetic scoring. The ambiguous slippage between the two is resolved as Nina deciding whether or not to let Jamie go, becomes more involved with Mark, whom she meets after Jamie's death. She finally purchases a new piece of Bach's repertoire, the 'Keyboard Concerto in G minor (S 1058)', detaching herself from the 'Adagio' and Jamie:

> The music in this film is connected with a network of verbal and visual imagery…After [Nina's]… on-screen participation in the pop songs, about a third of the way through the film, her participation in music is restricted to listening as she begins to move away from Jamie; her musical action migrates definitively to the non-diegetic realm, suspended in the underscore and resolved in the keyboard concerto. The music is crucial to our understanding of these characters and how they relate to one another. [57]

Truly, Madly, Deeply is an example of how some non-Hollywood (if still predominantly mainstream) film negotiates between conventional and alternative practices, including degrees of audibility, to enhance both its storytelling and symbolism. It is a useful example because the majority of Japanese film case studies examined in this thesis are not avant-garde films but mainstream entertainment that, nevertheless, like *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, do something different with scoring that negotiates between scoring practices to achieve deeper narrative and symbolic goals.

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[54] Nicholas W. Reyland, *Zbigniew Preisner's Three Colours Trilogy: Blue, White, Red* (Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 2012), 140.
[55] *Ibid.*, 140.
[56] Stilwell, 'Symbol, narrative and the musics of *Truly, Madly, Deeply*', 73.
[57] *Ibid.*, 73.

1.2.2 Theorising difference

Various theorists have challenged mainstream scoring conventions on polemical grounds. Sergei Eisenstein, V.I. Pudovkin, and G.V. Alexandrov, writing on the importance of montage in film editing, argued that while meaning was conventionally generated from the visual montage, experimenting with synchronous sound could produce additional meaning from the visuals as a form of montage development. Davison highlights how they believed that the application of 'synchronized sound in "distinct nonsynchronization" with the visuals would lead to "the creation of an orchestral counterpoint of visual and aural images'.[58] She describes Eisenstein's use of horizontal montage (organization of the visual shot) and vertical montage (compositional lines of music) to frame his assertion that there should be a counterpoint between elements of the medium.

Royal S. Brown uses Eisenstein's film *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) in *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* to demonstrate how montage theory worked in practice through 'an alternate form of film/music interaction and director/composer relationship.'[59] Eisenstein argued that audio and visuals present an underlying theme in different ways, creating a 'certain separation between the musical score and the narrative.'[60] For example, in *Alexander Nevsky*, following the battle on the ice, the camera pans across the battlefield strewn with bodies before adopting a number of static long shots to show women entering from the background in the distance bearing torches. The shots and use of dialogue reveal the tragedy of the conflict as wounded and dying soldiers are shown trying to rise, calling out the names of loved ones before falling down again. This sequence is accompanied by an aria performed by a mezzo-soprano solo voice and orchestra translated in Sergei Prokofiev's score as the cue 'The Field of the Dead'. The lyrics of the aria are synchronised with the visuals. For example, when the translated words of 'I kiss your sightless eyes and caress your cold forehead' are accompanied by the visual action of a woman dropping her torch to embrace one of the deceased soldiers that she recognises. However, the specific separation that Eisenstein describes is

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[58] Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 60.

[59] Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (California: University of California Press, 1994), 134.

[60] See Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice, 63-64,* and *73,* for a full assessment of Eisenstein's analysis for music as montage and full reference of Royal S. Brown's critique of *Alexander Nevsky's* score.

revealed at this moment. Despite having a level of awareness of the artificiality of the battle of the ice sequence being shot in a film studio, the audio-viewer, and from the operatic aria giving the impression of a staged dramatic performance rather than an actual scene of conflict, has witnessed the deathly reality of war. Thus, as Davison notes, drawing on Nicholas Cook's assessment in *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (1998), the 'music seemingly operates in counterpoint to the image, [though in fact] it works in the service of unity between image and sound at a deeper level.' [61]

Eisenstein *et al.* were carving out alternatives to parallel underscoring at the onset of the synchronised sound period, Adorno and Eisler's *Composing for the Films* ([1947] 1994) critiqued the '"tired" clichés' [62] of the classical Hollywood score at a point by which they had become mainstream in Hollywood and elsewhere, laying out the traditional scoring conventions and offering alternatives. They stressed the manipulable potential of modernist musical practices, such as atonality and serialism, and how new compositional techniques could be accompanied by alternative approaches to sound design in film as well. In particular, Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler suggested that music could be utilised in such a way that the culture industry's control over the management of Hollywood cinema would be exposed. Many of their suggestions 'were targeted at pulling the spectator-auditor out of a direct, passive relationship with the cinematic action on screen which, they believed, constituted Hollywood.' [63] For these reasons, techniques disrupting or rupturing transparency would be favoured. Eisler putting theory into practice as a politically motivated composer, produced scores that steered away from mimicking the action and emotional mood on-screen but stood in contrast to the visual narrative to express larger symbolic goals that would provoke alternative audience commentary and interpretation. This was often for the benefit of workers to take action as he would seize opportunities to draw attention to political situations. Three notable examples include *Regen* (*Rain*, 1929), a short Dutch documentary film directed by Joris Ivens, *Pete Roleum and His Cousins* (1939), a pre-Hollywood American film project with Joseph Losey and the Hollywood collaboration with Fritz Lang and Bertolt Brecht, *Hangmen Also Die* (1943).

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[61] Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 62.
[62] *Ibid*., 28.
[63] *Ibid*., 66.

Regen is a particularly notable example of a score that reflects the overall mood of the film rather than following the visuals. Eisler produced the second sound version of the score in 1941 as an experiment for the Rockefeller Foundation's Film Music Project. [64] The work is called *Vierzehn Arten den Regen zu beschreiben, op. 70* (*Fourteen Ways to Describe Rain*) and exists as an independent piece of chamber work, highlighting its autonomous function. The short avant-garde film, written in collaboration with Mannus Franken, is about a rainy day in Amsterdam, exploring the city before, during and after a rainstorm and the changing moods. Eisler produced a score using the twelve-tone note serialism technique to explore dramaturgical possibilities. A pupil of Arnold Schonberg, Eisler wrote the piece as a homage to his teacher, and there is a connection with Schoenberg's chamber piece *Pierrot Lunaire, op. 21* in the melancholy motif depicted in the film's mood and scoring. Eisler also prioritised chamber instrumentation over Hollywood's conventional orchestra, which he viewed as producing a standardised monotonous sound that detracted from the articulations of expression that a chamber group could provide. Overall, 'Eisler employed a range of musico-dramatic possibilities that included close detailed synchronization – as in the parallelism associated with mickey-mouse techniques and other illustrative procedures-and the more extreme and contrasting effects of counterpoint (Eisler 1947: 148).' [65] However, Eisler's scores do not provide a complete negation of Hollywood scoring practices. Despite demonstrating the importance of small forms and delivering covert political musical statements, this was to maintain the music's dramaturgical function, demonstrating some adherence to Hollywood film score conventions.

Adorno and Eisler, like Davison and Gorbman, therefore note the level of compromise within Hollywood:

No matter how well motion-picture music 'rebel[s] and disavow[s] the picture that degrades it, wither by ruthless opposition or by revealing exaggeration', it is still subject to neutralization

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[64] Joris Ivens asked Lou Lichtveld to write a score for the original silent film in 1932.
[65] Hanns Eisler and [Theodor Adorno], *Composing for the Films* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1947] 1994) quoted in Sally M.A. Bick, 'Eisler's Notes on Hollywood and the Film Music Project, 1935-42', *Current Musicology No. 86* (Fall 2008): 24.

through the culture industry's machinery of standardization (Adorno and Eisler 1947/1994, pp.117, 86-7). [66]

In response to Adorno and Eisler's proposals for film music to utilise modernist musical practices, however, Davison pointedly states that '[m]usical language is not in itself the answer to alternative practice. Rather the "mechanism of neutralization" must be broken (p.87). Institutional difference offers a mean by which this may be achieved.' [67] Gorbman's assessment echoed these words when she concluded that 'working within the Hollywood system severely limits composers' [68] opportunities to use the prescriptions for alternative scoring practices suggested by Adorno and Eisler. She finds such practices 'more congruent with those employed *outside* Hollywood cinema.' [69]

1.2.3 Davison's examples

The film examples Davison presents in *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice* certainly cover a spectrum of alternative scoring practice, ranging from art cinema financed and mainly produced outside of Hollywood (Jean-Luc Godard's *Prénom Carmen*, 1983) to auteur films financed by Hollywood, using Hollywood actors, but operating in a somewhat dialectical relationship to mainstream narrative filmmaking practices (*Wild at Heart*, David Lynch, 1990). Davison applies her analysis of the film examples to establish what kind of relationship or difference they have with Hollywood cinema, based on her notion that 'there was a resurgence of classical scoring in Hollywood cinema from the mid-1970s on.' [70]

Jean-Luc Godard's *Prénom Carmen* (1983) demonstrates a precise deconstruction of classical Hollywood scoring practice by challenging the convention that non-diegetic music should be *unheard*. In doing so, transparency is troubled. This is achieved by 'problematizing the ability of film music to move easily across boundaries – between the diegetic and the non-diegetic, for example, and by foregrounding the manipulation and mediation of the sound recording and mixing apparatus inherent

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[66] Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno, *Composing for the Films* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1947] 1994) quoted in Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 69.
[67] Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 69.
[68] *Ibid*., 69.
[69] *Ibid*., 69.
[70] *Ibid*., 69.

in the presence of any non-diegetic film music.' [71] Godard's practice of treating all elements of the musical score – dialogue, environmental sounds, and non-diegetic music – as it would function in an orchestral performance, with all sounds occurring on the same level, breaks with Gorbman's second principle of inaudibility. This intensification of sound to expose the convention of classical Hollywood scoring is foregrounded in *Prénom Carmen* by the role of a string quartet in the film. The audio-viewer is introduced to the Prat Quartet, who are shown and heard throughout the film rehearsing various Beethoven Quartets as diegetic music. Extracts of the same movements performed by the quartet are also heard in the musicians' absence from the screen. [72] Later, diegetic and non-diegetic performances by the quartet are heard concurrently. Such music is virtually impossible *not* to hear.

Across all of the non-Hollywood films Davison analyses in her publication, the role of dialogue is discussed in relation to the common classical soundtrack practice of prioritizing it over sound effects and music. *Prénom Carmen* breaks with this conformity and offers no such hierarchy. One significant example is in the sequence towards the end of the film when Carmen and the gang of criminals, carry out the fake filming as a cover for a kidnapping in a hotel restaurant where the string quarter is hired to perform. Carmen's dialogue is heard on the soundtrack, addressing people at a table. It is not prioritised over the dialogue of the string quartet who choose to stop playing the Beethoven Quartet because 'it is too sad.' No sense of foreground or background is provided here as all dialogue competes in the sound mix and presents a sonic rupture. This is carried over in the fragmentary playing of the string quartet both in their rehearsal space and in public. The abrupt stops and skipping bars of music produce a spatiality within the sound design that breaks with the classical Hollywood convention of continuity and challenges the listener through its disruptive nature. This is heightened by the fact that there is no transparency between the string quartet's diegetic and non-diegetic performance as they are often seen and heard rehearsing, discussing the interpretation of the piece which 'undermines the role(s) of music as defined by classical Hollywood scoring […] The quartet achieves this not by presenting music in situations which conflict directly with classical practices but by intensifying the same practices to the extent that they crack open and reveal themselves to be

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[71] *Ibid*., 75.
[72] See Davison, pp. 97-116 for a full breakdown of the music cues for the film shown in a timing table format. Davison's use of bracketed numbers in her table provides the equivalent numbering of sequence/shot as they appear in Godard's screenplay.

purely conventional.' [73] Davison's analysis draws attention to how Godard unsettles the audio-viewer as a form of political agitation by revealing the 'divergence of the media' defined as non-Hollywood practice. Similarly, the case studies presented in this thesis demonstrate an unconventional approach to sound design that challenges the hierarchy of sonic elements as a means to unsettle the audio-viewer. However, the following interpretations will address how a nervous agitation is triggered by unusual audible sound moments in the Japanese 'ghost' films that disrupt classical scoring practice and challenge the boundaries between sound-design and music.

While the soundtrack to *Prénom Carmen* exaggerates classical scoring convention in order to expose its artifice, Davison's analysis of Derek Jarman's *The Garden* (1990) challenges the hierarchical convention of prioritizing image over sound to deliver narrative meaning by exposing the uncoupling of sound and image track. As Davison summarises:

> The soundtrack for *The Garden* comprises original and pre-composed music, sound effects and voice-over. There is little on-screen dialogue in this film: what conversation there is, is shown as mute. Lip-synchronization does occur elsewhere during the film, but only intermittently and only in non-spoken vocalizations, such as laughing, screaming and singing. Jarmen's rejection of on-screen dialogue results in the loss of the primary technique by which a film promotes an illusory unity of discourse. [74]

Davison examines theoretical approaches on the reception of primarily acousmatic electroacoustic music and sound in the film. While acousmatic sounds can be read as working to emphasize a film's narrative agency offering a 'continuity of diegetic space by denying the limitations of the frame, […] such sounds always entail the risk of threatening a film's unity of discourse.' [75] *The Garden* exemplifies this as while it broadly tells the story of the Passion, Jarmen substitutes the traditional figures with a gay couple, highlighting the theme of persecution that does not present a linear narrative. Therefore, the unity of diegetic sounds used to emphasize a linear visual narrative characteristic of classical Hollywood filmmaking is rejected here, even more so with the absence of

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[73] Davison, *Hollywood' Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 83.
[74] Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 119-120.
[75] Davison, 'Playing in The Garden: Sound, Performance and Images of Persecution', *Indiana Theory Review* 19 (Spring/Fall: 1998): 36.

on-screen dialogue. Instead, a dialogue of interpretation opens up on the use of acousmatic sounds with no visible sound source, suggesting a liberation of sound from the image. Davison analyses examples of acousmatic sound and the manipulation of real-world sounds in the film as well as the use of the term *acousmatic music* to define 'music that is recorded and then diffused without combination with live electronics or live performers: it exists only on tape (whether analog or digital) or as a fixed set of instructions to a computer'. [76] Her discussion on spatiality and exposing the gap between sound and image through both the out-of-sync singing of Jessica Martin's 'Think Pink' rendition as well as addressing the manipulation of diegetic and real-world sounds, challenges the ideology of the unheard Hollywood scoring tradition that is connected with a similar use of sounds in Japanese 'ghost' films. For example, discussing *The Garden,* Davison highlights how 'manipulated sounds provide a "sonic bridge" between the unseen real-world sounds and the sound of the cameras (which are rooted in the image). In this way, the image provides a possible source for the unseen sounds and attempts to contain the threat they pose.' [77] The case studies presented in this thesis also interpret the use of manipulated and acousmatic sounds in relation to how the image may offer a sound source that attempts to contain the threat of the ghost. The films I am examining also draw attention to the gap between the diegetic and non-diegetic, paralleling a division between human and spirit worlds portrayed in the films, which equally exposes a disunity between sound and image that breaks with classical Hollywood scoring conventions.

Further examples of scholarship that have examined contrasts between Hollywood and non-Hollywood film scoring include Mera and Burnand's *European Film Music*. Several contributions in this publication highlight music that subverts mainstream approaches to continuity editing and narrative linearity through, for instance, the avoidance of non-diegetic music or the use of music that underplays musical expression. Mera's contribution on the film music of Theo Angelopoulos's 1998 film *Eternity and a Day*, for instance, 'reveals the inadequacies of conventional theoretical frameworks for the study of film music beyond the model of mainstream narrative cinema.' [78] Mera provides an alternative analytical approach that considers a working relationship between the

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[76] Luke Windsor, 'A Perceptual Approach to the Description and Analysis of Acousmatic Music' (Ph.D. diss., City University, UK, 1995), 5.
[77] Davison, *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice,* 120.
[78] Miguel Mera and David Burnand, 'Introduction', in *European Film Music*, 9.

composer and director, leaning towards modernist sensibilities that differs from most mainstream filmmaking processes in its collaborative nature. He calls attention to a concept-driven score that uses music to prioritise philosophical outlook over narrative commentary and a refusal 'to make the audience feel comfortable with its emotional reaction to the filmic text.' [79] Mera's analysis of how *Eternity and a Day* blurs the borders between the diegetic and the non-diegetic is also integral to encouraging the recognition that 'the concept of music as an exclusively narrational force can be problematic when we examine films that do not subscribe to traditional narrative structures.' [80]

This examination of silence and space in Angelopoulos' direction not just as a structural device but as part of a broader aesthetic consideration is particularly relevant to this thesis's consideration of silence and space. Mera observes how 'Angelopoulos' filmmaking is constantly anchored in "stillness, in an effort to have us experience and contemplate his images in a new way".' [81] Similarly, silence and space are well utilised in Japanese 'ghost' cinema, encouraging the audio-viewer to discover new meaning within the images that will challenge mainstream scoring practice from a Japanese cultural aesthetic understanding. This will be explored further in Chapter Two and the subsequent case study examples in Chapters Three and Four.

In a later article, Mera (writing with Anna Morcom) comments on how the internationally recognised dominant mode of Hollywood filmmaking has

> shaped discussions and defined the methodologies and functional models of screened music scholarship. While this work has, of course, been both valuable and necessary, the lack of commensurate attention to other filmmaking, scoring or performing traditions has created a misleading imbalance. [82]

Mera and Morcom offer a response alongside this recognition noting that '[r]ecent scholarship acknowledges that other film scoring traditions can contribute to a broader debate on the nature of the relationship between music and moving images and has thus begun to readdress the balance

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[79] Miguel Mera, 'Modernity and a day: the functions of music in the films of Theo Angelopoulos' in *European Film Music*, 140.

[80] Mera, 'Modernity and a day: the functions of music in the films of Theo Angelopoulos', 135.

[81] *Ibid.*, 138.

[82] Miguel Mera and Anna Morcom, 'Introduction: Screened music, trans-contextualisation and ethnomusicological approaches.' *Ethnomusicology Forum* 18.1 (2009): 9.

somewhat.' [83] The examples presented in this thesis respond to this imbalance by drawing attention to unique Japanese scoring practices that exploit the tensions between mainstream Hollywood scoring, non-Hollywood scoring, and approaches that mediate between them for narrative, symbolic and ideological purposes. There is no extensive literature on Japanese, or indeed non-Western scoring practices, so this thesis can also be considered a productive extension of screen music studies focus to date. However, there are a select number of important extant studies, and surveying them highlights ways in which the tensions outlined above play out in many Japanese productions – including some 'ghost' films.

1.2.4 Towards a theory of alternative Japanese scoring practices

A wide-ranging assessment of film scoring practices can be found in Mark Slobin's 2008 edited collection *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of film music*, [84] another study addressing the critical imbalance noted by Mera. In Slobin's collection, references to Japanese film music are few. The most dedicated passage uses the example of the Japanese *koto* zither to highlight how certain instruments not only have emotional associations in different cultures but social resonance too. Slobin notes, 'just as in Japan the *koto* zither became a girls' speciality, a "social grace." In short, instruments are just as typecast as scales.' [85] Despite this minimal contribution to Japanese film music studies, the publication achieves a unified collection of film music essays within ethnomusicology that asserts the importance of the study of sound with culturally specific meanings. This is a rudimentary example of what this thesis will offer in-depth on the study of Japanese 'ghost' film music and sound design. While not predominantly ethnomusicological in approach, the Japan and ghost specific focus of this thesis's analyses and theorising demand a sensitivity to culturally embedded codes and symbols that will inform the reader's interpretation and understanding of how music and sound are used in the examples presented. This understanding is informed by examples of aesthetics in Japanese theatre and film that

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[83] *Ibid.*, 9.
[84] Other notable publications on the study of film music outside of the US are Alison Arnold, 'Hindi Filmi Git: on the history of Indian popular music' (Ph.D. dis., University of Illinois, 1991); Rebecca Coyle (ed.), *Screen scores: Studies in contemporary Australian film music* (Sydney: Australian Film, Television and Radio School, 1998); Gregory Booth, *Behind the curtain: Making music in Mumbai's film studios* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008); Nicholas W. Reyland, *Zbigniew Preisener's The Three Colours Trilogy: A Film Score Guide* (Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, 2012).
[85] Mark Slobin, 'The Steiner Superculture' in *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music*, Mark Slobin (ed.), (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 15.

were inspired by field visits, as noted in the Introduction. The case studies also include direct quotations following interviews with composers, Kawai Kenji and Ashiya Gary. The following chapters will examine the functions of film music and sound, and what they signify in the Japanese context. I will examine dual meanings in music that address Japanese traditional instrument associations, performance context, performance practice, and most importantly, the influence of Japanese cultural concepts on scoring practice and sound design in contemporary practice, informed by my own analysis, field visits and interview content.

In his 2008 edited collection *A History of Film Music*, Mervyn Cooke provides an overview of Japan's film music history from the silent and early sound era through to a chronology of composers who worked with *auteur*-directors Ozu Yasujirō and Kurosawa Akira, including Hayasaka Fumio and Masaru Sato. The final section of Cooke's summary reviews modern compositional output mainly focused on the increasing popularity of Japanese anime in the international market and referencing contemporary musicians/composers such as Kawai Kenji and Kanno Yoko. [86] There is also a final paragraph on the music of Japanese horror, which, like the section on Japanese anime, explores a mediation between Western and Non-Western scoring practices. Writing on this, Cooke concludes with a quotation from Philip Brophy observing Japan's 'tendency towards "sucking in the infosphere of the West and extruding it into unimaginable forms, constructs and mechanisms" (Brophy, 1997).' [87] Anime is parallel to the success of Japanese horror in the West, having found a place, especially in the US, partly on the basis of the novelty of its genre and partly because of the aspects that are familiar for international interactions that can enable the novel features. The scoring practices of Anime and J-horror, which just from its 'catch all label' coined in the West, exemplify a mediation between Hollywood and other scoring practices. However, as Cooke highlights in the paragraph on Japanese horror, music in these films can be confusing and offer 'hotchpot scores'. [88] This area will be

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[86] Other articles on various aspects of music and sound design in anime include Milos Miles 'Robots, Romance, and Ronin: Music in Japanese Anime', in *The Cartoon Music Book*, Daniel Goldmark and Yuval Taylor (eds.), (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2002), Imada Kentaro, 'Lupin III and the Gekiban Approach: Western-styled Music in a Japanese Format', in *Drawn to Sound: Animation Film Music and Sonicity*, Rebecca Coyle (ed.), (London: Equinox, 2010), Koizumi Kyoko, 'An Animated Partnership: Hisaishi Joe's, Musical Contributions to Miyazaki Hayao's Films', in *Drawn to Sound: Animation Film Music and Sonicity*, Rebecca Coyle (ed.), (2010) and Aki Yamasaki, 'Cowboy Bebop: Corporate Strategies for Animation Music Products in Japan' in *Drawn to Sound: Animation Film Music and Sonicity*, Rebecca Coyle (ed.), (2010).
[87] Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [2008] 2010), 395.
[88] *Ibid.*, 395.

examined in regards to the influence of Japanese aesthetic concepts on the scores that are released and interpreted in a global marketplace.

Research on Japanese film scoring has also included publications that provide dedicated analysis of the scoring practices and sound design of specific case studies. Hosokawa Shūhei's article on 'Atomic Overtones and Primitive Undertones: Akira Ifukube's Sound Design for Godzilla' addresses the music of Ifukube Akira and the influence of different scoring practices on the composer. Hosokawa particularly notes the parallels with Béla Bartók's music, whom like Ifukube, explored the art music concepts of privatism and modernity:

> Ifukube used local (in this case, Ainu) timbres and musical gestures, employed asymmetrical rhythms, and orchestrated the Godzilla scores with a full orchestra that also incorporated extended techniques or unusual instruments, and lastly, created a musical language that, like Bartók's, "evokes the national" while refusing to exoticize it (p. 45). [89]

Hosokawa's article demonstrates an example of scoring influenced by Japanese culture that does not fetishize it but provides an analysis of sound and music in Japanese cinema that gives an insight into scoring practices away from the Hollywood dominant model. This is highlighted by Hosokawa himself, who, when considering the sequels that followed not scored by Ifukube, concludes that: 'To my ears, at least, the tonal scoring lacks the voluminous and the sublime connotations the original Gojira/Godzilla conveyed. The tonally depicted monsters, no matter how they may be ultra-magnified and infuriated, look and sound like beasts tamed by Hollywood's language.' [90] Furthermore, Ifukube's *Gojira/Godzilla* marks a crucial moment in Japan's cinematic history as it included the first use of tape in recording sound effects in film. Gojira's stomping sound was 'synthesised from sound samples of Japanese fighters, firearms, bombs etc. archived in the Tōhō sound library on magnetic tapes (transferred from wartime optical soundtracks).' [91]

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[89] Kendra Preston Leonard, 'Review: Philip Hayward, ed. *Off the Planet: Music, Sound and Science Fiction Cinema*', *The Journal of Film Music* 2/2-4 (Winter 2009): 271.
[90] Hosokawa Shūhei, 'Atomic Overtones And Primitive Undertones: Akira Ifukube's Sound Design for Godzilla', in *Off The Planet: Music and Sound and Science Fiction Cinema*, Philip Hayward (ed.), (Hertfordshire: John Libbey Publishing., 2004), 58.
[91] *Ibid*., 49.

Brooke McCorkle's 2012 article 'Nature, Technology, and Sound Design in Gojira (1954)' moves away from Ifukube's intention for the score to examine the relationship between nature and technology through sound design. She considers how non-diegetic and diegetic music revolves around the monster, including diegetic performances of traditional Japanese music and dance. Interestingly, McCorkle also considers the mediation between Japanese and Western music in her discussion on the diegetic music, including how '[t]he film's opening features sailors playing guitar and harmonica. Though performed on western instruments, the music sounds like a Japanese folk song. In this way, it exemplifies the Japan/West dichotomy embodied by *Gojira*.' [92]

In turn, McCorkle's recent 2020 publication 'Listening to Soundscapes in Kurosawa's *Dersu Uzala* (1975)' offers a closer examination of the relationship between nature and sound in a Soviet-Japanese film by a Japanese director. This highlights the decentralising of classical Hollywood scoring conventions. The film, based on memoirs and occurring in a flashback with voice over details two meetings and the friendship shared between city-dwelling Russian explorer Vladimir Arseniev and local forest-residing Mongolian huntsman Desu. The film's opening, set in 1910, does not start with a flashback but shows Arseniev trying to locate Desu's grave. As McCorkle informs the reader from the offset, '[a]lthough the story is set in late imperial Russia, I read the film as a presentation of Kurosawa's attitude towards nature vis-à-vis environmental degradation in Japan.' [93] Furthermore, Kurosawa's choices for music and sound design in the film stemmed from his own beliefs, which work to emphasize the soundscape that is 'nature's "voice"'. [94] McCorkle's analysis focuses on how the soundtrack, which has little dialogue, challenges vococentricism and deconstructs the idea of a united soundtrack in service of the central environmentalism message. The reader is guided through various moments in the film in which the use of natural sounds draw attention to the narrative concern of the film:

> The austere soundtrack emphasizes these natural sounds. The scantiness of dialogue and non-diegetic underscore in the film provides room for several "aural close-ups" of the effects track.

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[92] Brooke McCorkle, 'Nature, Technology, and Sound Design in Gojira (1954)', *Horror Studies* 3/1 (2012): 24.
[93] McCorkle, 'Listening to Soundscapes in Kurosawa's Dersu Uzala (1975)' in *Voicing The Cinema: Film Music and The Integrated Soundtrack*, James Buhler and Hannah Lewis (eds.), (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 190.
[94] *Ibid.*, 190.

What [R. Murray] Schafer refers to as keynote sounds define the movie's depiction of the
natural environment; bird calls and the sounds of fire, wind, and water all prevail in the film's
numerous static long takes. [95]

Other keynote sounds are used in the film, such as rifle gunshots representing manmade technology
and, more philosophically, Desu's relationship with the world. What is most striking about
McCorkle's writing is the attention paid to language and the issue of a Japanese audience not
comprehending the meaning of dialogue that is not their native language in a vococentric cinematic
example. She argues that subtitles allow the audio-viewer to connect with the soundtrack more broadly
in failing to understand the dialogue. This strikes up a discussion point in considering the perspective
of an Anglophone audience audio-viewing the Japanese language case studies presented here.
However, the analysis provided in this thesis will primarily focus on the receptivity towards other
sounds that are not dialogue. This is because, as McCorkle notes with *Desu Uzala*:

> [T]he Russian language's distancing effect for nonnative speakers is an effective tool for
> conveying the film's didactic message. The human voice steps down from its hierarchal peak
> within the soundtrack and draws closer to sound effects and the natural world. The established
> classical hierarchy of privileging voice over sound effects and music crumbles. [96]

Therefore, my approach to Japanese 'ghost' films will also address the breakdown of hierarchical
scoring structures that have dominated in classical film scoring, now challenged by case studies that I
argue prioritise sound design in the examples I present.

In the final section of McCorkle's publication, a key point directly relates to a popular
sound design approach in Japanese 'ghost' films. She concludes:

> In *Dersu Uzala*, Kurosawa and his team harnessed sound effects to generate a poignant
> commentary that rejected an imperialist vision of man's dominance over nature. The porous
> boundary between nature and human as embodied in the character of Desu is mirrored in the
> sound design, in which sound effects become musical and vice versa. [97]

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[95] *Ibid*., 190.
[96] McCorkle, 'Listening to Soundscapes in Kurosawa's Dersu Uzala (1975)', 190.
[97] *Ibid*., 190.

In Japanese 'ghost' cinema, sound design is also crucial in exploring the porous boundary between the human and spirit worlds as I will argue through a deconstruction of the boundary between diegetic and non-diegetic sound that is also related to the challenging of such boundaries in traditional Japanese theatre.

1.2.5 Research on music and sound in Japanese 'ghost' films

Further studies on Japanese film music discuss the influence of traditional theatre, including kabuki and noh, and the cultural concepts that are the heart of their philosophy. One such example is Michael W. Harris's research and analysis of five film scores by Hayasaka Fumio: *Rashomon*, *Drunken Angel* (Kurosawa, 1948), *Ugetsu* (Mizoguchi, 1953), *Shichinin no samurai*/*Seven Samurai* (Kurosawa, 1954) and *Sansho Dayu*/ *Sansho the Baliff* (Mizoguchi, 1954). A breakdown of Japanese and non-Japanese music and sound influences in *Shichinin no samurai* is highlighted earlier in this chapter. However, here I turn to the use of cultural concepts and the music of traditional Japanese theatre referenced in Harris's work and, in particular, his analysis of the 'ghost' story in *Ugetsu*. Harris highlights Hayaska's use of traditional Japanese instrumentation and the stylistic pluralism of combining Japanese and Western instrumentation, which influenced film composers following in his footsteps, such as Takemitsu Tōru. What is especially relevant to my research is Harris's writing on Hayasaka's blurring of the diegetic and non-diegetic boundaries in the film score and how this parallels the blurring of the human and spirit worlds of the film, and the role that traditional Japanese instrumentation (mainly influenced by noh theatre) plays in achieving this. More will be written about the ghostly influence of *Ugetsu*, drawing on Harris's research, in Chapter Two of this thesis. However, at this point, I would like to note that my research focuses more on an understanding of the cultural aesthetics that influence the use of instrumental techniques that form a crucial role in traditional Japanese theatre music and sound. The same approach is taken when examining *Ugetsu*. Harris provides excellent examples looking at the aesthetics of *gagaku* (Japanese Imperial Court Music and Dance) and noh theatre in his *Rashomon* case study, and the aesthetics of *mono no aware* (translated as 'the pathos of things' in Harris's work) in *Shichinin no samurai*. However, my research expands upon this excellent scholarly contribution by considering the use of Japanese concepts in contemporary Japanese 'ghost' films.

Several texts have been published over the last couple of decades that analyse the music in a number of Japanese 'ghost' film examples from a variety of culturally sensitive vantage points. In his 1999 article 'How Sound Floats on Land: The Suppression and Release of Folk & Indigenous Musics in the Cinematic Terrain', Philip Brophy discusses how Takemitsu's scoring for the ghost film anthology *Kwaidan* explores metaphorical relationships between land and sound design. Further examples include Koizumi Kyōko's publication 'Creative Soundtrack Expression: Tōru Takemitsu's Score for *Kwaidan*" in the 2009 collection *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema;* James Wierzbicki's contribution to the same collection, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications' and his later 2010 article 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese Kaidan films and their Hollywood remakes'. William Whittington also contributed an article in 2010 comparing the use of sound design in Japanese supernatural horror films and their American remakes: 'Acoustic Infidelities: Sounding the Exchanges between J-Horror and H-Horror Remakes'. The need to work intensively on these repertoires highlights that they might provide a 'hotspot' of sorts for non-Hollywood scoring practices worthy of attention in this doctoral research in particular. Chapter Two will examine their approach to Japanese aesthetic concepts in the music and sound design of the 'ghost' film case studies they explore.

Before moving on to a closer examination of some of the historical examples of Japanese horror cinema and how their scoring practices have assimilated or offered alternatives to classical Hollywood scoring, it is relevant to highlight that the most substantial body of literature on Japanese film music examines the works of Takemitsu Tōru, a protégé of Hayasaka Fumio's. This is mainly because of his expansive repertoire and his later film scores' experimental compositional stylistic approaches. This includes assessments of Takemitsu's writing on many Japanese concepts in comparison to Western musical methods in relation to his compositional approaches, in *Confronting Silence* (1995), a book made up of extracts from his diary. Interviews and documentaries also form part of this body of literature, such as the 1994 Charlotte Zwerin documentary *Music for the Movies: Tōru Takemitsu*, which featured interviews with Takemitsu himself and his film collaborators. Other critical assessments on Japanese film music composers and their works include Michael W. Harris's doctoral research discussed above. To draw attention to these works briefly here is to draw attention to the fact that such analytical approaches to Japanese film composers and their works, besides

biographical accounts, are few. I hope that this thesis will provide another useful stream of examples and ideas to feed into the collective scholarly pool.

1.3 Sonic horror practice in the silent era and early sound film in Japan

Before presenting an assessment of film music and sound practices that developed from the silent era of cinema in Japan through to early sound film, it is important to recognise that the development of sound practice in cinema in the US, Europe and Asia should be not reduced to simply an 'othering' or capturing of 'national essence'. As Aaron Gerow highlights:

> Scholarship on American and European early cinema can help us raise issues and questions with which to approach Japanese film, but we should remember to sift our answers through local forms of appropriation – local forms defined less in terms of historical transcendent national essence than of concrete and geographically particular historical conjunctures, which may include the transversing of global forces. [98]

While highlighting the differences between approaches to scoring practices, this assessment will draw attention to both local inflexions and Western influences on Japan's silent film era (1896-1939).

One source of difference between Western and Japanese scoring is that, whereas Hollywood developed a range of Western theatrical and operatic scoring models, distinctive theatrical approaches to realism, sound and music were influential on early Japanese film productions. Despite the importation of cinematic technology initially developed in the west into Japan, a unique narrative cinema style was established in the country, often adapted from the traditional kabuki theatre. Japanese audiences were familiar with the narrative conventions of the kabuki stage plays. Nevertheless, when kabuki film emerged, audiences only saw a few excerpts from the play being performed. As a result, rather than watching the development of a story, as was the case in Western cinema, the kabuki cinema audience's source of entertainment came from seeing parts of a familiar story being represented. As Komatsu Hiroshi summarises:

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[98] Aaron Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895-1925* (London: University of California Press Ltd, 2010), 14.

In Western illusionism, in order to enhance the credibility of a narrative film, cinema tended to proceed along the same path as naturalistic theater. In the case of kabuki cinema, the credibility required of a narrative film did not matter because its representational mode hardly depended on the story itself. Whether or not the thing which a film represented was realistic did not matter. What mattered was to make the audience conscious of the fact that there was a stage. [99]

Significantly, this highlights that early Japanese cinema is not a transparent medium, but one that, counters Hollywood, and calls attention to the devices of narration and the status of narrative *as* narrative.

Because the representational mode of Japanese films was so different from Western cinema up to 1910, 'there were no large-scale historic drama films or fantasy films produced in Japan which were influenced by those Western films.' [100] Films dealing with ghostly themes fit under the fantasy category. In the earliest days of Japanese 'ghost' film production, theatre provided an essential reference point, and film maintained some of its unique representational conventions. *Momijigari* (*Maple Leaf Viewing*), an 1899 silent film, believed to be the oldest preserved Japanese film, was the first experimental example of an *Engeki jissha eiga* (films of ongoing stage action). Cinematographer Shibata Tsunekichi filmed the three scenes from the kabuki play (adapted from the noh play of the same name written by Kanze Nobumitsu), using a static frontal camera filming the performers in long shot. The film was not released until 1903 due to Ichikawa Danjūrō IX's (one of its featured actors) apparent dislike of film and concern about it replacing live performance. It was 'shot primarily to preserve the performance of Danjūrō. Therefore, it intentionally indicated that the object being filmed was on stage.' [101] This is an example of early Japanese cinema rejecting transparency as a seamless construction by featuring the theatrical stage, thus breaking with the dominant classical film style, which will be explored further here.

Momijigari tells the story of a warrior sent to a mountain to investigate and kill a demon. In the film, Princess Sarashina performs a dance, followed by the warrior Tario no Koremochi fighting

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[99] Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I', 235.
[100] *Ibid*., 243.
[101] *Ibid*., 235.

Sarashina, who is actually a disguised female demon (*kijo*). The entire stage, painted backdrop and a stagehand are visible in the frame, with the footage shot from a higher position, as if looking down onto the stage. This was because the director, Shibata Tsunekichi, wanted to show the most famous kabuki actors of the Meiji period, Danjūrō and Onoe Kikugorō V, situated on the stage, which 'would have been an inappropriate style of framing from the standpoint of Western illusionism.' [102] The film thus presents both fiction and nonfiction: its diegesis presents the kabuki narrative, but it is shot as a documentary of the stage performance, a performance record of the actors. The short silent film features no music, although the original stage play would have featured traditional kabuki musical ensembles of the *shosa-ongaku* (on-stage music) and *geza-ongaku* (off-stage music). [103] Other film examples reference the traditional theatrical use of music in kabuki cinema. For example, the *Osaka Current Events Newspaper* (December 31, 1907) reports that 'Benkei of the Bridge used six hundred feet of film and was shown with traditional narrative chanting and musical accompaniment (*jōruri narimono iri*). The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* describes the 'unheard' music of *Momijigari* as being *nagauta*, *takemoto* and *tokiwazu-bushi* – all types of *shosa-ongaku* (accompaniment for acting and dancing). [104]

The footage, with no sonic content, also delivers its narrative without the mediation of language. However, this would not be the case in the showings of Japanese commercial films that incorporated theatrical stage traditions that became widespread from 1908 onwards. These films were

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[102] Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I', 235.

[103] *Momijigari's* original print is reported to have been destroyed during the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. Existing prints are held by the National Film Center in Tokyo, by the Nikkatsu film studio in 1927 from excerpts found in Shizuoka and Osaka. This edited version is close to the original version, being six minutes in length. A four-minute version is also held by the Nikkatsu Film Studio. Bunka Isan Online (Cultural Heritage Online) place the actual running time of this version at 3 minutes and 50 seconds, played at 16 frames per second and a footage length of 104.5 metres (342 feet and 13 frames).

[104] *Nagauta* is used by the majority of dance dramas in kabuki and is performed by an onstage group of musicians called the *debayashi* consisting of several *shamisen*, *fue* (flute) and drums that originated from the Japanese noh theatre tradition: the *ko-tsuzumi* (small drum), *ō-tsuzumi* (large drum) and *taiko*. The *nagauta* is classified under the *utaimono* group, performing lyrical *shamisen* music expressing the emotions of the actors on stage should they sing about their feelings, or accompany them as they perform a dance (*buyō*). *Takemoto* similarly is used to enhance actor's performances but via a narrative vocal style which was developed from a form of narrative music used in puppet plays (bunraku). This is called *gidayū-bushi* and features a chanter (*tayū*) and a *shamisen* player. The sung narrative enhances the actors' performances, delivering advanced plot lines and describing scenery. The actor's words are often unified with the narrative music whenever they deliver their lines in synchronization with the *Takemoto* rhythm. This produced the expression 'ito ni noru', meaning 'get onto strings', referring to the *shamisen* strings. *Tokiwazu-bushi* is another type of narrative music made up of chanters and *shamisenkata* (*shamisen* players) that uses a *chūzao* (medium-neck *shamisen*) to perform accompaniment for *buyō*. *tokiwazu-bushi* is distinguishable for its slower-pace and solemnity, as well as its reliance on the voice. A fourth type of *shosa-ongaku* is *kiyomoto-bushi*, a narrative vocal style recited in very high-pitched tones, accompanied by *shamisen*. Known as one of the major musical styles accompanying kabuki dance (*buyō*). *Kiyomoto-bushi* is also used as a staging device or ruse to emphasise the realistic use of the offstage music.

also called kabuki-influenced *kyūha* (old school) productions. [105] This 'kabuki cinema' followed strict codes of production based on the representational theatrical code. Gerow, writing on early Japanese cinema, draws on one such example of this coding from the research of Komatsu Hiroshi that addresses the transference of the all-male actors of kabuki, following the 1629 ban of female actors in filmed productions. Komatsu observes that:

> [T]he use of *oyama* or *onnagata* (terms describing male actors playing female roles), for instance, as not just a holdover from Kabuki but also a practice that prevented the development of close-ups or other devices that could undermine *oyama* by emphasizing physical realism over the abstract femininity that the practice had traditionally signified. [106]

These early practices of basing cinematic conventions on theatrical conventions contrast with the approach of early Western cinema that would create a physical realism based on illusion and portray spatial and temporal movement using film sets and strategic camera angles that could not be achieved in real-time stage acting. Of course, in the early pre-sound Western cinematic tradition, formal continuity that would become a dominant cinematic convention was not fully achieved as intertitles were used in the films. However, in Japanese silent cinema, most films did not use intertitles, except to announce each scene as the form was based on a communication of gesture that stemmed from the *kata* (stylized movements) of kabuki. The silent film narrators of early Japanese cinema had a much more unique and prolonged impact on film scoring practice, which will be examined in the next section, which considers how issues of transparency, inaudibility and invisibility are challenged in various ways. The section will conclude with an analysis of one of the first examples of a Japanese silent film that presents a ghostly theme.

1.3.1 Narrating Japanese Silent Cinema

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[105] While it is beyond the remit of this thesis to provide a full history on the development of cinematic forms throughout the entirety of Japanese cinematic history it is relevant to note that alongside the *kyūha* or *kyūgeki* ("old school drama") another classification *shinpa* or *shinpageki* ("new school drama") contemporary drama, tending to be melodrama/sentimental drama that adapted Western ideas can be traced back to at least 1908 and was also a popular film form up to around 1920. From the early 1920s onwards, the term *jidaigeki* (period pictures) replaced the earlier term *kyūgeki* and *gendaigeki* (pictures set in modern times) was used to replace *shinpa/shinpageki*.

[106] Komatsu Hiroshi, 'Tennenshoku kara jun'eigageki e – Nihon eigaahi ni okeru Tenkatsu no igi', in *Geijutsugaku kenkyū 5* (1995): 36 quoted in Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity,* 98.

Summarising the relationship between image, word, and narrativity in early Japanese cinema and how the traditional code of Japanese theatre shaped these elements, Gerow turns to Komatsu Hiroshi, who observes:

> "The traditional form of Japanese film did not aim for a cinema narrated only by images. The linguistic aspect of the image was borne by the dialogue of the benshi such that the images themselves were merely the illustration of an independently existing story. Films were articulated into scenes that were largely equivalent to chapters, with the intertitles signifying the titles of those chapters." [107]

As well as discussing the minimal role of the intertitles in Japanese silent film, Komatsu references the role of the *benshi* (meaning orator/speaker) [108], sometimes called *katsuben* (motion picture orator). The *benshi's* role related to Japan's tradition of spoken performance, such as *kōdan* historic storytelling and the comic narrative tradition of *rakugo*, both delivered without musical accompaniments. [109] Depending on how many character voices were needed, the *benshi* or group of *benshi* provided a vocal narration called *setsumei*. [110] However, the terms *nakasetsumei/nakasetsu* were used for *setsumei* provided while the film was shown. Before delivering the moment-by-moment narration of the film, the *benshi* would also deliver introductory remarks on the film's background/content or the marvel of the moving image. This discourse was called the *maesetsu*. [111] Other appellations were also commonly used alongside *benshi*. For example, in kabuki-influenced *kyūha* (*kyūgeki*), a slightly different style was first adopted. To recreate the theatre experience that the *kyūgeki* came from, performers known as *kowairo benshi/kowairoya* (impersonator/imitation of voices) were trained as narrators to read the lines of kabuki texts and mimic in synchronization the voices of the actors. They used a mimetic vocal dubbing performance style called *kowairo setsumei* (voice colouring) [112]:

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[107] *Ibid.*, 98.

[108] The original term for *benshi* was *Katsudo shashin benshi*, shortened to *benshi*.

[109] Similarities can also be identified between the *benshi* narration and the single off-stage narrator who provided the description of the scenes and character emotions in the *gidayū* chanting of bunraku puppet theatre.

[110] Jeffrey A. Dym highlights that other appellations were also used for the narrative art that the *benshi* created. However, as Dym observes, the term *setsumei* is the word most frequently used in the contemporary sources discussing the late silent era. It also translates as 'explanation' which is most relevant for the discussion here. See Jeffrey A. Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators, and Their Forgotten Art of Setsumei: A History of Japanese Silent Film Narration* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003).

[111] Jeffrey A. Dym also notes that remarks were given after the film called *atosetsu* but adds that these remarks were not considered an essential part of the performance.

[112] *Kowairo* literally means 'voice colouring'.

[T]his dialogue functioned to enhance the impression of seeing a live performance, an experience further augmented in some cases by other theatrical trappings, such as Kabuki curtains, clappers (*hyōshigi*), or music (*hayashi*). In this way, the motion pictures, with their lower prices, could have functioned as a poor man's theater around 1908, when, as the story goes, Hanai Hideo began presenting Nakamura Kasen's Kabu*ki* films, performed by a female troupe, with *kagezerifu*. [113]

As referenced above, another type of narration technique also existed called *kagezerifu* (literally 'shadow dialogue') and was delivered by actors who voiced their lines behind the projection screen. [114] Examining these specific forms of narration and who provided them is beyond the scope of this thesis, but highlighting the difference between the *kowairo benshi* and *benshi* is particularly relevant here in terms of the diegetic effect the latter produced. Multiple *kowairo benshi* were needed to cover the voices of characters in *kyūgeki*, sometimes adopting multiple parts if there were not enough of them, so they underwent training to change their voices. Following the original kabuki piece, a suitable *kowairo benshi* would be chosen for various roles. For example, a child would provide the voice of a child character. Jeffrey A. Dym notes the importance of retaining elements of the kabuki theatrical tradition through the role of the *kowairo benshi*, but 'this was considered a violation of the unique essence of cinema, presenting what should be a silent medium as theater.' [115] The *benshi* provided a more developed approach in line with the new film technology:

> Therefore, a distinction is evident between the kowairo, who was trained as a narrator to read the lines of kabuki texts, and the benshi, who introduced, interpreted, commented on and lent his or her voice to the characters of the film. [116]

Gerow also observes the parting of ways from the theatrical influence within the *benshi* profession. However, the following division he describes is interpreted as being between the 'voice-colourers' of the *kowairo benshi* and the 'explainers' of the *benshi*:

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[113] Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity,* 99. The *hayashi* music that accompanied *kowairo* was usually provided by a *shamisen* and scaled-down *narimono* ensemble (*narimono* is musical accompaniment and sound effects besides *shamisen*).

[114] Another hybrid form of cinema that also used actors who voiced their roles from behind the screen was popular around the mid-1910s called *rensageki* (joined/chained drama). It combined film scenes with scenes delivered on stage from a play that included the actors' voices from behind the screen.

[115] Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity,* 136.

[116] Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators,* 9.

The whole benshi profession quickly divided into two mutually disapproving camps, the voice-colourers and the explainers'. The latter specialized in Western films, introducing unfamiliar objects and customs. Until they developed their own special art form, they tended to be looked down on as 'mere explainers.' The voice-colourers, who specialized in Japanese films, gradually lost their following in the early twenties when film ceased attempting to facsimilate 'real plays' and moved toward more purely cinematic modes. [117]

So far, this section highlights how the *benshi* provided an extension of an indigenous narrative practice that has been responded to in two different ways: First, that the *benshi* allows the audio-viewer to feel part of the diegetic illusion on-screen, aligning it with conventional Hollywood cinema. Second, the *benshi* encourages the audio-viewer to recognise that a film is something to be read, therefore enabling them not to be sutured by the fiction of the on-screen world. Dym suggests the former as he notes how the *benshi*'s *setsumei* (meaning 'explanation' and denoted as the *benshi's* silent film narration) made the audience feel part of the film world being projected onto the screen, describing the experience as '"seeing" with one's ears'. [118] This description can be attributed to the *benshi* because it was they who not only educated audio-viewers as a commentator-reader about what was happening on screen but also provided a fuller sensual experience through their vocal art. Here, Dym overexerts the power of the spoken narration, even highlighting it as the primary means by which the audio-viewer could be transported into the diegetic film world. Gerow notes that what Dym provides is more of a 'romanticist celebration of the *benshi* as a neglected art, rather than a critical consideration of the ideological struggles over *benshi* and what it might have meant to call their work an art at the time.' [119]

Alternatively, Joseph L. Anderson argues that the *benshi's* role reflects Japanese performance traditions, particularly 'narration as a continuation of the tradition of "commingled media" in the Japanese arts'. [120] By 'commingled media', Anderson refers to the ability of Japanese art to show simplicity and reduction. However, another tendency is to bring together elements in complex relationships, producing what he describes as 'a mixing – a commingling – of media rather than a

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[117] Peter B. High, 'The Dawn of Cinema in Japan', *Journal of Contemporary History* 19/1 (January 1984): 40.
[118] Jeffrey A. Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators,* 3.
[119] Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity,* 135.
[120] *Ibid.*, 134.

rigidly defined pure medium.' [121] Anderson expands upon his assessment of commingling media in Japanese culture, drawing attention to a traditional speaking subject in Japanese visual arts. For example, the narrative *emakimono* (horizontal picture scrolls) extend beyond providing a caption by using literary text to tell a complex story alongside a succession of pictures on the scroll. This complexity translates into the *benshi's* role and how the audio-viewer is aware of their presence, challenging the transparency of the film and any illusion created by the narrative flow. Anderson refers to the *benshi's* role in bringing awareness to the film's production. However, in referring to the institution and because it is more cinema specific, he uses the term *katsuben* instead of *benshi* because the former was also used for a non-film orator:

> [T]o most audiences, the film was an open text and one element in a complex, mixed-media, live entertainment. A large part of the pleasure for the audience was in the katsuben's creative and critical reading of the film… The dominance and apparent reality of the photographic images on the screen could be deconstructed by the katsuben's words and demeanor. Indeed, the presence of the katsuben attacked the ontological status of the film. [122]

The *benshi* thereby raises exciting discussion points when examining Japanese films practices and their foundational differences from Hollywood and European conventions. Early American and European silent films tried to create a dramatic illusion cinematically. From 1897 silent film narrators were used in American cinema, as well as the popular trend of lecturers using cinema as a means of providing visual enhancement for their talks on various topics. However, by 1915 the majority had vanished from American and European cinema as film producers shifted to provide a more self-sufficient narrative. This meant offering a form of cinema that moved away from films being exhibited by lecturers towards cinema that producers had complete control over. Anderson notes on how this was achieved:

> [F]ilm scholars Tom Gunning, Miriam Hansen, Charles Musser and others have shown, between 1908 and 1912 filmmakers devised framing, editing, acting *mise en scène*, and other

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[121] Joseph L. Anderson, 'Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema: Essay on the Necessity Of Katsuben', *Journal of Film and Video* 40/1 (Winter 1988): 13.

[122] Joseph L. Anderson, 'Talking to Pictures: Essaying the *Katsuben*, Contextualizing The Texts', in *Reframing Japanese Cinema*, Arthur Noletti Jr. and David Desser (eds.), (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 286-287.

techniques that allowed them to set forth longer narratives without the aide of a live human voice. [123]

Alternatively, in Japanese silent cinema, the *benshi* would draw attention to the illusion, as 'the customary way of showing films in Japan did not allow for any films without accompanying explanations.' [124] Gerow draws attention to this explanatory nature through the voices of cinematic reformers who sought to delineate the *benshi's* function by focusing on issues around terminology. In particular, Gerow notes the work of critic Takeda Kōkatsu, who preferred the alternative term of *hon'yakusha* (translators) over *benshi*:

> The old term *benshi* (orator), first prevalent in the early 1910s, reflected a system in which the benshi was truly an orator expected to speak and argue, to enounce his own opinion. While Takeda preferred the term *hon'yakusha*, presumably because the role of explaining gave too much power to the benshi, most of his fellow reformers opted for the term *setsumeisha*, which defined the benshi only as a figure who explains, who simply supplements another text instead of creating his own. The new name became the definition of what the benshi should do. [125]

The interpretation of the term *setsumeisha* was viewed both negatively and positively. The former response was argued by reformers as a reason why the role was now redundant, as it confined the role of the *benshi* to 'acting *as* a tautology: saying what had already been said, repeating what was already evident in the text so that everyone would clearly understand its meaning.' [126] The latter responses welcomed the definition of *setumeisha* as good advice in practice. *Benshi* Fushiki Eda provided advice along these lines, noting that in order 'to avoid "killing the picture" by disclosing the entire plot before the screening also reveals an increased emphasis on narrative pleasure based on the temporality of the text, not oratorical excess in the theater, which then led him to advise all *benshi* to narrate "objectively" during projection.' [127] This discussion around terminology of the *benshi* is too broad for the context of this thesis, but it is significant to note the use of the term *setsumeisha* here because, as leading *benshi* Raiyū Ikoma observes, it highlights an important shift in the way that early Japanese cinema was defined:

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[123] Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators,* 8.
[124] Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I', 253.
[125] Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity,* 141.
[126] *Ibid*., 141.
[127] *Ibid*., 141.

[I]t was no longer a matter of listening to film as simply another form of illustrated storytelling but a matter of viewing it as a cinematic mood that exceeded the story and was unique to the motion pictures. *Benshi* had to transform their methods because oration was no longer their goal; the point was now to relate a filmic atmosphere, and this meant toning down the spectacle of language and obeying the text. [128]

While the style of the *benshi's* delivery naturally changed over time with the objective non-*kowairo* style famed by *benshi* Tokugawa Musei being used as a measure, that Gerow notes set the standard for all various forms of explanation across Japanese and non-Japanese films being show for *benshi* from the beginning of the 1920s, [129] the role of the *benshi* should not be reduced to merely explaining the text, especially as a form of narration centred on the oral, as the analysis of the *benshi's* role in the next section of this thesis will demonstrate. As Komatsu Hiroshi argued, 'the linguistic aspect of the images was borne by the dialogue of the *benshi*, with the images themselves being the illustration of an independently existing storyline.' [130]

While this chapter focuses on Japanese cinema, it is important to note that the explanatory nature of the *benshi's setsumei* was also helpful during screenings of early international cinema. They would provide additional explanations for anything unknown to Japanese audio-viewers, including the cultural practices of cinema from other countries. They also relied on the *benshi* to translate titles. Therefore, again during attention to the illusory world of the film, which is spoken for by the *benshi*. Reading this through film music theory, it can be understood as a challenge to Gorbman's principles of inaudibility and invisibility as the dialogue of the *benshi* invited a level of awareness of the cinematic apparatus that was masked by the practices of Western cinema. While it could potentially be argued that these principles were broken in order to produce referential narrative cuing - thus aligning with Gorbman's seventh rule that '[a] given film score may violate any of the other principles...providing the violation is in service of the other principles' [131] – as discussed earlier, historically the *benshi* also had artistic freedom over how they interpreted the images, meaning that no

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[128] Gerow, *Visions of Modernity*, 145.
[129] Gerow notes that by the end of the 1910s, the majority of *benshi* referred to themselves as *Setumeisha*, which was also what they referred to in censorship codes. This is just one example of the issue of terminology that Gerow explores in his fuller considered history of the *benshi* that is beyond the scope of this thesis.
[130] Gerow, *Visions of Modernity*, 147.
[131] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 73.

one performance was ever the same, and thereby creating disunity of audience experience in terms of the meanings taken away from each individual screening.

The *benshi's* role was a traditional Japanese practice, the familiarity of which contrasted, to 'home' audiences, with the more innovative, hybridised underscoring of Japanese silent films during this period. This hybridisation was produced by a mixture of Japanese and non-Japanese instrumental ensembles known as *wayō gassō* (literally "a Japanese and Western ensemble") which usually accompanied Japanese films with a modern setting at that time. The traditional Japanese theatrical influence prevailed, with Japanese period dramas usually being accompanied by *narimono* (from kabuki theatre). [132] *Wayō gassō* became very popular in Japan in the 1910s, using a variety of instrumentation from different national traditions in response to different genre needs. Consistent in these ensembles was the use of traditional Japanese instruments, including the *shamisen*, and various kinds of Japanese percussion, such as the *taiko* and bell-like *kane*. Non-Japanese instrumentation mainly consisted of piano, trumpet, violin, and clarinet/saxophone. Bandleader Hatano Fukutaro, influenced by the Western repertoire, invented the term *keiyo ongaku*, meaning "descriptive music", for the way in which he linked music more directly with the image. His performances became popular with filmgoers. It was not long before underscoring accompanying the action was adopted for the most popular genres of the time – *jidaigeki* films (traditional period dramas set in the feudal past) and the swordplay samurai tales of *chanbara*. Hosokawa Shūhei has explained how this move towards the use of Western underscoring roughly corresponded to a period of formation of an urban middle class with interest in new ideas of "individualism" and "democracy" – and with an aptitude for consumption. Dym notes an example of this Western music consumption. He explains how 'Japanese audiences learned a great deal about Western music, not only by listening to the music played while the films were being shown but also from the "intermission music," which was performing between films at the larger theatres.' [133] This education continued with the use of entrance music to introduce the *benshi*.

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[132] *Jinta* (civilian brass bands that became popular around the 1900s) also performed in film theatres, often noted for playing circus-like music: 'Jinta was a small brass band hired by an advertising agent, which paraded through the streets with banners bearing store or product names, or performed to entertain audiences at circus shows and festivals (Hosokawa 1989a: 130).' See the research of Marié Abe, 'Resonances of Chindon-ya: Sound, Space, and Social Difference in Contemporary Japan' (Ph.D diss., University of California, 2010). Quotation from page 29.
[133] Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators, and Their Forgotten Art of Setsumei: A History of Japanese Silent Film Narration,* 58.

Different theatres chose different entrance pieces, again demonstrating an interesting mix of Western and Japanese music. For example, '[t]he Miyakoza played *Dixie Land*, the Ushigomekan used *The Star Spangled Banner*, and the Teikokukan, which showed Universal Picture films, played the Japanese classic *Tengoku to jigoku* (Heaven and Hell).' [134]

The shifts between styles, however, from 'home' to 'other' and back, offered new opportunities for filmic narration – on the one hand puncturing inaudibility through the noticeability of the shifts in stylistic register and exposing visibility of the band who were seated in front of the audience, but on the other creating new means of articulating commentary accentuating or adding new forms of representation in the film's narration. Shifts in narrative discourse are thus created at the level of individual screenings for the audiences who take away a different meaning from each audio-viewing of the film, not just from the *benshi* but the musical representations that accompany each film screening. This triggers further questions about the importance of music-narratological approaches, which as Nicholas Reyland concludes in his article "The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship? Music Narratology and Screen Music Studies", 'structure cultural experience and demand closer critical scrutiny.' [135]

1.3.2 'Kuruma Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai' an Early Japanese Horror Film Score Example

The following discussion will present an example of a Japanese silent film, considering all its audio elements and analysing how music, sound and *setsumei* begin to indicate how the unique sonic practices of early Japanese cinema, while diverging from Western traditions, also paved the way for a unique approach to audio in Japanese 'ghost' films.

Some of the *jidaigeki* (period pictures) and *chanbara* films dealt with ghostly content, providing the *benshi* with the challenge of scripting the 'unseen'. One example was production company Arashi Kanjuro's masked samurai hero Kurama Tengu, [136] a vigilante character who became popular after the hugely successful film *Kurama Tengu* was released in 1928. The sequel *Kurama Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai* (*Kurama Tengu: Age of Terror/The Frightful Era of Kurama Tengu*), also released

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[134] Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators, and Their Forgotten Art of Setsumei: A History of Japanese Silent Film Narration,* 58.

[135] Nicholas W. Reyland, 'The Beginnings of a Beautiful Friendship? Music Narratology and Screen Music Studies', *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* 6/1 (Spring 2012): 69.

[136] Based on the original novels of Osaragi Jirō.

in 1928, focuses on the protagonist's fight against the Shogunate Government to bring power back to the Emperor and unite Japan. The series of films are also described as Bakumatsu period films set in the early 1860s, which refers to the last decade and a half of Tokugawa Shogunate rule between 1853 and 1867. Following this period, the feudal shogunate government was dissolved. The imperial system was restored with Emperor Meiji taking rule of Japan in 1868, hence the vigilante Kurama's tales of fighting on the side of the Emperor as a loyalist (*shishi*) – on the side of progress. *Kurama Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai* may be a Bakumatsu period film, but it is also one of Japanese cinema's early examples of ghostly horror with its striking audio-visual representation of a haunted house which the following analysis focuses on. The strange and mystical nature of Kurama Tengu is suggested from the outset by the character's name, which was inspired by a literary legendary swordsman Minamoto no Yoshitsune, who was rumoured to have been taught to sword fight by the *Tengu* of Mount Kurama. The *Tengu* is a bird-like goblin, one of the *yōkai* (strange, supernatural creatures and phenomena from Japanese folklore) that links the vigilante of Kurama Tengu not only to the extraordinary skill of the swordsman but to the otherworldliness of the *Tengu*.

As with other Japanese silent films of the time, *Kurama Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai* was intended for presentation with live narration by a *benshi*. It is important to note that the version that survives today is only a partial production of the original footage; much of the film is lost. However, a film reproduction was released for the surviving footage by Matsuda Film Productions in 2008 with Sawato Midori, a female *benshi* and one of Japan's most celebrated providing the narration. The films in the *Kurama Tengu* series are not the earliest example of Japanese horror cinema. This accolade should go to one of the first cinematic interpretations of the popular kabuki play *The Ghost Story of Yotsuya*, first performed on the stage in 1896. This tale of vengeance from the afterlife was first adapted into a film by Shozo Makino for Nikkatsu studios in 1912. Among other early cinematic adaptations of *Yotsuya* (including Ito Daisuke's famous 1928 new edition), this film would have provided a fascinating comparative example to explore the early Japanese horror film score. However, as the *Kurama Tengu* films also demonstrate, the survival rate of Japanese silent films is incredibly poor. [137]As heard in the

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[137] Due to the survival rate of Japanese silent films being incredibly poor the version of *Kurama Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai* used for the purpose of this thesis is produced from restoration. The poor survival rate of Japanese silent films is due to a number of factors, including the destruction of the Nikkatsu film store in the Great Tokyo

film, the most common *benshi* vocal technique is *kataru*, meaning 'speaking voice', which was made up of conversational and oratorical tones. Discussing Sawato's stylistic approach to her role as *benshi* in the film, Larry Greenberg, a silent film researcher and CEO of *Digital Meme,* confirms that she usually embellishes without changing the story. He believes that Sawato's narration script is close to the original. Mr Greenberg adds: 'What is important to remember is that the *benshi* is an improvisationist who must interpret a film for a live audience so the script is dynamic and changes from one performance to the next.' [138] In addition to the *benshi's* narration, hybridised musical underscoring also accompanied Japanese silent film. For audiences of the time who may have been less familiar with the scoring approaches, their musical meaning was confirmed by the *benshi's* narration, as demonstrated below through the example of the haunted house scene.

At the point when we are introduced to the haunted house in the film and its folklore iconography, which includes spider webs, a black cat, a mysterious mass of black hair appearing in strange places around the house and a scroll falling off the wall by itself, the audio-viewer is also presented with a film score that moves away from indigenous Japanese music and instrumentation. It is this striking replacement of Japanese instrumentation (with the exception of the *taiko*) that makes this part of the film stand out. This substitution of a more typical Western underscore could be read in relation to the film's plot, as Kurama Tengu – like a Japanese audio-viewer in 1928, potentially – is about to enter into unfamiliar territory. Furthermore, upon arriving at the house, the *benshi* informs the audio-viewer that it should be treated with an air of caution. The *benshi's* narration hints that the house is haunted, and therefore, as the following paragraphs will demonstrate, makes explicit facts arguably only implicit in the scoring, potentially rendering the score more likely to be a focus of conscious attention should the audio-viewer notice the change in scoring and ponder its significance.

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earthquake of 1923 (also known as the Great Kanto earthquake), further destruction in the fire bombings of Japan, the restriction of Japanese films controlled by the Japanese military between the 1930s-1950s, and the censorship by occupation forces, filtering out any film that dealt with *jidaigeki*, i.e., non-democratic content. The impact of these various incidents is also reflected in the quality of those silent film reels that did survive, including *Kurama Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai*. The full version of the film is not preserved. The first film *Kurama Tengu* runs at 75 minutes while *Kurama Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai* runs at 38 minutes. The film that exists today has been digitally reproduced in such a way as to maintain the unique Japanese screening format from the silent film a re-recording of the original orchestral musical accompaniment and *setsumei* narration delivered by the *benshi*.
[138] Larry Greenberg, interview 26th September 2016.

Figure 1. Kurama Tengu enters the haunted house.

In the shot that introduces us to the interior of the haunted house, a high, sustained C6 is played by the violins joined by brass playing an octave lower (C5), introducing a four-note ostinato through which the tonal triad of C minor is looped continually throughout the scene. The camera is focused on a close-up of a spider's web, the background blurred as we see Kurama Tengu walking towards the web from the other side; the web eventually covers his face. The delivery of the cue in C minor heard here for the first time in the film is striking as, following a very short break of silence, it enters after the quieter, ostinato brass underscoring of the previous cue. It immediately draws the audio-viewer's attention to the shadowy atmosphere the *benshi* has prepared for us. Her dialogue with a softer, cautious intonation, preceding the C minor opening cue, informs the audio-viewer that '[t]he house greeted him with deathly silence.' [139]

Following the opening cue, the next entry is led by bass trombone and piano in unison, performing a low, repetitive melody, still in the key of C minor, and accompanied by soft *taiko* drum rolls. This ostinato increases the momentum of the narrative as Kurama is shown investigating his surroundings. Bursts of trumpets and cymbal are used to create startle effects. Descending sequential chromatic passages are also heard from the upper strings, with tremolo used to heighten the tension of

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[139] Sawato Midori, dialogue. *Talking Silents 5: Kurama Tengu, Kurama Tengu Kyofu Jidai*. Dir. Yamaguchi Teppei. Digital Meme, [1928] 2008, DVD.

the ominous atmosphere. [140] While the scoring works in such a way that the audio-viewer might expect a typical ghostly environment to be represented, the startle effects, minor key and descending chromatic passages are overshadowed by the role of the *benshi*. The traditional Japanese music that audiences might have expected accompanying such scenes is often non-synchronised, using interpolated sounds as symbols of extra-musical meaning: a tangential rather than direct accentuation of narrative. Direct accentuation is a function performed here, not by the score but by the *benshi*. Rather than clarifying the meaning of the visuals, as one would expect of Western audio practices in film, the *benshi* playfully casts doubt on them to open up a new realm of supernatural uncertainty, played out at the level of filmic narration: is what we are seeing real or not real? Furthermore, by inviting the audio-viewer to draw an inference, the audio-viewer becomes arguably more active than a sutured one. In a sense, the *benshi's* interpretive role parallels the positioning of the spectator by many Japanese films of this era and later – a more consciously active reader of film, aware of scoring as well as other elements of the audio-visual discourse, and not afraid to interpret it or to recognise its potential multivalence.

As became standard in the vococentric classical system of Hollywood, the dialogue is prioritised over underscoring, as is also the case with *benshi* narration. However, the narrated descriptions of the environment are also delivered by the *benshi*, not just dialogue, unlike Western silent film scoring's 'contributing to the narrative's geographical and temporal setting', [141] here it is the *benshi's* description that guides the audio-viewer's interpretation of the story and narrative references. The *benshi,* therefore, has a determinant influence on the audio-viewer's interpretation of the haunted house scene. Her *setsumei* may attack the ontological status of the film, using audio to deconstruct the image and music in a way that leads audio-viewers to ask whether the truth of a sequence lies in the image, the score, or the narrator's accompaniment – or reminding the audio-viewer, like other early Japanese film, that all is illusion and fiction. For example, without the narration, the audio-viewer may believe that the seemingly ordinary lady who later enters the room to

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[140] This scoring could be compared with a type of cue sheet compiled from standard photoplay music in western silent film described as 'misterioso dramatico', composed by Gaston Burch and included in S.M. Berg's American Cinema Incidental Series suggesting 'sudden or impending danger' and used for scenes of 'sneaking into a house and those with a quiet yet frightening atmosphere'.
[141] Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 83.

serve tea is the mistress of the house. However, the *benshi* suggests a ghostly nature with the description that she 'appeared as if from nowhere'. [142]

The haunting power of the off-screen presence that the *benshi* amplifies is demonstrated in *Kurama Tengu*'s early glimpse of how a traditional Japanese haunted house scene might be filmed and scored. [143] The *benshi's* poetic commentary creates an innovative displacement of music as the dominant audio narration in 'silent' film, providing a ghostly voice that clarifies, to a degree, what is seen and what is heard, but not its uncanny status. Even in this early silent example, the uniquely Japanese addition of the *benshi* challenges the principles of invisibility and inaudibility. It maintains a tradition of Japanese visual presentation that does not submit to Western illusionism. Instead, the *benshi* delivers both dialogue and the narrative information that would primarily be represented by the visuals (including intertitles) and reinforced by underscoring in Western silent film. Thus, the *benshi's* role in Japanese film makes it different to Hollywood approaches soon to be formulated, and certainly to Western silent practice of the time. The gulf that begins to open between the location of visual and audio elements of the diegesis and non-diegetic narration anticipates the unique sonic approaches that Japanese 'ghost' films of the coming decades would produce, and how they would begin in turn to invite new approaches to scoring that would challenge hegemonic Western practices.

1.4 The Development of the Japanese 'ghost' film score in the Early Sound Era

The first Japanese full feature sound film or 'talkie' was *Madamu to nyōbo (The Neighbour's Wife and Mine)*, directed by Gosho Heinosuke in 1931. Silent films and talkies co-existed for some time in Japan, proving the popularity of narration as an art form. However, after 1914, Japanese filmmaking began to change with Komatsu observing that 'Japanese cinema decided to take the direction of adapting the representational mode of Western cinema in which cinema undertakes its own narrative.' [144] Furthermore, in the 1910s and 20s, supporters of the pure film movement campaigned

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[142] Sawato Midori, dialogue. *Talking Silents 5: Kurama Tengu, Kurama Tengu Kyofu Jidai.*
[143] The restoration produced by *Digital Meme* includes original scoring by Yuasa Joichi, a Japanese composer who specializes in soundtracks from the silent era. Producing music under the remit of recreating the original experience of filmgoers during the 1920s and 1930s, Yuasa worked with a couple of members of his music ensemble *Colored Monotone* to also perform the score. Information provided kindly by Larry Greenberg, CEO of *Digital Meme*.
[144] Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I', 257.

'to change the production and exhibition practices of the Japanese film industry', advocating a move away from practices associated with theatre entertainment. The first pure film productions appeared after 1918.

The most significant shake up in the early Japanese film industry was the great Kanto earthquake in 1923. With Tokyo flattened and most studios and theatres as a cultural hub, the film industry was severely affected. Donald Richie and Joseph L. Anderson note how the supply needed to meet the demands of the people and the fact that 'the movies remained popular, and soon more and more films were imported from abroad to fill in the demand the Japanese companies could not satisfy.' [145] More importantly, this highlights the inevitable modernisation and adoption of Western filmmaking techniques that came with this shift. As Richie and Anderson note: '[T]he earthquake and its resultant confusion had upset the industry to the extent that many of the old concepts were relinquished and completely new methods and ideas were adopted. The atmosphere of the film world after the earthquake was one of great and boundless enthusiasm.' [146]

Film studios like Nikkatsu, the oldest major motion-picture studio founded in 1912 along with rival film companies, adopted new approaches to film making and as Gerow highlights at the end of the 1920s,

> [T]he star and director systems were firmly in place with the emergence of figures such as Bando Tsumasaburō, Kurishima Sumiko, Itō Daisuke, Abe Yutaka and Mizoguchi Kenji; the screenplay was an accepted form, and among its prominent practitioners were Susukita Rokuhei and Yamagami Itarō; production forces gained additional power over exhibition; actresses replaced onnagata [female impersonator]; and intellectuals made significant headway in the industry as the social status of the cinema rose. [147]

Gerow observes how Shōchiku studios in the 1920s adopted the film practices of parallel editing and the use of close-ups, which were often avoided in early Japanese cinema to distract from the use of *onnagata* in place of female actors. In the 1930s, Tōhō studios gained a reputation for

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[145] Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry (Expanded Edition)* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 47.
[146] *Ibid*., 48.
[147] Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity,* 224.

having a more Americanized approach to film style. However, it was not until around 1936 that the last film productions featuring live narration were overtaken entirely. This overlap between narrated silent cinema and sound cinema was mainly because the addition of the film narration fitted into a style of performance to which Japanese audiences were accustomed since 'the fragmentary nature of most Japanese films of this period – which allowed the *benshi's* interpretation to dominate – is illustrative of typical early Japanese cinema.' [148] Komatsu notes explicitly how the *benshi* was significant in ensuring that the Japanese could 'retain its own Japanese-style modes (for example, the use of long takes and of few close-ups). However, the fact that the existence of the *benshi* helped Japanese cinema preserve its form is due to the fact that the Japanese cinema was not self-sufficient. The subsequent character of Japanese cinema was established on this foundation built up during the pre-World War I period.' [149] Interestingly, this pre-war era was one that Anderson critiques as being unable to establish a culture industry like that of the United States and that with '[n]ever fully becoming a mass production industry, the studios lacked capital and maintained a precarious relationship with theaters, two factors that, for instance, helped delay the introduction of sound.' [150]

Sasaki Hirohisa notes how the sets of early Japanese 'ghost' films were modelled on traditional theatre examples, adopting stylized hyperrealism. [151] The same descriptions apply to many films' music and sound design in the 1920s and 1930s, such as *Arima Neko* (*The Cat of Arima*, 1937), which used traditional kabuki theatre musical accompaniment for its score. Ushihara Kiyohiko's 1938 film *Kaibyō nazo no shamisen* (*The Ghost Cat and the Mysterious Shamisen*) is another key example that demonstrates the prevailing influence of the theatre on early Japanese sound film. Also described as a 'ghost cat' film (*bakeneko* or *kaibyō*), the film is set around the kabuki theatre and delivers a revengeful ghostly plot that focuses on one of the theatrical form's lead instruments in producing musical narrative, the *shamisen*. Personified through its continuous association with supernatural activity, the *shamisen*'s musicality is used to draw attention to the central character of Mitsue, an *onna-kabuki* (women's kabuki) performer betrothed to an apprentice *shamisen* player called Seijiro. Mitsue becomes jealous when a beautiful girl called Okiyo returns Seijiro's lost cat Kuro and becomes

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[148] Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I', 251.
[149] *Ibid*., 257.
[150] Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity,* 224-225.
[151] Michael Crandol, 'Nightmares from the Past: Kaiki eiga and the Dawn of Japanese Horror Cinema' (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2015), 50.

besotted with him. Mitsue kills her betrothed's cat in a fit of jealousy and murders Okiyo after Seijiro gives her his prized *shamisen*.

Mitsue is first shown performing *kabuki buyō* (kabuki dance) [152] on the stage with the onstage musicians and the *tayū* (chanter), who are heard and seen performing the *kiyomoto-bushi* – a type of narrative music accompanied by *shamisen*. The scenes are played out as if the kabuki is being filmed in real-time, including shots of the audience's reaction to the performed poses and dancing, again drawing attention to the influence of traditional Japanese theatre on early sound cinema. The heterophonic texture of the music is described as *tsukazu hanarezu*; both musical lines essentially produce the same melody but lack synchronicity. This separation between the pulse and pitches of the *shamisen* and vocal narration is typical of Edo-period narrative music. It showcases the individual delivery of the voice and *shamisen* in the *kiyomoto-bushi* style, and 'this sparse style of playing is considered the most evocative and sexy'. [153] The *kiyomoto-bushi* narrative form and the accompanying visuals in this scene emphasise the attention-seeking confidence of Mitsue's character, as well as her evocative and murderous nature. Her position as an *onna-kabuki* actress also draws attention to the historical context of kabuki theatre. With women's kabuki established in 1609 and banned in 1629, the film is set somewhere within this time frame. The associations placed on *onna-kabuki* leading up to its ban were those of eroticism, mischief, deviation, and the accusations of prostitution in the theatre world. Mitsue's character would also be linked to these associations, heightened by the musical associations of the accompanying *shamisen* as part of the *kiyomoto-bushi*. [154]

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[152] *Kabuki buyō* is also sometimes called *Nihon buyō* (Japanese classical dance).
[153] Alison McQueen Tokita, 'Music in Kabuki: More Than Meets The Eye', *The Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*, Alison McQueen Tokita and David W. Hughes (eds.), (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 236.
[154] In the licensed quarters, prostitutes adopted the *shamisen* as their instrument of choice and brought it to kabuki from around the 1610s. It was used to accompany erotic double-entendre short songs described as *kouta*.

Figure 2. The murderous *onna-kabuki* actress Mitsue performing a dance.

In the final part of the film, the hyperrealism of the theatre experience is heightened with another scene shot as if live action. This is reinforced by the audio perspective, as the volume changes according to the distance from its source in a realistic manner. The drama is heightened as the scene opens with a much fuller kabuki music ensemble played off stage as part of the *geza-ongaku* that includes *fue*, *taiko* drums and bells. The dominance of Japanese theatre entertainment and its musical elements are further cemented by the presence of the onstage *kiyomoto-bushi* ensemble in this scene. There is a noticeable sharp cut in the visual and audio track to a close-up of Seijiro playing a solo onstage at one point in the scene. The camera cuts to a fixed shot of two new characters seated on the stage- the disguised Osume, the sister of the murdered Okiyo, and her accomplice, who is also in disguise playing the role of her monkey. The camera cuts to a close-up of the lead narrator who performs with the *shamisen* before cutting back to the action on stage and finally to a low fixed shot of the lead narrator and Seijiro performing side by side.

It becomes apparent that the camera's increasing mobile position from different points of view in the scene is matched with the increased tempo of the *shamisen* as a montage sequence suddenly unfolds, suggesting that a ghostly presence invades the stage. This is confirmed using a close-up of the *shamisen* being plucked furiously, followed by a shot that makes use of a kaleidoscope lens to reveal a surreal image of a cat face, and Mitsue's recoiling response, confirming it is her point of view that the distorted visual is seen from. However, there is some ambiguity regarding whether Mitsue solely witnesses this fantastical moment as the audience is instead shown reacting to lights popping from a multitude of lanterns around the stage. The *shamisen* is also placed at the forefront of the audio mix performing repetitive scale passages that crescendo and echo the rapid frantic nature of the

kaleidoscope imagery. As part of the stage falls as if from nowhere, the *shamisen* resumes its furious momentum until finally Mitsue is stabbed and falls to the floor.

Director Ushihara Kiyohiko's filming style not only emphasises different performative aspects of the kabuki play but incorporates the use of kaleidoscope lenses, double exposures and slow-motion sequences. These, amongst other fantastical approaches to cinematography, create a visually arresting supernatural experience. However, this synergy of traditional and modern *kaiki* (strange) visual iconography is achieved with an approach to scoring that retains an emphasis on traditional aspects of scoring a kabuki play. Music is used here to draw attention to cultural sonic practice in the theatre to highlight ghostly appearances that challenge the medium of the screen as stage and musicians as being heard but not seen:

> The term "underscore" has several interlocking meanings, including the delineation of emotional or narrative content by musical accompaniment, or the more literal meaning of scoring running *under* the dialogue and/or action. This last meaning also shades over into a geographical meaning, of music emanating from a physical space underneath the stage. [155]

Robynn Stilwell's description applies to the 'geography of the soundscape' in the traditional Western theatre, highlighting how almost none of this construct changes in music for cinema. However, as *Kaibyō nazo no shamisen* (*The Ghost Cat and the Mysterious Shamisen*) demonstrates, Stilwell's construct does not necessarily apply to the engagement of space and music with the visuals of the stage that were used in Japanese cinema. The relationship between the audience and audio-visual in this Japanese 'ghost' film example is more in keeping with Stilwell's examination of the 'breaking of the fourth wall', an engagement between the audio-viewer and screen that cautions the acceptance that the musician's presence should not be acknowledged. Just as it should be acknowledged that the visibility of the musicians on stage is also still a prevailing example of the dominance of the Japanese theatre tradition over the early sound film in Japan.

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[155] Robynn Stilwell, 'The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic' in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (eds.), (London: University of California Press, 2007), 188.

1.5 Film Scores for Retold Folklore: Japanese 'Ghost' Film Scores of the 1940s and 50s

Horror continued to evolve in Japanese cinema according to national cultural fears and the emphasis on recounting urban myths and folklore in film, producing a variety of approaches to film scoring, and often surprising audio-viewers. As scholar of Japanese folklore and ghosts, Zack Davisson notes, '[T]here is a litany of cinematic adaptations […] [that] are reinvented year after year and the ghosts of Oiwa, Otsuyu, and Okiku are resurrected afresh for new audiences waiting to be chilled by their ghostly touch. [156] *Yotsuya Kaidan* (*The Ghost Story of Yotsuya*) was one such story that was adapted for the screen over thirty times. However, while Daisuke Ito's 1928 film, *Shinpan Yotsuya Kaidan* (*Yotsuya Ghost Story New Edition)* was closer to a theatrical production, made up of seven reels narrated by a *benshi* (silent film narrator), Kinoshita Keisuke's two-part 1949 film *Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan* (*The Yotsuya Ghost Story: A New Interpretation Part I*) and *Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan: kōhen* (*The Yotsuya Ghost Story: A New Interpretation Part II*), a modernised film version of Nanboku Tsuruya's kabuki play, moved away from the previously dominant theatrical audio-visual representations.

The impact of historical events had a significant effect on the Japanese horror film tradition and its scoring - none more so than the Allied Occupation of Japan in 1945, led by General Douglas McArthur, who took charge of the Supreme Command of Allied Powers (SCAP) to reform and prevent the remilitarisation of Japan in the future, abolishing the Meiji Construction which was at the heart of the Empire of Japan. With this came censorship of Japanese culture, particularly as in the 1930s, the Japanese government had used cinema to produce wartime propaganda and promotional documentaries known as *bunka eiga* ('culture film') showcasing the power and glory of the Japanese empire. As well as screening American films to encourage American ideals and introduce an American cultural model for the Japanese population to follow, American censorship banned any Japanese films deemed overly feudal. As Rachael Hutchinson notes:

> Censorship during the Allied Occupation (1945–52) was similar in its mission to that of the
> Japanese military system, with the double aim of encouraging one ideology while suppressing
> another. In this case, the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) Section of General

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[156] Zack Davisson, *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost,* 154.

Headquarters aimed to promote films displaying democratic qualities, while suppressing those with feudal or militaristic themes. Once again retrospective censorship came into effect, as hundreds of pre-1945 films were banned. [157]

Censorship regulations included banning, cutting, or revising required elements ensured by dual censorship carried out by the CI&E and the Civil Censorship Department (CCD) from January 1946 to June 1949. CI&E continued to monitor films in post-production from 1949 until the end of the Occupation in 1952, despite the Film Ethics Regulations Control Committee (abbreviated as Eirin) being established in 1949 to replace external censorship as a self-regulating body. Due to these democratic restrictions, Kinoshita Keisuke's 1949 two-part film adaptation of the *Yotsuya Kaidan* kabuki play, *Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan* (*The Yotsuya Ghost Story: A New Interpretation Part I*) and *Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan*: kôhen (*The Yotsuya Ghost Story: A New Interpretation Part II*) do not possess the same chilling supernatural element as the original story. Forced by the Occupation Policy, Kinoshita dispenses with the double vengeance theme central to the original story. In the initial play, Iemon, who has murdered his father-in-law and poisoned his wife Oiwa, is now presented as an opportunistic hero who wishes to restore his honour by becoming a retainer (a low-ranking member of the samurai military culture). This is achieved by his remarriage to a wealthier woman, which, the plot implies, is partly justifiable as Iemon and Oiwa are presented as living a life of hardship that '[offers] in "samurai" terms a likeness of hard times to be found in postwar Japan.' [158] In Kinoshita's adaptation, an anti-climax is apparent as Iemon kills himself in a fire after his hallucinations begin to act upon his conscience, making the story 'more of a cautionary tale that can be chalked up to the old adages.' [159]

Previously in this chapter, the 'translation' [160] of Western music into Japanese culture was highlighted in earlier examples of film music, noting the syncretic-style ensemble of Japanese and

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[157] Rachael Hutchinson, 'Introduction: negotiating censorship in modern Japan' in *Negotiating Censorship in Modern Japan*, Rachael Hutchinson (ed.), (New York: Routledge, 2013), 8.

[158] Keiko I. McDonald, *Japanese Classical Theater in Films* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press), 89.

[159] Nicholas Rucka, 'Review: Yotsuya Ghost Story, Parts I and II' (http://old.midnighteye.com/reviews/round-up_003.shtml, 14 May 2014).

[160] See Alison McQueen Tokita, 'Bi-musicality in modern Japanese culture', *International Journal of Bilingualism* 18/2 (2014) 159-175 for a broader survey on how Western music was effectively 'translated' into Japanese culture in Japan's modern period and her application of the concept of bi-musicality across several examples of musical activity.

Western instruments in the example of *wayō gassō*. I would also argue that a direct influence of the Occupation restrictions resulted in the scoring approach of *Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan* and *Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan: kodan* being symptomatic of the diluted storyline. This is achieved by aligning the tragedy of the visuals with a melodramatic approach to scoring that foregrounds the use of *wayō gassō*. The two-part film's most prominent and recurring musical theme is the poor wife Oiwa's sentimental theme. Her melody is played by the upper strings in A minor and accompanied by flute and harp arpeggios. It enters throughout the film in different variations, with the addition of piano, woodwind, and brass used in the final scene to heighten the story's final climax. No matter what variation of the melody is heard, it always retains a principle melodic progression of A4, B4, D5, E5, with the minor third interval emphasising the western sourced musical connotation of tragedy in Oiwa's disfiguration and her subsequent murder.

The ghostliness of her character is diluted further by the fact that she is robbed of a voice in the film. As a ghostly figure, she is merely a figment of Iemon's imagination and has no dialogue. However, a distinct moment of ambiguity that challenges the sound source stands out when Oiwa's sister Osore visits her house, not realising that her sister has been murdered. As Osore examines the boarded-up property, Takuetsu, an accomplice in Oiwa's murder, appears onscreen, whispering the words of the Buddhist chant *Namo Amitābha,* which is said to help bring balance and protection. His chanting is joined by the off-screen voice of Oiwa's sister calling out his name. However, Takuestu recoils in horror as he cannot identify where the dialogue is coming from, giving it a ghostly disembodied effect. The audio-viewer is aware that he stands outside Oiwa's former residence, which prioritises the audio to suggest a ghostly presence and also keeps the audio-viewer guessing as there is no diegetic sound source at this point in the shot. Osore times her entrance on-screen perfectly as she comments, 'You look like you've seen a ghost.' While the dominance of Western musical practices encouraged by actions of the Allied Occupation was prevalent in film scoring, as demonstrated here with the example of *Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan/Shinshaku Yotsuya Kaidan: kodan.* The specific sequence presented above highlights how ambiguity around a sound's source can still challenge classical scoring convention when highlighting the presence of the Japanese ghost primarily through audio rather than visual.

The Hollywood classical scoring convention of music being subordinate to the image is also challenged with the vocalisation of the supernatural and reinforcement of traditional Japanese folklore storytelling in Mizoguchi Kenji's 1953 film *Ugetsu*, based on a story by Akinari Ueda. The tale tells of two men, a farmer and a potter living in 16th-century war-torn Japan, who must face the consequences after leaving their loyal wives for fortune and glory. Towards the beginning of the film, a boat appears from the mist on a lake, with the voice of a woman heard chanting over the diegetic sound of the lapping water and creaking of the oar's steering. As the boat moves closer towards the long static shot of the camera, the chanting is seemingly given a visual source as a woman is shown visibly steering the boat, accompanied by a low *taiko* drum beat, which began in the previous scene, but strangely matches the pulse of the song. As the boat gets closer to the camera, we see all of its inhabitants- two families travelling across Lake Biwa, escaping warfare. As the camera cuts to the next shot, panning to the right and moving out to expand the frame, it is revealed that the chanting is not from an on-screen source, as the woman, who is at first silent, engages in conversation while the chanting is still present on the soundtrack. A sense of ghostly dread is created from the drum and the source-less song 'which features long, plaintive melodies and lyrics about a little boat that floats along with all its passengers asleep and no one at the rudder […] "This world is a temporary abode / Where we weep until the dawn comes / Pitched by the waves"'. [161]

Figure 3. The two families travel across a ghostly Lake Biwa.

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[161] Harris, 'Hayasaka Fumio, Ronin Composer', 101.

The use of traditional Japanese instrumentation and Buddhist musical associations of chanting for ritualistic purposes, such as those used in ceremonies connected to the spiritual world, are abundant throughout the film. The music is often challenging the source in the film diegesis, making the audio-viewer question whether the scoring belongs in some kind of 'fantastical gap' [162] between the film world, the non-film world and the supernatural realm it represents. Stilwell defines this term as 'a cinematic fantasy, in the form of a dream, flashback or musical number or, musically in 'the free play of possibility' [163] between narrative functions. In *Ugetsu*, 'Hayasaka's manipulation of musical worlds mirrors the on-screen narrative of a ghost story which by its nature forces us to consider the boundary between our reality and the hereafter.' [164] This could imply that the voice may not exist in the diegesis but another parallel world to the material reality depicted in the visuals. By blurring the sound sources in this scene, as the *taiko* also remains without a definitive point of audition, the sound-image hierarchy is deconstructed, challenging classical scoring practice in order to create the uneasy feeling that a ghostly encounter is to be expected in the film.

At the end of the 1950s and into the early 1960s, several films were produced that continued to emphasise the ambiguity of sound sources through the influence of Japanese theatre's stylized artificial storytelling format. Michael Crandol describes Nobuo Nakagawa's 1959 version of *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* as being a film neglected in terms of analysis, despite the director having produced a film that is 'often regarded as a masterpiece of the horror genre.' [165] *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* opens with the sounds of *ki*, a music cue used in kabuki theatre created when two square hardwood sticks also called *ki* or *hyōshigi* (wooden clappers) are struck together. [166]The claps notify actors of timing related to performances, create cues for acting, and provide sound effects. The sounds of *ki* are familiar to Japanese theatre audiences, particularly the opening cue performed at the start of a play, called *Naoshi,* made up of two *ki* clacks. [167] The cue is distinct in its placement as a sound performance prologue and for the specific rhythmic figure used, known as *oroshi,* which begins as a

[162] Stilwell, 'The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic', 186.
[163] *Ibid*., 187.
[164] Harris, 'Hayasaka Fumio, Ronin Composer', 100.
[165] Richard J. Hand, 'Aesthetics of Cruelty: Traditional Japanese Theater and the Horror Film', in *Japanese Horror Cinema*, Jay McRoy (ed.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 22.
[166] The term *ki* is used to describe both the sounds and the instrument that produces them.
[167] At the start of a play when the curtains open, they do so to the sound of *ki*. They are also used to signal the end of an act, with the *ki* being hit immediately before the actor's last line or gesture. See: https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/kabuki/en/production/music8.html

slow, steady beat before it gradually increases in speed and intensity, leading into a drum roll. It is heard as the film's opening credits appear, superimposed over images of a kabuki stage being prepared for a performance. A stage helper pulls back the curtain just before the final strike of the *ki/ hyōshigi* enters. While the claps are heard off-stage, in keeping with the traditional use of *ki*, played off-stage, the audio-viewer's position at the opening of the film is that of being within the diegesis, as a member of the audience seated at the opening of the play, as if to confirm that the sonic cue of the clappers is diegetic.

The final strike of the wooden clapper reveals a lone figure on the stage, the stage helper carrying a candle holder and wearing dark robes so that he is 'invisible' to the audience. The sound of the *shamisen* accompanies an opening chant that recites the obligations and ties that bind women to men and parents to their children. The camera pans up to a platform on the stage right, revealing the *tayū* and the *shamisen* player who perform the narrative vocal style of *kiyomoto-bushi*. However, the narrative music is only confirmed aurally as the narrator sits motionless, detached from the voice heard. What might be assumed is that this is an off-stage performer, as kabuki also includes the off-stage musicians of the *geza*, hidden behind a black bamboo curtain. The camera does, in fact, pan down to the right-side black stage curtain, which is called the *kuromaku* and 'symbolizes the darkness of night.' [168] However, the detachment between the *shamisen* and narrator provides a sense of disembodiment that, combined with the stage's dancing lone figure, acts as a specific Japanese gothic frame for the tale about to be recounted.

1.6 The Influence of Jazz and Nature in Japanese 'Ghost' Film Scores of the 1960s

Japanese 'ghost' films of the 1960s emphasised ghostly elements by applying a Japanese cultural sensibility that, unlike Western examples of supernatural horror such as *House on Haunted Hill* (Castle, 1959), *Carnival of Souls* (Harvey, 1962) and *The Haunting* (Wise, 1963) did not rationalise the mysterious forces portrayed. The supernatural was reinforced through music and the use of sound design. Many of the films' thematic contents have deep roots in the philosophies of Buddhism and

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[168] Miyake Shūtarō, *Kabuki Drama: Tourist Library Vol.7* (Japan Travel Bureau: Tokyo, 1959), 69.

Shintoism, particularly both belief systems' regard for connections between the natural and the supernatural. [169] Composers produced more ambiguous and experimental connections between sound and the cinematic supernatural, often manipulating sounds of nature, which resulted in them adopting a more animistic scoring approach that offered an alternative approach to the dominant classical scoring model, as demonstrated through the film case studies that follow.

Scholars often class Kaneto Shindō's 1964 film *Onibaba* (*Devil Woman*) as an art-house film or 'New Wave "horror"' example [170]. Shindō's ethos as a filmmaker was based on a cinematic naturalism that centred on the image as the key component of filmmaking rather than the dialogue. There is no dialogue in the first ten minutes of *Onibaba*; instead, the film's opening pan shot features the sound of the wind blowing through the susuki grass. The film's title overlays the swaying grass, a visual imitation of the ambience set for the film. This is joined by the sound of a simultaneous gong and cymbal strike, followed by a blasted single note entry from multiple trumpets in unison, producing an opening frenzy of sound. A percussion-heavy ostinato with a diatonic, improvised sax solo enters with trilling sax underneath and intermittent alternating double and single note entries of muted brass. The cue ends on a sudden final drum roll, and once again, a static shot of the swaying grass in the breeze appears onscreen, introducing a civil war setting as two wounded samurai make their way through the long grass. The film is set at a time known as the Japanese Warring States period, a period of near-constant civil war from 1467-1615, starting with the Onin War of 1467 in Kyoto.

The influence of jazz is identified in this opening scene which triggers curiosity over the use of a musical form created by African-Americans being used over black and white visuals of feudal

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[169] There is a wider debate which cannot be fully explored here around the term 'supernatural' in relation to Japanese culture: what is defined as supernatural in one culture is instead regarded as strange or mysterious, but natural, in Japan. Other terms, such as ghost, *yūrei* or *yōkai* could be relevant here. However, in the context of this thesis I have chosen the term 'supernatural' to mean the irruption of the ghostly world into human experience. What is defined as supernatural in one culture is instead regarded as strange or mysterious, but natural, in Japan. In Japanese culture and fiction, supernatural entities are not unnatural nor technically supernatural. Anthony Chambers notes in his discussion of Akinari Ueda's *Ugetsu Monogatari* (*Tales of Moonlight and Rain*): '[T]he notion of "supernatural" is in and of itself relative, and while "strange" and "mysterious" are commonly attributed to Japanese scary tales, "supernatural" is probably "an inappropriate word, since what is considered to be supernatural in one culture is regarded as merely strange-but natural-in another" (Chambers in Ueda 2008:16)'. See Katarzyna, Marak. *Japanese and American Horror: A Comparative Study of Film, Fiction, Graphic Novels and Video Games*. (North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 13.
[170] Crandol, 'Nightmares from the Past', 8.

Japan. Kunio Hara observes how there has been 'a long and at times complicated history of jazz in Japan'. [171] Kunio details the country's relationship with jazz pre-and post-war, noting:

> [Jazz was] popularized during the Taishō and early Shōwa eras (1920s and 1930s), jazz was suppressed in Japan during the Pacific War due to its association with the United States. Immediately following the war, starting during the long period of American occupation, the popularity of jazz experienced a resurgence especially with the new influx of American soldier musicians and touring artists. [172]

For the post-war Japanese youth, their inherited value system was now discredited by the war and Occupation, which led to a rebellion of identity crisis. Jazz provided a consequent appeal as it spoke to individuals as a musical form promoting the expression of creative resistance. However, as E. Taylor Atkins observes, there was a difference in the jazz of the late 1940s with the need to produce authentic jazz that privileged the form's American inheritance:

> [T]he jazz revolution of the mid-forties and the ensuing stylistic ruptures in subsequent decades also fortified existing assumptions about American superiority and Japanese backwardness in art. Before World War II, American jazz had been an undeniably attractive model to emulate, but is had been one of many sources of inspiration: even indigenous musics bubbled in the font of ideas. But in the postwar years, a period in which the nation's fate allegedly depended on its abilities to "catch up" to an American standard of living, there was a noticeably heightened sense of urgency to "catch up" to an aesthetic standard set exclusively by American jazz artists. [173]

Still, for the Japanese youth of the 1950s, and before rock stole its perch, jazz was a postwar music cultural trend, described as the *kūzen jazu būmu* ('unprecedented jazz boom'). However, with the popularity of jazz concerts amongst what Atkins described as the 'boisterous youths, egging the

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[171] Hara Kunio, *Joe Hisaishi's Soundtrack for My Neighbor Totoro*, Manabe Noriko (series ed.), (London: Blommsbury Academic, 2020), 128. Kunio specifically references E. Taylor Atkins' 2001 publication *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* which explores Japan's fascination with jazz and the dilemmas of identity faced by Japanese artists who wanted to liberate themselves from foreign models.
[172] Hara, *Joe Hisaishi's Soundtrack for My Neighbor Totoro*, 128-129.
[173] E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press: 2001), 168.

music on to ostentatious displays of instrumental prowess', [174] broader social issues came with it for other Japanese audiences and film was used to highlight these. The concern came from jazz's cultural and military associations of the Occupation. Kurosawa Akira was one such director who utilised jazz in cinema as 'the sonic representation of America's intrusion into the nation's cultural life.' [175] His 1948 film *Yoidore tenshi* (*Drunken Angel*) delivers a soundtrack that is described as '[dramatizing] the ''disturbance of indigenous culture'' and the "erosion of self [wrought by] the Americanization" of Japan: placid classical guitar vies with a raucously blaring jazz score, resounding off the cesspool that serves as the film's principal metaphor.' [176] Atkins lists a further example with Kurosawa's 1952 film *Ikiru* (*To Live*). After discovering he only has less than a year to live from a cancer diagnosis, the main protagonist, a bureaucrat decides to at first escape into the pleasures of the Tokyo nightlife, which is accompanied by a jazz soundtrack. Atkins observes from these examples that:

> Though hardly a xenophobic guardian of social and aesthetic traditions, Kurosawa expressed the continuing apprehension that many Japanese felt toward the music and the wholesale cultural transformation it portended, by deliberately associating jazz with the criminal opportunism that poisoned postwar society. [177]

Atkins then highlights the opposite side of cinematic production with jazz's dangerous aura and parental disapproval at times, making it an attractive soundtrack for a youth generation trained to condemn their earlier familial ties and values as feudal. Atkins goes on to list several examples of films targeted at teenagers and asserting jazz's reputed ties with adolescent rebellion, known as '"teen sex" films'. [178] Of course, connotations of sex and seduction linked to jazz music have always been prevalent in the US through many film examples of the 1950s and 60s. Michele Calella presents a musical and cultural analysis of how jazz-inflected music in films up to the early 1960s was used to highlight the construction of sexual female behaviours in Hollywood films using Elia Kazan's 1951 film *A Street Car Named Desire* as a key example. Rebecca Fulop also writes on the musical construction of gender in the Classical Hollywood era and contemporary connotations of jazz

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[174] Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in* Japan,189.
[175] *Ibid.*, 191.
[176] *Ibid.*, 191.
[177] *Ibid.*, 191.
[178] *Ibid.*, 191.

suggesting female sexual deviance. [179] In a similar way of linking jazz with the sensuous and female agency, *Onibaba's* use of jazz music in the film's opening could also be read as a musical style topic. It foreshadows the film's exploration of the disruptive energy of the female body and sexuality, closely matched to more of a classical Hollywood scoring convention. For example, in *Settling The Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*, Kathyrn Kalinak examines the encoding of otherness in Hollywood classical scoring through the example of jazz music stereotypes in the representation of female sexuality. However, I argue that the influence of free jazz with its lack of harmonic structure and absence of obvious metre, fits with the primitive description that parallels Shindō's film's plot and is reinforced by the traditional Japanese *taiko* drums that accompany the contrapuntal jazz music.

The film's focus on the visual and aural experience of the natural setting, particularly of the tall susuki grass, heightens this primitive emphasis of the soundtrack and the ambient opening sounds of the landscape space through the blowing grass followed by the burst of free jazz and taiko drumming are collectively part of a further spatiality of landscape tied to the noh theatre stage. Zvika Serper specifically notes how

> In *Onibaba* he employs two contrasting natural objects to convey the main theme of the film, recreating the contrasting natural elements in the noh space […] this combination reflects symbolically the noh ideals of longevity, sanctity and harmony. In *Onibaba* the main theme of turning the Middle-aged Woman into a demon and then vanquishing her is correlated with nature and its various components, which have a symbolic function in addition to serving as the setting for the narrative. Shindō makes meaningful use of two contrasting natural objects: the deep pit and the dry tree trunk. [180]

The landscape of grass symbolises the protagonists' impoverished situation, something that Shindō was keen to convey, stating in an interview with Joan Mellen how he wanted to show the 'lives of down-to-earth people who have to live like weeds'. [181] *Onibaba* tells the tale of a mother and

[179] See Michele Calella, 'Jazz, sex and film music: Music and gender in Hollywood's film dramas of 1950s', *Musik Theorie* 27/3 (January 2012): 246-265 and Rebecca Naomi Fulop, 'Heroes, Dames, and Damsels in Distress: Constructing Gender Types in Classical Hollywood Film Music' (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2012).

[180] Zvika Serper, 'Shindō Kaneto's films *Kuroneko* and *Onibaba*: Traditional and Innovative Manifestations of Demonic Embodiments', *Japan Forum*, 17/2 (2005), 250.

[181] Shindō Kaneto in Joan Mellen, *Voices from the Japanese Cinema* (New York: Liverlight, 1975), 80.

daughter-in-law living in marshland after their husband and son left to go to war. The women prey on wounded or lost samurai, killing them and disposing of their bodies in a pit before selling off their sought-after armour to survive. After the daughter (who remains nameless) begins an affair with a neighbour called Hachi, a war survivor who reports the death of the nameless woman's husband, Kichi, the mother's disapproval leads her to steal a noh mask from one of her samurai victims, using it to scare the daughter-in-law into submission. However, the mask is cursed.

Whenever the daughter prepares to sneak out to her lover's hut, a repeated two-note pattern is heard plucked on the guitar, joined by the sounds of unusual blowing techniques produced by wooden flutes and slides of the bow on the cello. These moments are also accompanied by low percussive thuds and snaps of thin pieces of wood. As the daughter is shown running frantically through the tall grass, the electro-acoustic sounds of bird coos are heard, overlaid with an electronic reverberated wash that produces an overall surreal audio effect, coupled with the diegetic sound of the wind blowing through the susuki grass. Ambiguity is again created by the sound of the birds, which could be described as part of the diegesis in this natural setting. However, besides the fact that it is the dead of night, the electronic wash that overlays the bird calls almost gives it a meta-diegetic presence, as the sounds match the movement of the female's frantic motion as she runs, scoring her arousal and lust as she flees towards her lover. The audio-viewer enters into her subjectivity through the framing of the sound. This is one example of how sound design of the external natural elements in the film dominates the soundtrack, entering into the meta-diegetic or what Stilwell describes as 'a kind of musical "direct address".' [182] This challenging of the classical hierarchy of soundtrack is observed by David Nicholas Buck, who, commenting on the standard hierarchy of sound in a film being the voice, sound effect and music in that order highlights that '[i]n *Onibaba*, the use of extended shots without human presence foregrounds sound as a vital component in this landscape experience.' [183]

[182] Stilwell, 'The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic', 197.
[183] David Nicholas Buck, *A Musicology Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2017), 82.

Figure 4. The daughter running through the susuki grass.

The Japanese pluralistic worldview assumes the co-existence of the human world and nature

with the spirit realm. This reinforces the key concept of exclusion/inclusion of the supernatural in

social reality. This pluralism is reflected in the approaches Japanese filmmakers took when adapting

ghost stories into film, preserving the naturalistic attitude towards unnatural entities, primarily through

the scoring approaches. Discussing the work of Takemitsu, Gianmario Borio observes how '[t]here

have always been composers who have nurtured their creativity by exploiting elements drawn from the

other arts, the sciences, or indeed domains of experience which apparently have little to do with

music.' [184] Takemitsu was a composer who showed affinities with experimental music, the avant-

garde, and the use of real sounds, resulting in a naturalistic alternative approach to composition that

resisted hegemonic American-style film scoring practice. His cinematic ideas were 'based on the

primacy of what was happening on the screen, making it possible to create specific soundscapes in

which music can be combined with sounds, voices, and noise,' [185] and thus, demonstrating the blurring

of boundaries between sound-design and music, while highlighting this unique Japanese film

soundscape. Takemitsu's score for Teshigahara Hiroshi's films demonstrates this.

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[184] Gianmario Borio, 'Foreward' in *Music Facing Up To Silence. Writings on Tōru Takemitsu*, Gianmario Borio and Lucinana Galliano (eds.), (Pavia: Pavia University Press, 2010), 105.
[185] Roberto Calabretto, 'Takemitsu's Film Music', *Music Facing Up to Silence. Writings on Tōru Takemitsu*, Gianmario Borio and Luciana Galliano (eds.), (Pavia: Pavia University Press, 2010), 180.

1.6.1 Experimental approaches

Teshigahara's *Otoshiana, (Pitfall*, 1962) delivers an unusual avant-garde ghost narrative focused on the dead wandering amongst the living. The title's double meaning leads the audio-viewer into the story of unexplained murders in a mining community. While the victims reappear throughout the film in incorporeal form, they observe the action around them and try to find out why they were murdered, sadly failing to find any answers. Teshigahara adopted more of a modernist approach to his work, described as not providing a uniquely 'Japanese' aesthetic. This conception was also reflected in Takemitsu's score for the film. However, the principal audience was intended to be Japanese. Both director and composer worked to bring the international avant-garde into a Japanese production that tied the supernatural to the social realism of exploitation, political critique, and allegory wrapped up in a conspiracy thriller that Teshigahara described as 'documentary fantasy'.

Otoshiana was made around a time of rapid economic growth in Japan that had built up to an advanced stage of industrialisation. However, this rapid modernization resulted in a social crisis of urban alienation, with people feeling a sense of spiritual emptiness and isolation. The film music score for *Otoshiana* responds to these social issues by drawing upon several dichotomies between tradition and modernity, national and universal, society and individualism, which engages 'in a dynamic, interactive process of cultural creolization'. [186] Any non-Japanese artistic influence that inspired Takemitsu's musical direction for the film was refracted by constructing a new identity that could still be described as Japanese. In *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, Takemitsu wrote, 'I am not a composer who represents Japan, not even a "Japanese" composer. Born and raised in Japan, aware that I am influenced by its culture, even as I try to free myself from that influence, at the same time I am fully aware that is impossible.' [187]

Artistic influence beyond Japan is recognisable from Takemitsu's membership with an avant-garde interdisciplinary artistic collective in 1951 called *Jikken Kōbō* (Experimental Laboratory/Workshop), of which he was one of the founding members. The group, active in Tokyo

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[186] Thomas R. H. Havens, *Radicals and Realists in the Japanese Nonverbal Arts* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 2.
[187] Takemitsu Tōru, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, Kakudo Yoshiko, and Glenn Glasow (eds., trans.), (Berkeley, California: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), 142.

until 1958, was comprised of composers, an engineer, a lighting designer, piano player, music critic, poet, set designers, and photographers interested in pre-war European and American avant-gardes. In particular, they exemplified the post-war Japanese reception of the Bauthausian philosophy of unified art, borrowing an idea from composer Richard Wagner called *gesamtkunstwerk,* or "synthesis of the arts*".* The aim of their manifesto *Jikken Kōbō to Takiguchi Shūzō,* which was written in the summer of 1951 by Shōzō Kitadai, but never published, was to 'synthesize/integrate/consolidate [sōgō] the various disciplines of art […] to create a new form of art with social relevance closely tied to daily life.' [188]

The group's spiritual leader, Taguchi Shūzō, encouraged members to reject the pursuit of idioms, methods or trends and create with their own sensitivity. Writing on the influences of Takemitsu's early music in postwar Japan, Deguchi Tomoko observes how '[t]he Japanese composers of the postwar generation were no longer concerned with mere imitations of European music; instead they searched for their own voices amid the sudden surge of diverse compositional approaches that poured in from the West. Takemitsu's generation initiated the development of their voices as composers of Japan.' [189] As well as an admiration of Western culture, Takemitsu was also influenced by composer Hayasaka Fumio. The latter had his own ideas about new forms of music in Japan that could compete with the Western tradition. Deguchi references an interview Hayasaka had with music journalist Miura Atsushi in 1954:

> Here Hayasaka summarizes his belief to instantiate the Japanese qualities into compositions. By Japanese quality, he did not refer to the pre- and inter-war techniques of referring to Japanese arts, locations, or tunes in the compositions, but to search for the simple, primitive beauty, on which the Japanese culture was founded and developed. [190]

Hayasaka's idea to retain Japanese sensibilities in postwar concert music influenced and is reflected in Takemitsu's compositional output and produced something distinctly unique when it came

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[188] Shōzō Kitadai, quoted in Miryam Sas, 'Intermedia 1955-1970' in *Tokyo, 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde*, Chong Doryun, Hayashi Michio, Yoshitake Mika, and Miryam Sas (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 95.
[189] Deguchi Tomoko, 'Tōru Takemitsu's "Spherical Mirror:" The Influences of Shūzo Takiguchi and Fumio Hayasaka on his Early Music in Postwar Japan', *Athens Journal of Humanities and Arts* X/Y (October 2019): 310.
[190] *Ibid.*, 12.

to his film scores, which delivered a co-existence of musical influences that retained an unmistakable Japanese quality, such as that for *Otoshiana*. Director Teshigahara respected Takemitsu's creative instincts, and the composer respected Teshigahara's ideas, too, mainly when composing the right aural counterpart for *Otoshiana*'s visuals. In her thesis on the politics and aesthetics of haunting in 1950s Japan, Darcy Gauthier notes how the film's collaboration is one of synchronicity between screenplay writer, director and composer, created through difference and dissonance:

> Abe, Teshigahara, and Takemitsu, modeled the intermediation and collaboration of *Pitfall* on a kind of musical 'counterpoint,' an auditory expression of dialectical relation that encapsulated the film's inter-relations between sound, image, and text—and, to extend the metaphor, between each of the creative subjects involved in the film's production: screenplay-writer, director, composer, as well as actors, musicians, instrumentation (most notably the film's prepared and unpredictable pianos), and other agents working together in synchronization while nonetheless providing their own contingent and unexpected elements to the film. [191]

For example, there is a disjuncture between the use of the American-rooted modern compositional techniques and the Japanese sensibility Takemitsu adopts in the film score that delivers a counterpoint that relates to the location and dislocation of the ghosts as a form of disruption, mainly when it speaks to us, the audio-viewers of its presence. The score as one of the elements that produce a counterpoint of synchronized differences expresses the film's concerns, 'namely the simultaneous displacement and consolidation of the working-class subjects of the film into postwar capitalist Japan.' [192] Abe, Teshigahara and Takemitsu all shared a common ethos in delivering the film's message. They all wished to decentralise the film's visual register and focus on the audio, which also delivers a form of counterpoint through the relationship between the film's visuals and sounds.

Otoshiana was adapted from a radio play, so with sound effects being at the fore of this media, the same principle also governed the film's approach to sound and music. Abe wrote an essay that theorized this counterpoint between image and sound in the film as totality produced not by a

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[191] Darcy Gauthier, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Haunting in 1950s Japan' (Ph.D. diss., Univeristy of Toronto, 2020), 43.
[192] *Ibid*., 43.

complementary relationship but one of tension and that the mimetic function of sound in film should be rejected. Darcy Gauthier writes about Abe's essay titled '*Heikōsen no aru fūkei*' (*Landscape with Parallel Lines*) and discusses how Abe's idea that '"only the sound of wind from beginning to end"' [193] in *Otoshiana* 'inverts the typical audiovisual hierarchy that places emphasis on the image.' [194] She then brings attention to Abe's criticism of another essay written by Ōtani Shinpei '"*Otoshiana' no onsei to katarite no 'konseki'*" (*The 'Trace' of the Narrator and Sound Direction in Pitfall*), highlighting how Abe felt that Ōtani's comments on the wind as a symbol of emptiness and fear that auditorily brought together disassociated subjects in the film such as the miners, ghosts, children etc. were too generalized despite bringing attention to how sound connects the disparate film subjects. Writing on this, Gauthier observes explicitly how:

> Abe argues that the film's soundscape, including the sound of the wind, is part of the film's "background" (*haikei*), and to treat this background as mere window dressing—a banal, homogeneous "whooshing" of wind—robs the background of its specificity, transforms it into an abstraction that is divorced from the particular, concrete reality of the film's setting and characters, the mining villages and their occupant. [195]

Instead, Abe concludes that 'the wind is part of the particular material-historical context of the film, a sound that emerges from and shapes the landscape of the mining villages.' [196]

Takemitsu's minimalist score for *Otoshiana* was well suited to the visuals of impoverished towns and the despondency of those exploited in the coal mining trade, as portrayed by the actual documentary footage used in the film. The dissonant chords of the two amplified prepared pianos heard in conjunction with the harpsichord throughout the film creates a sense of ambiguity, not just in terms of the plot's lack of resolution, but in the marriage of audio and visual. Takemitsu's aim with the score was to '"reduce music to sound (Takemitsu 1962: 15), foregrounding the apparatus in its materiality.' [197] Therefore, the audio-viewer could not be sutured by the score nor absorbed into the film world because of this experimental composition between sound effects and an abstract musical

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[193] Gauthier, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Haunting in 1950s Japan', 179.
[194] *Ibid.*, 1
[195] *Ibid.*, 180.
[196] *Ibid.*, 180.
[197] *Ibid.*, 187.

score that challenged audio-visual synchronization and the dominant classical scoring models. As Gauthier notes, "Reducing music to sound" has the effect of disrupting the transparency of the instrument in the act of performance, and transforms the musical apparatus into something present in the film, bringing the film's structure into the film as *content*.' [198] Takemitsu, like Abe, foregrounded the role of music in film, inverting the audio-visual hierarchy championed by classical Hollywood scoring conventions, famously stating, 'I often think of movies in terms of problems in sound.' [199] The earlier description of 'marriage' between audio and image is relevant because, despite the de-synchronization of sound in the film producing a kind of counterpoint, it does so in favour of the film as a whole, producing a kind of harmony. Gauthier writes extensively on Takemitsu's ideas of counterpoint as a 'harmony' are produced through difference in the film:

> *Pitfall's* soundtrack is relentlessly jarring, yet in a way that *punctuates as well as punctuates* what appears on screen. The first 'music' heard in *Pitfall*, as the miner and his son flee at night from a mine, does not simply 'accompany' or 'complement' the scene as an incidental, unobtrusive, indifferent musical backdrop, but punctuates it suddenly and forcefully – a quick, loud grunting noise of a string being rasped (piano strings being manipulated directly by Takemitsu) followed by several more bursts, interspersed at unpredictable intervals between periods of extended silence. [200]

Sonic punctuation also comes in the form of extra-diegetic sounds, including the rasping of the piano mentioned above and strings that are disassociated from the onscreen visuals. There is also a notable absence of diegetic sounds, such as in the case of the example referenced above; there are no diegetic sounds of footsteps heard when the miner and his son flee. This rupture in the mimetic association between audio and visual contrasts with the mimetic function of the Hollywood classical score. Gauthier draws attention to Shinpei Ōtani's observation that we do not hear the footsteps of the ghosts in *Otoshiana*, demonstrating how sound is used to emphasise the separation of the world of the ghosts from the living. Gauthier notes one important exception observed by Ōtani that 'in the first scene (and the last scene where the miner's son flees alone) it is the footsteps of the living that are

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[198] Gauthier, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Haunting in 1950s Japan', 187.
[199] Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, 36.
[200] Gauthier, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Haunting in 1950s Japan', 186.

absent. Rather than the absolute dissociation of the world of ghosts from that of the living, the lack of footsteps in the first scene establishes an association between the two.' [201] Gauthier again reinforces how synthesis is produced through the disconnection between audio and visual, which elevates the film's meaning as the audio-visual relationship 'mirrored the material contradictions of the film's ghostly subjects. Music was complicit with images in revealing a "more essential contradiction," one that is analogous to the ghostliness of modern capitalist labour in post-war Japan. [202] What Takemitsu wanted to achieve with this soundtrack reflected the methodology of the avant-garde in the 1950s which 'framed totality or *sōgō* as a tension between difference and identification.' [203]

The counterpoint between image and sound, in the Eisenteinian sense, was also used to suggest an internal disjuncture between nature and humanity that demonstrates the deconstruction of traditional Hollywood scoring practices by questioning whether the visual is the principal carrier of the narrative. This aligns with the role of the *benshi* in Japanese cinema discussed earlier in this chapter, and their relationship with the visual, bringing different interpretations, and creating a possible counterpoint, to what is being shown on screen, which also may generate the question of to what extent they are the principal carrier of the narrative. In the scene where the assassin visits the shopkeeper, informing her that he expects cooperation after she witnesses him murdering the miner, the camera cuts to a static image of a hill as the sun and clouds move across it. The assassin's voice carries over the image as he instructs the shopkeeper of what to say, accompanied by a low, mechanic rumble, mimicking the sound of the coal trucks rumbling along the steel tracks. The camera then cuts back to a close-up side profile shot of the assassin sitting in silence, asking 'Got it all?' before leaving. The achievement of this artistic uncoupling of sound and image reminds the audio-viewer of the indifference of nature, so important in Japanese culture, and the callous cruelty of human action that runs throughout the film. As Gauthier highlights: The "fear" the soundtrack expresses is therefore not an abstract form of 'existential angst' but rather an anxiety inherent to the experience of mining labourers who are themselves, just like ghosts, both *a part of and apart from* postwar Japan.' [204] The experimental scoring approach through *Otoshiana*'s alternative inter-play between sound, image and

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[201] Gauthier, 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Haunting in 1950s Japan', 186-187.
[202] *Ibid*., 188.
[203] *Ibid*., 189.
[204] *Ibid*., 189.

text to deliver a powerful social critique via its ghostly subjects challenges the classical audio-visual hierarchy of sound.

Figure 5. The assassin's voice carries over the static mountain image.

Similarly, Kobayashi Masaki's 1964 film anthology *Kwaidan* is also described as a celebration of rupture in audio-visual synchronisation, drawing attention to sonority and presenting the ghostly through ambiguous sound design. Takemitsu's scoring approach was again reflective of his resistance to the idea that music has a single, generic function. Takemitsu's views on counterpoint as highlighted above through the example of his earlier score for *Otoshiana* align with Michel Chion's description of 'true *free counterpoint*' in which sound and image as loosely connected but independent tracks come together simultaneously to create a new layer of meaning, elevating the image. Made up of four episodes, *Kwaidan* is based on Lafcadio Hearn's literary stories compiled in the early 20th century and derived from traditional Japanese ghost stories. [205] The film score uses audio-visual disjuncture to create an atmosphere of terror effectively: '[t]he edits of the visuals seem to refute any temporal relationship with the sonic events of the score. The visuals and the music neither heed nor observe the other: they coexist.' [206] Therefore, the score could also be read as an example of Takemitsu's counterpoint between sound and image that is delivered as a dialogue to produce a new layer of meaning in the visuals.

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[205] Lafcadio Hearn's approach to folklore has been at the forefront of studies and 'placed Japanese traditions in a global context.' See Bill Ellis, 'The Haunted Asian Landscapes of Lafcadio Hearn' in *Putting the Supernatural in Its Place: Folklore, the Hypermodern, and the Ethereal*, Jeannie Banks Thomas (ed.), (Utah: University of Utah Press, 2015), 192-220. Lafcadio Hearn's writings include *Glimpses of an Unfamiliar Japan: First Series* [1894], *In Ghostly Japan* (1899), *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things* [1903] 1971.

[206] Philip Brophy, 'How Sound Floats on Land: The Suppression and Release of Folk and Indigenous Musics in the Cinematic Terrain' in *Beyond The Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema,* Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert (eds.), (London and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 144.

In *Kwaidan,* the audio-visual interaction mirrors cultural and societal beliefs about the

supernatural world coexisting with the living world. Takemitsu's score emphasises an other-worldly,

inhuman quality throughout all four film episodes. Music and sound are carefully used to heighten the

cultural significance of the stories being told. Richard N. Tucker's description of the film's symbolism

presents a description of *Kwaidan's* portrayal of typical motifs of Japanese culture:

> Recognizing that at the base of all good ghost stories lies a foundation of psychological
>
> reality, Kobayashi does not conduct a search for resounding statements on the human
>
> condition. Two of these stories contain the love between the living and the dead that is found
>
> in many Japanese films, presented in the normal manner with subtle indications rather than
>
> clearly announcing the fact. Kobayashi sets his stories in a mysterious world- half theatrical
>
> and half realistic. [207]

Kwaidan's supernatural world is exemplified by resisting the restrictions of realism, both

visually and audibly. Mimicking reality is achieved by delivering the film as a staged production. The

lighting is theatrical, especially when a single spotlight is used to highlight a single character, object,

or parts of a darkened set, and deep focus photography is used to minimize the effect of perspective,

replicating a traditional *ukiyo-e* print. The anthology also borrows from the bunraku (puppet theatre)

tradition by adopting an off-screen voice 'much like the *tayū,* who recites all of the character's lines

and comments on the action, or the *benshi*. The effect is to heighten the sense of unreality and

increase the feeling that a story is being told […] thus linking it strongly to the tradition of

hykaumonogatari kaidankai.' [208]

The themes of *Kwaidan's* four stories emphasise the importance of honour and the sanctity of

the oath. Kobayashi's exploration of the juxtaposition between man's material nature and spiritual

nature [209] is presented through visuals that evoke the myths and folklore that express a Japanese

sensibility while reinforcing the irrational through abstract sound design. *Kwaidan's* title sequence is

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[207] Richard N. Tucker, *Japan: Film image* (London: Studio Vista, 1973), 110.
[208] Petty, 'Stage and Scream', 99. *Hykaumonogatari kaidankai* roughly translates as *A Gathering of 100 Weird Tales*. A popular ghost story game that grew in popularity during the Edo period and involved blowing out a candle every time a scary story was told until the final candle was extinguished, releasing a supernatural presence.
[209] As stated in an interview in 1972 with scholar Joan Mellen.

presented in an abstract manner, mirroring the uncanny nature of its stories that follow, as shots of different coloured ink are shown being dropped into a swirling expanse, like paint brushes being dipped in water. These shots are intercut with the credits of the four films in the kanji alphabet, adding momentum to the visual track. The transformative visuals of the ink swirls are contrasted sonically in the title sequence, which, except for the crackling of the audio lead, runs virtually in silence except for the chimes of a small metallic gong. Two chimes are heard at various moments on the soundtrack, left to resound until they naturally fade out, with no set musical structure. The formal continuity of the classical score is lost here, and a rhythmic elasticity exists that seems to float along in asynchronous placement.

There is a moment of synchronization in the opening credits between the image and the soundtrack – when the swirl of red ink is synchronised with the first chime, and the realms of the supernatural and the human briefly touch. This floating aspect in *Kwaidan's* opening credits is in the form of a subtle musical leap from the first strike of the chime that then ascends up a perfect fourth and remains there as the sound is slowly allowed to decay, lingering amongst the transparent, soft, organic shapes that form in the water. This recalls the aesthetics of a single sound which scholar Shimosako Mari notes when she describes how, in practice, 'the Japanese first enjoy the unique timbre of a single sound and then enjoy ma, the "space" created after it.' [210] This concept is utilised through cue delays that are seconds apart, forming a disquieting harmony through disunity. It also creates an ambience of a parallelism with the supernatural world of the film and the living that is read over the course of *Kwaidan* to foreshadow its exploration of ghostly terror crossing over into the human world. This is another example of how sound draws attention to the porous boundaries between the living and the dead as explored across this thesis. This singular treatment of audio is also coupled with the use of electronic sounds throughout the film, challenging conventional Western scoring techniques:

In *Kwaidan*, I wanted to create an atmosphere of terror. But if the music is constantly saying, 'Watch out! Be scared!' then all the tension is lost. It's like sneaking behind someone to scare them. First, you have to be silent. Even a single sound can be film music. Here [in the episode *The Black Hair*], I wanted all sound to have the quality of wood. We used real wood for

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[210] Shimosako, Mari, 'Philosophy and aesthetics', *The Garland encyclopaedia of world music Vol. 7*, R.C. Tokumaru Provine, Y. and J.L. Witzleben (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2002), 552.

effects. I'd ask for a 'cr-a-a-a-ck' sound, and they'd split the wood, or rip it apart, or rend it with a knife. Using all these wood sounds, I assembled the track. [211]

Takemitsu's use of recorded acoustic sounds elaborated with experimental music techniques draws similarities with Pierre Schaeffer's exploration of the shifts between noise and sound and the level of meaning that using an object in this way can acquire. However, there is a far more culturally-embedded treatment of the soundscape in Takemitsu's scoring, as timbral transformations were used to create distinct sound effects that highlighted a specific cultural sensitivity. Throughout all four episodes of *Kwaidan,* different aural typologies are at work that offer alternative non-Hollywood scoring practice: In *The Black Hair*, there is the combination of real and electronically elaborated sounds and prepared piano. This produces a dialect in which single, isolated sounds reflect the character's moral dilemma and state of mind. The other articulated sounds are dynamic, mirroring the uncontrollable world of the supernatural forces at play. This is particularly the case in *Yuki-Onna* (*The Woman In The Snow*) which tells the tale of a traditional female *yūrei* figure who finds an old woodcutter and his mentor sheltering from a snow storm. Sucking the life out of the older man, she spares the younger, warning him never to tell of their meeting, but returns to him in disguise after falling in love with him and later disappearing as he breaks his vow. [212] In this episode, there is more of an emphasis on acoustic instrumental sound that captures the snow woman's chilling representation. Musical arrangements are electronically treated, with traditional instrumentation metamorphosed to describe natural phenomena in a unique manner. The sounds of the *shakuhachi* are manipulated and stretched, coupled with wordless vocals played in slow motion to capture the ambience of the haunting

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[211] Takemitsu Tōru. Dialogue. (00:31:18). *Music for the Movies: Toru Takemitsu*. Dir. Charlotte Zwerin. Sony BMG, 1994, DVD.

[212] Zack Davisson notes that a translation of *yūrei* as 'Japanese ghost' is imprecise. '*Yūrei* are entirely different creatures than what the Western world knows as ghosts. The Japanese language can even separate the two, using kanji 幽霊 for *yūrei* and the Westernized [katakana] ゴースト for ghosts.' *Yūrei* can be interpreted as a ghost classification, much more specific than a Western interpretation of a ghost. They are a spirit of the dead that is a distinct creature of folklore. As Zack Davisson highlights, 'folkloric definitions change over time.' Davisson, '*Yūrei*, Ghosts & Yōkai: A Chat with Zack Davisson | Japan Station 50', Podcast from Japan Station: A Podcast about Japan by Japankyo.com, [15 October 2020], (https://www.japankyo.com/2020/10/about-yurei/, 25 October 2021 Time Stamp: 39:00).
There are several alternative names for the *yūrei* as well as other names existing for specific variations. The three prominent alternative names for *yūrei* are: *Bōrei* 亡 (departed) +霊 (spirit), *obake/bakemono* お化け (changing) + 物 (thing) and *shiryō* 死 (dead) + 霊 (spirit). See Davisson, *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost*, 2015. Davisson provides a full glossary of ghosts and spiritual beings in his publication in pages 213-216.

snowstorm summoned by the ghost. The distinct culturally encoded sonic haunting of Takemitsu's score challenges hegemonic Hollywood scoring practices and its critical approaches through *Kwaidan's* ambiguous audio-visual interaction that parallels the ambiguous interactions of the world of the living and the dead in Japanese cultural belief.

In *Hoichi the Earless*, instrumental music dominates the soundscape, and the performance aspect takes up the central plot development providing a culturally encoded soundscape based around the *biwa* and its blind player, Hoichi. Charged with playing the ballad of the battle of *Dan-no-Ura*, Hoichi is unaware that those who command him to perform are the very ghosts of those who fought and died there. The resonance of the *biwa* pertains to the traditional noh drama *Genjo*, which featured a *biwa* player performing for spirits. However, adapted for the film, it is re-elaborated electronically, 'creating a dialectic between real and re-elaborated sound which injects considerable drama into the musical score.' [213] The noh drama is also alluded to with the sounds of noh vocal interjections of 'You, Ya—a, Yo—'; 'Ha--, Ho, Ho—'; 'Iya--, Iyo—,' used here as an audio reminder of the half-theatricality Kobayashi's anthology delivers.

The final episode, *In A Cup Of Tea,* presents a significantly reduced sonic palette with the sounds of *shamisen* and vocal interjections placed carefully in the score. Amplified diegetic sounds are heard throughout, with the technique of cutting sounds from the visuals, mimicking the appearances and disappearances of the ghosts onscreen. This technique involves splicing and editing sounds, transforming the audio-visual relationship into a broken tapestry. *In A Cup Of Tea*, the deliberate cutting of audio also reflects the narrator's opening words about certain fragments of fiction left unfinished in old Japanese books. Where old narratives break off, music and sound do the same, presenting juxtaposition – the use of natural sound treated unnaturally.

This unique sound practice could also be identified in films of the 1960s that used more traditional Japanese musical material. In Nobuo Nakagawa's 1968 film *Kaidan hebi onna* (*Snake Woman's Curse*), the spirits of a mother and daughter seek revenge on their greedy landlord and his son, who raped the daughter, and they wish to avenge their husband/father's death. This vengeance at

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[213] Calabretto, 'Takemitsu's Film Music', 193.

the hands of the women as they become *obake* [214] is seen as a reaction to the threat of rupturing the ties of the family household. In *Kaidan hebi onna,* the soundtrack is dominated by song, connected to the home and maternal ties of the visuals and supernatural presence of the many shots of snakes shown slithering over the ruins of the family home. [215]

The use of folk songs in *Kaidan hebi onna*, mainly sung by women, produce a unique form of sonic haunting, made up of the voices of the oppressed, both living and deceased. In the scene in which the daughter is introduced to her new post as a weaver for the landlord to pay back her deceased father's debt, the audio-viewer is introduced to the weary sounds of the weaving wheels. These are paired with the forlorn non-diegetic sounds of women's vocals and accompanied by high strings in unison, emphasising the social struggle of the women's labour: 'Whatever the weather, I keep weaving….' A lantern is lit in the scene, a reminder of the long work hours: 'Weaving women don't sleep,' followed by 'If you work hard, you can endure shortage and discomfort'. The context of the heavy use of song in the film is rooted in its setting, as rural songs of various sorts were 'the voice of the people and the land,' [216] described in ancient native terms as a 'ditty' or *uta,* meaning 'song', and more specifically as folk songs called *minyo*. The opening non-diegetic narration of the film describes the long years of feudalism and the lack of intercommunication that is maintained in this image of an older Japanese tradition, one of social isolation in which the rights of the people remained muted except through the release of song. The rich tradition of Japanese folk music in the film is reinforced so that various haunting performances deliver a nostalgia that mirrors the setting, cut off like a ghost town where only the spirits' vengeance offers consolation. While different from Takemitsu's experimentalism with electronic and acousmatic instrumentation, the score for *Kaidan hebi onna* also incorporates traditional Japanese folklore to deliver a distinct culturally encoded film score that challenges dominant Hollywood scoring practices.

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[214] *Obake/Bakemono* お化け (changing) ＋ 物 (thing): The terms translate to something closer to supernatural creatures. *Obake* and *bakemono* use the kanji 化 (*bakeru*), which carries the meaning of 'to adopt a disguise or change form.' However, the implication is to change to something for the worse. See Davisson, *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost,* 2015.

[215] In Japan snakes are regarded as creatures with supernatural powers and it is believed that *aodaishō*, a large snake resides in older homes in Japan, perceived to be the guardian snake of the home.

[216] David Hughes, '"Japanese New Folk Songs," Old and New', *Asian Music* 22.1 (Autumn, 1990-Winter 1991): 2.

1.7 A mix of pop and underscoring mythical tradition in the Japanese 'ghost' films of the 1970s and 80s

A unique Japanese conception of nostalgia is created in Japanese 'ghost' films using pop songs such as those in the score of Obayashi Nobuhiko's *Hausu* (*House*, 1977). A director of experimental films and television commercials, Obayashi produced a psychedelic hyper-cinematic ghost story about a house that literally consumes a group of visiting schoolgirls who join their friend on what is supposed to be a summer vacation trip to her maternal aunt's house. The playful collage of editing techniques creates the exciting energy of a television advertisement, mixing a wide range of media with a hyper-experimental approach to sound that emphasises surreal sonic landscapes. The film was commissioned by Toho Studies, who wanted to make a Japanese film that replicated the same success of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* to challenge the dominance of US cinema in the Japanese film market, especially with the release of one of Hollywood's first blockbuster motion pictures. Obayashi was hired, but the director produced a ghost film that parodied commercial Hollywood cinema film's aesthetic and narrative tropes, mainly through *Hausu's* abandonment of realism. The film draws attention to its artifice from the very start, not ostensibly through political motivation, but to highlight the potential of moving away from Hollywood classical filmmaking conventions. This is the message from the film's opening titles which announce that it is 'A Movie'. The self-referential nature of *Hausu* stood out in its subversion of the classical Hollywood approach of *Jaws,* and its score was a crucial part of this non-Hollywood approach though this was achieved by actually incorporating a key classical scoring trope: the *Hausu* leitmotif, introduced after the appearance of the film's title cards. First played on the piano, the melody opens with two bars of an ostinato with octave leaps from D6 to D7. The leitmotif enters underneath the ostinato with a nine-bar diatonic melody in G major also played on the piano in the treble clef range.

After this initial opening melody incorporating the leitmotif, it shifts into an arrangement typically heard in a vaudeville or funfair setting, with woodwind cues, ragtime piano and an upbeat drum rhythm. This melody develops further into a heavily synthesised variation with electric guitar and clapping machine before cutting off to the original ostinato and the ragtime piano playing the solo melody. A final conflicting piano melody is then heard fading into the soundtrack and overtaking the original melody with its discordant notes. The leitmotif is heard in various permutations

approximately twenty times throughout the film. In his article on *Hausu* Drew Byrd notes the evolving role of the leitmotif in the film:

> It's initially used as a malleable, expressionistic representation of how the girls are feeling at any point in time, often warm and jovial with a strongly nostalgic character. At the halfway point, however, the leitmotif enters the film's diegesis in the form of a music box, changing from an emotional signpost into an icon of wartime grief. Its appearance signals a turn in both the girls' understanding of their dire circumstances and the viewer's understanding of how *House* uses music to create a false sense of comfort. [217]

The film's soundtrack was completed a year before *Hausu* was shot, which stands out from the traditional Hollywood approach in which the musical ideas and leitmotifs would primarily be composed inspired by the visual source of the film. In a 2010 documentary on the making of the film, *Constructing a House*, Obayashi noted that the actresses: 'belonged to a younger generation that found it easier to express emotion through chords, melodies, and rhythms than through words. So instead of talking, I decided to use music to direct their movements.' [218] This also highlights how the use of leitmotif and its classical thematic associations are distorted in *Hausu,* challenging the primacy of visuals. The use of leitmotifs also significantly works to negate realism as they are used in such a fantastical way throughout the film, creating a feeling of false comfort. For example, after the auntie feeds on Mac and Sweetie appears to have disappeared, presumed to be the auntie's second victim, the leitmotif is heard played by a saxophone with piano accompaniment and a synthesised recorder/whistle playing a sequential three-note pattern as the auntie dances around. She disappears into the fridge only when Fantasy is looking and playfully torments the girl in the sequence, including breaking the fourth wall of cinema as the auntie smiles directly at the camera. The sequence continues with the exact arrangement of the leitmotif as the auntie appears to jump onto the wooden ceiling beams, dances with a skeleton and is then shown eating Mac's hand on a dinner plate, playfully humming the leitmotif as she appears to bring a goldfish to life too. The fantastical continues through

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[217] Drew Byrd, 'Love, Lies and Leitmotifs: *House* (1977)" in *Bright Wall/Dark Room* Issue 92: Redux (February 2021): Para 4, (https://www.brightwalldarkroom.com/2021/02/05/love-lies-and-leitmotifs-house-1977/, 4 October 2021).

[218] Obayashi Nobuhiko in 'Constructing a House (*Hausu*, 1977)'. Dir. Mark Walkow. 2010. *YouTube,* uploaded by Audiovisual Rescue, 25 April 2021, (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98wTroAWsIs&t=1376s, 4 October 2021).

the music as Blanche the cat jumps onto the piano and, with the use of camera editing moving backwards and forwards across the keys appearing to meow the leitmotif in an off-key effect with added pitch-bending effects over the synthesised meowing. This exaggerated use of the leitmotif in the film at this point is just one of many surreal audio-visual moments that highlight the distortion of reality throughout the film.

Figure 6. Auntie's smile at the camera breaks the fourth wall of cinema.

Hausu focuses on the passage of emotional trauma crossing from one generation to the next, over an examination of the human condition. As seen in earlier film examples, Obayashi continued to present a world of animism and focuses on Japanese folklore in the form of the *kaibyō*, a more accurate term used in folklore for Japan's supernatural cats and classified as *henge*, meaning 'transformed animals.' [219] The term *bakeneko* is translated as 'changing cat' [220] and is used for the mysterious cat that has the ability to change shape, transform and is a more general term for a paranormal cat. In *Hausu,* Blanche the cat almost seems to manipulate the horror that unfolds, and her transformation into a deadly portrait that shoots blood from her mouth, enough to fill a room, is one example of Obayashi's production of sensory overload:

> Many of his subsequent works intercut hand-drawn and collage animation with live-action
>
> footage in various formats (often referencing early cinema techniques, like iris-effects).

[219] Zack Davisson, *Kaibyō: The Supernatural Cats of Japan* (Seattle and Portland: Chin Music Press and Mercuria Press, 2017), 31.
[220] *Ibid.*, 33.

Obayashi makes full use of these juxtapositions in *House*, with its fluid mix of stylized sets, painted backdrops, monochrome and tinted film, and occasional dips into animation. [221]

Hausu is unusual in that it is both the visuals and audio that dominate in their transformative abilities. Chuck Stephens notes:

> [T]he virtually limitless visual variations and sound design fever schemes (cocks crowing, babies wailing, piano glissandi and thunderous waves crashing on an unseen shore) with which he transforms the story's traditional elements (which go beyond those bakemono/kaibyo components to include, among other things, various evocations of ukiyo-e illustration master Hokusai's famous ghost-headed Oiwa lantern). [222]

The animism rooted in Japanese supernatural beliefs is explored through layers of exaggerated scoring practices. Reverberation, echoes and electronic sound effects are taken full advantage of in the film, with phantom-like vocal effects added to the girls' dialogue as they explore the haunted house. The electronically manipulated chorus of youthful voices is joined by a multitude of moaning vocal effects and laughter from the house itself.

These acoustic shifts are used to link the present and the past as the once mournful aunt who waits for the lover that never returned from war uses her niece as a connection to the vitality she once had. This results in her unleashing 'the revenge of haunted family history upon those urbanities who mistakenly believe they can shake free of the past.' [223] This is best exemplified in the moments of conversation Oshare/Gorgeous shares with her aunt. The recorded dialogue between the pair is delivered in such an intimate way that ambient sound is muted, isolating the voices in some kind of telepathic communication, even when the other girls are present in the scene. A terrifying form of sentimentalism is formed through this connection, as despite the monstrous nature of the aunt's appetite for girls of marriageable age, she also has an interest in youthful romanticism. A former piano teacher, the aunt and her house seem to be governed by a romantic piano theme variation of the leitmotif called *In The Evening Mist* that is heard both diegetically and non-diegetically throughout the

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[221] Paul Roquet, 'Unhinged Desire (At Home with Obayashi)', in *Hausu* DVD booklet, 2009, 21.
[222] Chuck Stephens, '*House*: The Handmaidens' (https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1634-house-the-housemaidens, 20 July, 2016).
[223] Roquet, 'Unhinged Desire (At Home with Obayashi)', 26.

film as a piano arrangement but also in other instrumental arrangements. The aunt's faith in eternal love has consumed her, just as she and the house have an eternal need to feed on the girls' optimism as they move into adulthood and the promises of first loves.

> Obayashi's endeavor to comment on real-life atrocity with the exaggerated stylings of the fantasy genre produces a sort of aesthetic paradox, further heightening the intergenerational tension on display: his grandiose, classical romanticism only works when put in dialogue with a "ghost story" that's really about the destructive urges of humanity annihilating its capacity for love. Although the genre trappings of the film justify nostalgia in G major, they also work to actively repudiate it. [224]

This rejection of nostalgia is particularly noted through the fate of Melody. The musician of the group becomes eagerly engrossed in the diatonic richly sequential tones of the piano theme's 'melody' in G major, the sheet music for which the aunt uses as bait to entice Melody to play. However, as Melody plays for the girls after Mac and Sweetie disappear and Gorgeous, now possessed, seemingly goes to get help, Melody becomes fixed to the piano, her fingers stick to the keys, playing it over and over even when Fantasy tries to shake her out of playing, the melody then falls apart into discordant chaos as the piano literally consumes Melody and with her the romantic nostalgia of the leitmotif she played so beautifully.

Figure 7. Melody is devoured by the piano.

[224] Byrd, 'Love, Lies and Leitmotifs: *House* (1977)' (https://www.brightwalldarkroom.com/2021/02/05/love-lies-and-leitmotifs-house-1977/ , 4 October 2021).

Another piece that does not incorporate the leitmotif is 'Love Theme', a dramatic piano ballad with a psychedelic funk bass lick, rich strings, electric guitar, percussion and melodic synthesized embellishments. Sung in Japanese, with its ever-shifting modulations, it is another example of the pop-dominated score that provides the perfect accompaniment to the film's phantasmagoria of childlike horrors and the culturally specific stylistic elements that may appear surreal to a non-native audience. Other surreal pop songs, realised by Japanese pop-rock group *Godiego* [225], written by lead songwriter Yoshino Micky in collaboration with Kobayashi Asei, were also written for the soundtrack. The stylistically varied soundtrack that includes an eclectic mix ranging from psychedelia, honky-tonk piano, funk bass and boogie-woogie matches with the illusory nature of the film's visuals. Despite the overt influence of 1970s American popular music here, each music excerpt is over the top in its delivery of 70s piano-popular music mixed with an experimental approach, emphasising various musical elements in order to match with the pop culture nightmare of the film's plot that makes it strikingly unique, particularly in the music's rejection of Hollywood realism and the scoring conventions that were used. For example, many of the tracks are doused with a sickly irony and none more so than the song 'Eat', a psychedelic fusion feast of heavily syncopated rhythms heard whenever the house attacks someone and suggests gluttonous devouring in its repetitive guitar licks. Popular music in the film plays an additional role in challenging a convention of Hollywood film scoring, as when the girls meet at the train station to embark on their trip to the countryside, they are shown chatting to the members of the band Godiego. This demonstrates a rupture of invisibility in the classical scoring tradition as the band's song 'Cherries Were Made for Eating' with vocals by Takekawa Yukhide is heard playing in the background.

Japanese musical influence is also evident amongst the American popular music in *Hausu*. One of *Hausu's* soundtrack tracks titled 'Oriental Melon Man' [226] features a funky bass guitar riff and 4/4 rock drum beat throughout on a standard drum kit. However, the melody is produced by two *fue* (traditional Japanese flutes) in counterpoint – the *shakuhachi* and a higher-pitched *fue* melody, most likely a *shinobue*. A wordless chorus of voices is heard throughout chant-like in their drone-like

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[225] Pronounced 'Go-die-go', a nod to the fourteenth century Japanese emperor- Go-Daigo.
[226] The oriental melon is a type of melon cultivated in East Asia also known as Makuwa uri named after the village where it is said to have derived from – the village of Makuwa, today called Motosu City.

delivery. Added snaps of percussion are produced from traditional Japanese drums and what sounds like the wash of a gong strike, also entering sporadically at 2:27, 2:45, at 3:05 and finally 3:09. This cross-cultural mix of instrumentation is a similar example of retaining a Japanese quality to the music that film composer Hayasaka Fumio encouraged, which matches the ghostly folklore elements of *Hausu*. The fantastical combination of American pop music with some Japanese musical influence coupled with *Hausu's* ghostly nostalgia and abandonment of realism, even treating leitmotifs in a fantastical manner, parodies the Hollywood film aesthetic. *Hausu's* self-referential nature stands out in its subversion of the dominant mode of Hollywood filmmaking and its scoring. [227]

1.8 Inaudibility, narrative gaps and the Japanese 'ghost' films of the 1990s

In the 1990s, many Japanese supernatural horror films subverted narrative containment by offering no resolution to the ghostly tales that they told. Instead, the films delivered a dissonance, like an unresolved musical chord with no sense of finality that was matched with alternative approaches to sound design.

Nakata Hideo's teen V-cinema (direct-to-video) [228] 1996 film *Joyū-rei (Ghost Actress/Don't Look Up)* is one example that offers no back story or explanation as to where the film's vengeful ghost emanates from. No resolution is provided as the ghost is shown, still haunting the film set after the final credits. Nakata's film was created using a straight-to-video budget using a heavily synthesised film score approach. The score, dominated by popular music, includes a reoccurring synth melody created from a panpipe timbre and children's voices, with intermittent bursts of tambourine effects. A reggae-influenced synthesised keyboard cue is also heard when a mysterious female figure, the ghost, appears on some old footage that a camera crew discover as they shoot their own film on set. The old footage overrides the present content that is being filmed.

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[227] Nobuhiko Obayashi's 1988 film *Ijintachi tono natsu* (*The Discarnates/Summer Among The Zombies)* also transplants old Japanese folklore into a contemporary setting. He presents an adaptation of the traditional *Botan Dōrō* (The Peony Lantern) ghost folktale in modern-day Tokyo. A clash between the individualisation of modern westernisation and the traditional Japanese family unit is explored through the film's cinematography, storyline, and scoring approach.
[228] V-Cinema, or the direct-to-video industry as it is known was popular in Japan in the 1980s and 90s.

Synthesised percussion effects, manipulated female vocal drones and high-pitched, sustained string synth effects are heard throughout the film, creating a ghostly ambience conventional in many cinematic traditions. However, an element of traditional Japanese music is used in the soundtrack that stands out: the *taiko* beats heard at critical moments. During the film's end credits, *taiko* polyrhythms enter, coupled with the synthetic panpipe music heard earlier as the opening credits rolled and the addition of various percussive effects, with a ghostly electronic drone, also echoes in the background. The use of *taiko* is symbolically paired with the full realisation of the ghost at the end of the film. *Taiko* drums are often used in folk performing arts, rituals and festivals. This includes the annual summer festival of *O-bon* celebrated to honour the spirits of ancestors, a time when families come together around the *butsudan*. [229] The *taiko* rhythm that is most prominent in the finale of the film is the high-pitched *shime-daiko*, suitably placed as non-diegetic accompaniment in the film as *shime-daiko* is commonly used for the backing rhythm in *taiko* ensembles. The propulsion of the beat represents a tradition of *taiko* which was 'occasionally referred to as *yobi-daiko*, meaning to call or summon, and was thought to bring storms.' [230]

This summoning reference can be likened to the strength of the supernatural and the instrumental reckoning that was to establish the female *onryō* in Japanese supernatural horror films such as *Ghost Actress* and many other examples of films from the late 1990s into the new millennium, such as Nakata's *Ringu* (1998). [231] The combination of conventional 'ghost' film sounds effects with traditional Japanese instrumentation in *Joyū-rei (Ghost Actress/Don't Look Up)* was distinctive in the film's low-budget soundtrack, being straight-to-video. This alternative scoring approach was joined by the unique visual iconography of a *yūrei*, a spirit of the dead and distinct creature of Japanese folklore with long black dishevelled hair, pale complexion, wearing a white robe and often with no feet.

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[229] *Butsudan* are Buddhist altars in Japanese households dedicated to the family's ancestors. Mid-August, the family gathers around this altar to commemorate their ancestral spirits and welcome them on their annual return to the living world.

[230] Jane Alaszewska, 'Two beats to a single drum: An analysis of old and new styles of Hachijo-daiko' in *Musiké, International Journal of Ethnomusicological Studies. Special Edition: Analysing East Asian Music. Patterns of rhythm and melody 4,* Simon Mills and Sahlan L. Momo (eds.), (Rome: Semar Publishers, May/December 2008): 4.

[231] Zack Davisson describes the *onryō* as a popular ghost in Japanese horror cinema, defined as 'a ghost who died with some lingering grudge and seeks revenge against those who wronged them.' 215.

Altogether it produced a unique audio-visual whole that offered a culturally distinct haunting Japanese cinematic narrative.

1.8.1 Scoring a Japanese urban legend

Released in 1998, *Ringu* is based around an urban legend that tells of how a female 'other' becomes a destructive force in contemporary society. In the film's opening shots, two friends discuss a myth that has spread across Tokyo concerning a videotape that, once watched, unravels an unstoppable curse. As soon as the tape finishes, the viewer receives a phone call informing them they have one week to live. It becomes apparent that the urban myth is tied up with reality, as a group of friends who watched the tape while on holiday, including Tomoko, one of the girls from the film's opening scene, are all found frightened to death in mysterious circumstances. On discovering Tomoko as the latest victim, Asakawa Reiko, a journalist and aunt to the dead girl, attempts to uncover the mysterious curse surrounding the videotape.

In *Ringu,* sound is used to identify the ghost's presence and is favoured over the visual, implanting traditional Japanese music concepts into the sound design, heightening the cultural significance of the story being told. The amount of non-diegetic scoring heard in the film is minimal, as composer Kawai Kenji was much more conscious of how diegetic sound could be utilised to create innovative sound design that was not necessarily concerned with explaining why the on-screen action was happening, a contrast to the mimetic nature of Hollywood film scoring. He creates a soundtrack in which melody and sound effects are so well integrated that they cannot easily be differentiated. In *Ringu,* environmental sounds heard throughout are juxtaposed with electroacoustic sound effects. This suggests the paralleling of the living natural world through acoustic and diegetic sound, with the supernatural otherness of electroacoustic sound used whenever anything ominous is suggested in the film. These electroacoustic sounds are often paired with synthesised strings, reinforcing the irrational through abstract sound designs.

In the scene in which Reiko is shown entering the cabin reception, asking the receptionist whether he remembers the teenagers' visit, there is a notable lack of sound besides the dialogue of their conversation. As Reiko is shown standing behind the desk waiting for the receptionist in silence, various close-ups show her eyes moving around, as her attention is drawn to a bookcase. Previously

the audio-viewer hears nothing but the environmental swishing sounds of pages being turned as the receptionist checks the bookings. However, the establishment of this still ambient room tone is disturbed in the next shot as high-pitched trilling violins suddenly enter, completely cutting out the diegetic sounds. This sudden burst of sound ruptures the transparency of the film; the metal dissonance delivers a powerful aural assault on the senses, marking a significant juncture in the film. The piercing violins are coupled with, though not necessarily synchronised to, a completely new change of camera angle at this point in the sequence. The point of view shot used here, as Reiko's eye line is followed by a panning shot vertically moving down the bookcase, is mirrored by this conscious use of sound. They build up a crescendo to the point where the camera suddenly cuts to an extreme close-up of a white videotape case protruding on one of the shelves and, again, another sudden blast of a high-pitched sound, this time for a climatic emphasis dominates the soundtrack. While this build-up of sound may seem conventional in alerting the audio-viewer to the deadly content of the videotape, the audio and visuals of the tape are not revealed through any device at this point and so whatever malevolence comes from the tape is powerful enough to challenge Gorbman's inaudibility rule of classical Hollywood scoring. The manipulated scratching sound is almost unbearable to the ears: this electroacoustic effect is metal scratching against metal. This sound effect, doubled up with the equally painful sound of a low drone, covers both high and low registers of the sound spectrum and triggers startle, and disgust responses from the audio-viewer as the tape is first encountered by Reiko.

Figure 8. Reiko's first encounter with the tape.

The grainy effect placed over the close-up shot of the tape suggests a possible flashback; however, Reiko is yet to watch the tape, let alone have a memory connected directly to it. This suggests a possible rupture in the audio track, triggering the question of where the source of this sound is. It cannot be part of the diegetic soundtrack as the receptionist does not react to it, and Reiko has to alert his attention to the tape. However, the expression on her face suggests that she has not just seen the tape, but she has heard it. This leads the audio-viewer to conclude that the sound might belong somewhere on Stilwell's axis of the 'fantastical gap', something that has leapt into Reiko's mind, or, even suggests that the spectral presence is not a visual manifestation but one of sound, possibly generated by the video itself. This is another example of audio in a Japanese 'ghost' film highlighting the porous boundaries between the living and the dead. What makes the ringing of the trilling strings so *affective* is that it comes out of nowhere after the quiet stillness of the previous shots. There is no explanation for what Reiko hears or does not hear at this moment in the film. Rather than signifying a direct emotion at this point as a classical scoring approach might, a supernatural presence is communicated by the suggestion of the ruptured audio-visual synchronisation, a form of sonic haunting. This is tied to the cultural specificity of *Ringu* as it applies non-Hollywood scoring practice to challenge any mimetic imitation in the film. As Valerie Wee observes, 'rather than privileging narrative coherence, in *Ringu*, the emphasis both in the video images and on the level of the film's narrative is on privileging the emotion of fear and the mood of anxiety and insecurity founded on ignorance and the inscrutability of the supernatural.' [232]

1.9 Technology and how to score a Japanese 'ghost' film in the 00s:

This concept of sonic haunting identified in *Ringu* indicates a realm of alternative approaches to film scoring in later millennial supernatural Japanese horror films such as Kurosawa Kiyoshi's 2001 film *Kairo* (*Circuit/Pulse*), which will be examined further in Chapter Five, and Takashi Miike's 2003 film *Chakushin ari* (*One Missed Call*). Miike's film will be examined here as it provides a thematic continuity from *Ringu*, which influenced *Chakushin ari* in its idea of a telephone, though modernised to cell phone in the latter film, being a conduit for the *onryō* (a vengeful *yūrei*) to pass through and kill

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[232] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear*, 84.

the living. *Chakushin ari* tells the story of a child ghost who uses technology to possess her victims and bring about their death. The victims receive a call from an unfamiliar ringtone followed by an automated voice message informing them of 'one missed call.' A date and time in the future then appears on their phone, and the message itself is of their very demise recorded as live action, eerily including their last words. Takashi uses audio to mimic a disjuncture in sensory logic by presenting sounds without visuals throughout the film. This is achieved by displacing the visuals of a death occurring in 'real time', with the visuals focusing on someone hearing the audio through their phone - often Yumi, the main protagonist. By providing no real-time visual source during these moments in the film, Gorbman's function of inaudibility is challenged with an alternative approach that prioritises sound as the primary vehicle of the narrative instead of the image.

Sound is invasive in *Chakushin ari*, mainly through the role of the telephone ringtone. Each time a victim is selected, they hear the same melody emanating from their phone. The audio-viewer later learns that it is the tune from a fictional children's television programme, revealed when the nurse, looking after a little girl called Nanako who has been abused by her sister Mimiko, presses the tummy of the teddy bear the little girl carries with her. The song 'I Love Mom' is heard, its lyrics revealing a strong irony as the words 'I love mom' 'she's my mom' are repeated over and over in a sickly-sweet female child's voice. This is the melody the sister Mimiko hears as her mother abandons her in the apartment only to die of an asthma attack, leaving the bear to sing to her. Music is used here to alert the audio-viewer that the film is not just about demonic offspring but rather the neglectful mother. Mizunuma Marie's prolonged absences from her children resulted in her daughter's abuse towards Nanako, her decision to take responsibility for her daughter's death, and ultimately, her failure as a parent. This is also paralleled with Yumi's flashbacks of her mother, a figure who directly abused her daughter, 'the two mothers are equated with each other as if they are part of the same monstrous entity.' [233] The teddy bear's tune is translated into the cursed ringtone. It begins with an augmented sixth chord, pausing before a haunting music box-like lead melody enters littered with diminished intervals. As it can be identified, the mother's musical theme is now directly tied to the curse through the mobile phone. In this instance, 'because the haunting is clearly tied to technological

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[233] Sara Swain, 'Roaming across cinematic space: the cell phone in narrative film' (Ph.D. diss., Concordia University, 2008), 90.

mediation seemingly conflates women with technology.' [234] The alliance of females and technology in *Chakushin ari* demonstrate a universal power amplified through the sonic cue of the ringtone.

Figure 9. Yumi hears the cursed ringtone.

The sounds of technology have been used to create a Japanese postmillennial sonic haunting model. This is developed even further with digital development techniques in sound and ProTools in later Japanese supernatural horror film examples such as *Sadako 3D* (Hanabusa, 2012), discussed below. Directors have also begun to rework earlier film themes, experimenting further with alternative sound practices. In 2015 Nakata Hideo released the film *Gekijō rei* (also known as *Ghost Theater*), based on a similar premise to his 1996 film *Joyū-rei* (*Don't Look Up/Ghost Actress*) Both films tell their equivalent stories of a cast and crew haunted by a malevolent spirit in a production setting. The setting of *Gekijō rei* shifts to the stage from the film set of the 1996 example and focuses on the audition process of Mizuki Sara. She lands a part in a new production of 'Whimper of Fresh Blood'- based on the supposed murderous habits of the Hungarian Countess Elisabeth Bathory. In the play, the part of Elisabeth's alter ego is represented by a doll prop, that unbeknown to the crew and actors, possess a spirit of some kind and previously murdered two sisters before somehow making its way into a prop house.

Gekijō rei focuses on the doll that terrorises the cast and crew, literally sucking the life out of people. The overlap of supernatural elements within the play echoes the hysterical ghost woman who

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[234] Swain, 'Roaming across cinematic space: the cell phone in narrative film' (Ph.D. diss., Concordia University, 2008), 91.

appears in shots during the earlier 1996 *Joyū-rei* film and terrorises all on the film set like the doll. Describing the premise for *Gekijō rei*, Hideo Nakata commented:

> I wanted to bring innovation to the formula. In most of Japanese movies, ghosts are represented as blurry apparitions. They don't physically exist but we can still see them… This time, I wanted to bring a tangible item, which exists in the material reality. The soul of the dead person has to go into that item. That's why the doll starts to move. The limbs and eyes come to life. [235]

To emphasise the doll's non-human presence, the sound designer for the film, Shibasaki Kenji, worked on creating balance, especially when it came to the creaking sound produced by the doll's movement. The sound of its moving limbs had to be distinct as a representation of terror associated with the sound effect throughout the film as a sonic haunting. During one scene, a crew member stays late to fix a dress and duly falls asleep. As the seamstress wakes up, the camera focuses on a close-up of her face following her movement from low screen left to right. As she moves out of the shot and the camera cuts to a static shot, her head is shown blocking the doorway until she sits fully upright, positioned in the right-hand side of the frame, revealing the doll standing in the background behind a curtain partition.

The high pitch of an electroacoustic drone enters, joined by a wordless female soprano who produces a chilling octave leap and chromatic shifts in her vocalisations. As the doll moves towards the seamstress, the woman's panicked breath is layered into the sound mix. The creaking of the doll's movement is a sharp, high-pitched sound that is amplified so that it takes precedent over the wailing female vocals and the breathing of the seamstress who faces away from her. The doll then calls out the word 'chōdai' bathed in reverberation, repeating the dialogue, which gets louder as she moves closer to the back of the woman's head. As the camera cuts to the doll's point of view shown moving towards the seamstress, the soprano vocal is replaced with a cyclical melody on marimba and string accompaniment. The utterance of 'chōdai' [236] gets louder until the woman turns around. Her

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[235] Nakata Hideo, Takashi Shoko (trans.), 'GHOST THEATER: Director Hideo Nakata & Actress Haruka Shimazaki Interviews at "L`Étrange Festival 2015' https://www.scifijapan.com/tokusatsu-fx/ghost-theater-director-hideo-nakata-actress-haruka-shimazaki-interviews-at-letrange-festival-20154, (27 August, 2016).
[236] *Chōdai* can be translated as meaning 'please'. It is often used in the context of someone asking another person to give them something.

movement is accompanied by a sustained string pitch and held vocal note, with the female soprano delivering the final cadence point over the unending breathless gasp of the victim.

Shibasaki's attention to detail in producing a specific sound for the doll is representative of a Japanese cultural sensitivity towards timbral transformations utilised to create distinct sound effects in the supernatural horror film score. This reflects a consideration of sound over melody that pervades across Japanese music history and offers an alternative scoring practice that uses specific stylistic, cultural elements that counter the dominant Hollywood scoring tradition. Nakata references the integration between sound and music:

> [T]he blending of music and sounds is extremely important. Most of the time, sound effects were considered as most important than the music, but sometimes it was the opposite. We needed to find the right balance to make it work. But in those cases, there is no rule of theory. You feel like an orchestra conductor who has to find the perfect harmony between sound and music. [237]

Adopting this scoring approach, importance is placed on integrating natural sounds and music to produce a unique cultural sonic palette. As the examples in this chapter demonstrate, this practice was established by earlier composers in Japanese 'ghost' film music history and offers a variety of unique sonic moments in the films that also demonstrate a Japanese cultural sensitivity towards timbre in capturing distinct Japanese supernatural representations. The early examples of Japanese film drew influence from traditional Japanese theatre and called attention to the devices of narration moving on to the later examples that prioritised sound as a primary vehicle of the narrative or provided ambiguous sound sources. What this survey on the development of the Japanese 'ghost' score draws attention to are the ways that alternative approaches to music and sound in these films navigate the complex interrelations of pre-modern and modern Japanese culture to provide a rich insight into Japanese cultural perceptions of the supernatural.

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[237] Nakata Hideo, interview at 'L'Étrange Festival 2015'.

1.10 Japanese 'ghost' film scores post-00s

Technological development has impacted Japanese supernatural horror films' scoring practices into the late 00s, particularly in updating popular franchises. [238] *Sadako 3D*'s use of electronic effects to manipulate and emphasise environmental sounds, from telephone rings, phone vibrations, footsteps, and the computer mouse's scrolling and clicking sound effects, is representative of a more technologically advanced motivation towards scoring the supernatural. A hybrid audio-viewing experience has also become an end goal in the cinematic treatment of the supernatural through enhanced audio-viewing experiences. For *Sadako 3D*, cinemagoers could use second screen technology and directly interact with the big screen through their mobile phones. A custom-made app left on during the screenings meant that smartphones would vibrate, flash and emit various noises in conjunction with events in the film – updates to sound and visual technology in cinema that has been well utilised, particularly in horror films. CGI is one of the most significant updates and enhanced the ghostly figures of popular Japanese films. In the case of Shiraishi Kōji's 2016 production *Sadako vs Kayako*, a crossover of the *Ringu* and *Ju-on* franchises, it is more in line with the concept of the monster mash-up film. It also verges into comedy as the two ghostly antagonist's Kayako and Sadako, merge into one entity at the end of the film called Sadakaya.

After its theatrical release in June 2016, the film was exclusively launched through the *Shudder* streaming service in January 2017, with promotional material, including the first five minutes of the film shown on *Shudder's* YouTube channel. The rise in on-demand audio-viewing platforms has resulted in an increase of Japanese 'ghost' films being streamed through multiple platforms. Nakata's *Gekijō rei* (*Ghost Theater*) was anthologised into short films presented as *Gekijō rei kara no jōtaijō* ('Invitation from *Ghost Theater'*) with both the film and 10-episode show being released in 2015. Nakata directed most of the shorts, with Miyake Ryūta and Katō Junya directing the episode titled 'Ruins'. The short film anthology was made available for streaming on YouTube via the channel *AsianCrush*, a streaming service providing Asian entertainment in North America. As well as acting in the *Gekijō rei* (*Ghost Theater*) film, actor Nishino Gota introduces some of the shorts, acting as a host

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[238] A number of sequels have followed on from popular Japanese supernatural horror film titles. While this chapter provides an overview of sonic practice in Japanese supernatural horror films as an alternative to traditional scoring tradition, references to music and sound design in a film sequel will be used in Chapter Three when discussing the case study film of Shimizu Takashi's *Ju-on: The Grudge* in relation to its wider franchise.

as he is shown sitting in a cinema next to a poster of Nakata's original film. The popularity of the 'ghost' stories is reflected in these shorts as at least one of the three pop idols, Kata Rena, Okada Nana and Yokohama Yui from one of Japan's most prominent pop groups, AKB48 and its spin-off music projects star in each episode of the short film anthology.

It cannot go unnoticed that Japanese 'ghost' cinema alerts audio-viewers to the 'nonrational, emotion-centered perspective, [which] consistently emphasizes artistry, and hence artificiality, while disregarding most aspects of realism' [239] echoed through the sound design. The majority of films that originate from the ideology of the Hollywood tradition strive to communicate to the audio-viewer the motivation behind the onscreen actions. In Japanese 'ghost' films, 'typically there is no good reason why anything is happening other than the fact that someone has stumbled across the path of a yūrei.' [240] By drawing attention to these examples of unique sonic practice and how they are used to define specific cultural representations of the supernatural in Japanese cinema, the audio-viewer can gain a sense of how hegemonic scoring practice can be challenged in such a way that brings new recognition to the role that cultural, stylistic treatment of sound can play, channelling new definitions of sonic haunting and the supernatural in non-Hollywood film productions. The next chapter will examine how different art forms present the supernatural in Japanese culture and how artistic and musical aesthetics, first developed in other cultural forms, are applied in Japanese 'ghost' film scores. Throughout this study examples of distinct sonic practice from the above survey will continually resurface, proving that cultural considerations of music and sound design through non-Hollywood approaches to Japanese 'ghost' films provide a more informed and critical understanding of alternative scoring practice.

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[239] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes,* 44.
[240] Wierzbicki, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications and Lost in translation', in *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema*, Philip Hayward (ed.), (Equinox Publishing Ltd: London, 2009), 255.

Chapter Two- Japanese Aesthetics, the Arts, and a Supernatural Connection:

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines traditions of representing the supernatural and horrific specific to Japanese arts. It explains how unique examples of sonic practice in Japanese 'ghost' films, such as those presented in Chapter One, relate to Japanese artistic and musical aesthetics. Japanese composers have often called attention to a unique philosophy of practice encompassing the specific musical elements that define most Japanese music, as explained here by avant-garde composer Yuasa Jōji, who also composed soundtracks for experimental films:

> [T]he inheritance of my tradition implied a way of thought and perception rather than simply the adoption of superficial phenomena such as the pentatonic scale, or the simple usage of traditional instruments such as the shakuhachi, biwa, and koto. In other words, for me, remaining within a tradition meant retaining a system of thinking. It follows that this broader definition of "tradition" produced, and continues to produce, diverse concrete results. [241]

This chapter asserts that this system of thinking produced unique sonic practice in Japanese cinema, including the contributions of many composers of Yuasa's generation, such as Hayashi Hikaru and Takemitsu Tōru.

Writing on Takemitsu's piano works, Niels [Chr.] Hansen highlights how the composer's references to Japanese-specific music, thought and practices in his works often concerned 'aesthetic and formal dimensions'. [242] In order to examine these aesthetics further, and in later chapters their role in heightening the culturally specific representations of the ghostly in Japanese cinema, this chapter will provide an overview of the dominant aesthetic concepts in Japanese arts whose influence can be identified in examples of Japanese 'ghost' film scoring. First, however, the chapter will define the terms by which it will engage with the notion of musical aesthetics.

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[241] Yuasa Jōji, 'Music as a Reflection of a Composer's Cosmology', *Perspectives of New Music* 27/2 (Summer, 1989): 177.

[242] Niels Chr. Hanson, '"Japanese in Tradition, Western in Innovation": Influences from Traditional Japanese Music in Tōru Takemitsu's Piano Works', *Dutch Journal of Music Theory* 15/2 (2010): 99.

2.1.1 An Approach to Aesthetics

Despite the term 'aesthetics' deriving from a singular Greek term, *aesthetica* (perception), it has come to stand for a number of meanings across a variety of disciplines, 'working from a wide range of cultural backgrounds [which] contribute to a set of dialogues that aim to understand the values and meanings of art, artistry, and experiences naturally described as aesthetic.' [243] There are numerous theories of interpretation around the term which continue to generate challenging discussion. This section will not attempt to define aesthetics, nor the field of musical aesthetics, as both tasks are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, to warrant its use in developing a deeper and more unique context regarding culturally specific traditions of representing the ghostly and horrific in the Japanese arts, it is necessary to define my use of the term.

Roy Shuker notes that '[i]n a general sense, aesthetics is the philosophical study of art, with particular emphasis on the evaluative criteria applied to particular styles/texts in order to distinguish the identifying characteristics of those of value.' [244] Measures of value are often discussed in reference to aesthetics. However, as Simon Frith asks, 'how do we make musical value judgements? How do such value judgements articulate the listening experiences involved?' [245] These questions open up fruitful territory for debate in regard to aesthetic judgement concerning subjectivity and objectivity, through an individual's articulation of value in music as in the subjective, or through the aim to justify the articulation of value, i.e. objectivity. Both types of response raise questions on the different listening competencies of individuals as they articulate what they perceive to be aesthetic value. This is problematized further by musical examples being studied in relation to other musical works 'and in relation to the already-established discourse of aesthetics, with the purpose of isolating those textual properties which can be said to render it beautiful… [I]t completely fails to "place" the criteria for taste and beauty within the context of their own production – they are assumed to be somehow "there" in art objects.' [246]

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[243] Susan L. Feagin and Patrick Maynard, 'Introduction', in *Aesthetics*, Susan L. Feagin and Patrick Maynard (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.
[244] Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, [1998] 2005), 5.
[245] Simon Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 258.
[246] John Hartley, 'aesthetics', in *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* 2nd edition, Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders, Martin Montgomery and John Fiske (eds.), (London: Routledge, [1994] 2006), 6.

This notion has fallen under criticism for creating an ideological discourse founded on a universal criterion that is not objective. It is concerned 'with ideas about value and worth, and the criteria upon which they may be assessed, [which] have more to do with general cultural-historical values than with the specifics of the material being assessed.' [247] Therefore, this assessment of aesthetics is not sufficient in addressing how the term should be defined for the purpose of this chapter.

I define the term 'aesthetics' as being about meaning understood as contextualized audio-visual interactions. This chapter will introduce and expand upon a number of concepts founded on distinct artistic principles in order to clarify the culturally specific representations of the supernatural in Japanese arts and how they are used in Japan's 'ghost' film tradition. Such concepts are described as aesthetics in relation to their meaning and function in the arts in Japan, as the following sections of this chapter will highlight. Therefore, understanding more about these concepts, particularly from an Anglophone perspective, can be achieved by approaching them from the area of semiotics:

> The term aesthetic has gained some currency in semiotics, especially in the notion of an aesthetic code. This is taken to be a code in which the production of meaning within the terms of recognized (conventional) expression is not the aim but the starting point of a given message. [248]

In the context of the traditional concepts presented in this chapter, the notion of an aesthetic code will be applied by identifying significant conventions in Japanese culture and taking them as a starting point to show how they are used to represent the ghostly and the horrific in the Japanese arts. This approach is well suited to this chapter's examination of concepts not necessarily found in western arts, as '[s]emiotics may perhaps claim to have broken ranks with idealist aesthetics in its attempt to find a value-free and culturally specific description of aesthetic codes.' [249] Assessing a number of Japanese cultural concepts and how they are used to represent the supernatural, specifically in the treatment of music and sound, forms an approach that is comparable to the communicational function

[247] Elizabeth Eva Leach,'"Vicars of 'Wannabe'": Authenticity and the Spice Girls', *Popular Music* 20/2 (May, 2001): 146.
[248] Hartley, 'aesthetics', 7.
[249] *Ibid*., 7.

of semiotics. A task-based system for semiotic classification presented by Michael Hardt in his paper *Aesthetics, Semiotics and Visual Communication* is particularly relevant to demonstrate how each concept will be examined in the chapter. [250] This is because of the system's dynamic nature, not restricted by a western cultural hierarchy. Hardt's assessment of semiotic function draws on a classification system established by different schools of semiotics, including Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotic model. Charles Sanders Peirce's defines a sign as being 'something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity.' [251] This highlights a critical point in Peirce's theory in how a sign is perceived and understood and its relationship to the object that it refers to. As Peirce notes, '[a] sign […] addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign.' [252]

Peirce presented a triadic model as he did not believe that signification was a straightforward binary relationship. His basic claim presented the sign as consisting of 'three inter-related parts: a sign, an object and an interpretant.' [253] Put into practice a sign can be interpreted as a single word or expression, the object could be what is signified, as in the sentence, and the interpreted can be the complex thought. This triad of definitions led to the identification of three tasks when analysing the communication function of the different levels of complexity of a sign: *Orientation*, *Information,* and *Inspiration*. Hardt's research asks if there is a grammar of the visual language. He states that visual communication design applies the science of semiotics and argues that teaching contents on the subject should be changed from a product to a process orientation approach: 'There are new media and new dimensions. Signs and sign systems change from static to dynamic and interactive. The genuine task of a visual communication designer is process and not product related.' [254] Peirce's triadic model also emphasizes that semiosis is a process through the element of interpretation.

[250] See Michael Hardt, 'Aesthetics, semiotics & design'177132807-Aesthetics-Semiotics-and-Visual-Communication.pdf, 12 December 2016), 18.
[251] Charles Sanders Peirce, quoted in C.M. Smith 'The Aesthetics of Charles S. Peirce', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31/1 (Autumn, 1972): 23.
[252] Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce Volume II*, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (eds.), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935), 228.
[253] Albert Atkin, 'Peirce's Theory of Signs' in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/#SigVeh, 29 November 2021).
[254] Hardt, 'Aesthetics, semiotics & design', 23.

A process-oriented approach to the aesthetics and artistic concepts in the Japanese arts will be applied in this chapter. Each concept will be defined from an Anglophone research perspective and will also be examined through their dynamic application in new media in the contemporary Japanese 'ghost' film. Hardt's classification system can be applied as an organisational framework to comprehend the notion of musical 'aesthetics' in the Japanese arts. There is no set definition for each classification that allows for the multiplicity of some aesthetic concepts. The *Orientation* classification corresponds to the intended message of each traditional concept presented in this chapter. The *Information* classification corresponds to delivery and will highlight how the delivery of each concept demonstrates how it can be used to represent the supernatural in Japanese arts. This classification also considers the delivery of the concept in relation to other concepts: the 'sign in context with other signs'. The *Inspiration* corresponds to the reception of the concept applied to music and sound design and the meaning generated when applied to various representations of the supernatural in Japanese cinema: 'the sign in relation to what it means'. [255] The reception-oriented element of this category also addresses the recognition of how a concept produces certain meanings for an audience who are aware of the cultural significations of a concept: 'the creative use of sign combinations' [256] and 'the effect on the viewer, the use one makes of it (Morris 1949).' [257] In summary, applying this triadic system will enable me to present a definition of each Japanese cultural concept and how it is applied through music and sound in Japanese performing arts and may be linked to other concepts. The value in this will come from then being able to demonstrate how the definition and delivery come together to be used in the treatment of sound and music in Japanese 'ghost' cinematic examples.

Philip Tagg has also produced a highly commendable substantial body of material on the semiotic analysis of music. Tagg's research on 'the semiotics of music, in the broadest sense of the term, deals with relations between the sounds we call musical and what those sounds signify to those producing and hearing the sounds in specific sociocultural contexts.' [258] Considering social and cultural interaction, In *Music's Meanings: a modern musicology for non-musos* Tagg examines Peirce's process-oriented semiosis and recommends looking at it in terms of a message and its

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[255] Hardt, 'Aesthetics, semiotics & design', 19.
[256] *Ibid*., 19.
[257] *Ibid*., 17.
[258] Philip Tagg, *Music's Meanings: a modern musicology for non-musos* (New York: The Mass Media's Music Scholars' Press [2012] 2015), 145.

communication. He provides an interpretation of the totality and connections between Peirce's 'object', 'sign' and 'interpretant' through the analogy of an aunt's photo of their dog. Tagg notes that this story 'illustrates the necessity of distinguishing between object and interpretant, as well as between interpretants, in relation to the sign. These distinctions are essential when it comes to understanding how musical signs work, how the same sounds can mean different things to different people in different contexts at different times.'[259] This is why my approach to aesthetic concepts adopts a triadic approach that takes into account how the concepts work as a definition, their application in Japanese arts and the application to music and sound in the Japanese 'ghost' film, in relation to the other classifications that inform an understanding of the concept in its different contexts.

Tagg adds a musical slant to Peirce's semiosis and how observations about meaning change over time through a Country and Western music example of the whining sound produced by the pedal steel guitar and how its musical connotations led it to be a style indicator of the musical genre. He concludes that '[t]he advantage of looking at semiosis in such ways is that, by including intention as well as interpretation, the semiotic process is more open to understanding in terms of social and cultural interaction.'[260] Tied back to Peirce's triad and the relationship between object and interpretant, which, in this chapter will be presented under the umbrella of Hardt's system as information (object) and inspiration (interpretant) classifications in relation to the sign, presented in this chapter as the orientation classification, 'allows for a dynamic view of musical semiosis.'[261] Peirce's trichotomy presented under the classifications of Hardt's model here, which, as Tagg concludes, linking his *transmitter-channel-receiver* communication model[262] is 'more compatible with thinking about music in terms of symbolic *interaction* between humans.'[263] This will inform the analysis and application of the aesthetics applied to the music and sound examples presented that

[259] Tagg, *Music's Meanings: a modern musicology for non-musos*, 157.
[260] *Ibid*., 158.
[261] *Ibid*., 192.
[262] See Tagg, *Music's Meanings,* 172-193. To present a more detailed assessment of Tagg's research on semiotics in music would be beyond the scope of this research, but he acknowledges ethnocentricity in many of the examples he presents due to musical connotative semiotics as being to a large extent culturally specific. Therefore, the understanding of the term aesthetics here in relation to a semiotics model will be presented in its most deconstructed form in order to support this chapter's assessment of how traditional concepts in Japanese culture represent the supernatural and the horrific in the Japanese arts.
[263] Tagg, *Music's Meanings*, 192.

invite the audio-viewer to engage in a hermeneutic process relating to, and constructing, a ghostly sonic specificity.

2.1.2 Current scholarship on Japanese aesthetics

Before applying this framework to the Japanese artistic concepts for the remainder of this chapter, I will first present several existing scholarly approaches that have discussed Japanese aesthetics in relation to representing the ghostly and horrific in Japanese supernatural horror film scores. While they make useful contributions, as the forthcoming discussions will indicate, there is an enormous wealth of Japanese aesthetic concepts as yet unnoted and unutilized in the discussion of film and specifically music – a key function of the following chapters of this thesis. In her essay 'Creative Soundtrack Expression: Tōru Takemitsu's Score for *Kwaidan*', Koizumi Kyōko discusses Takemitsu's application of philosophical conceptions, earlier avant-garde influence, and notions of musique concrète juxtaposed with Japanese traditional instruments in his scoring. Koizumi directly relates these distinguishing characteristics as marking a peak in 'the aesthetics of horror-film scores to date,' [264] and concludes that 'the extent of Takemitsu's sound exploration in *Kwaidan* cannot be fully grasped without an understanding of these broader concepts of sound.' [265]

Her use of the term aesthetics is limited to a general conception of value within the form of a short essay. Roberto Calabretto also discusses *Kwaidan* in relation to Takemitsu's creation of sound components connected to his affinity with European composers and directors and the innovations in France, including the early practitioner of musique concrete, Pierre Schaeffer, and other exponents of tape music. Calabretto's research presents a study of *Kwaidan's* score 'characterised by the use of a limited number of sound objects obtained by recording acoustic sources requiring different performance modes and then elaborated with the techniques of experimental music.' [266] References to Japanese aesthetics can be teased out of his discussion of the soundscape of the film's four episodes. For example, Calabretto notes Takemitsu's mastering of a full range of stylistic codes in his film composition before listing the key tenets of the composer's exploration of sound that, as this chapter

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[264] Koizumi Kyōko, 'Creative Soundtrack Expression: Tōru Takemitsu's Score for *Kwaidan*', *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema*, Philip Hayward (ed.), (Equinox Publishing Ltd: London, 2009), 85.
[265] *Ibid*., 84.
[266] Roberto Calabretto, 'Takemitsu's Film Music', 189.

will demonstrate, are tied to Japanese cultural concepts representing the supernatural. Namely, these are the importance of a single sound and highlighting new potential in the various sounds produced by traditional Japanese instruments. Calabretto then directly includes a reference to the concept of *ma* in a footnote, all be it as part of a quotation from *Kwaidan's* director Kobayashi. It is included to highlight Takemitsu's working methods, especially as the film deals with 'some of the more typical motifs of Japanese culture.'[267] Calabretto concludes his article by praising Takemitsu's achievement in creating an aural continuum that fosters the development of a 'sensorial' cinema. He notes that 'the audio component is true to life not too much if it recreates the sound produced in the real world by the situation or event in question, but if it transposes and expresses the sensations associated with that cause.'[268] The transposition and expression of sensations that Calabretto refers to here can be directly related to Japanese cultural expression in line with Takemitsu's awareness of the aesthetics of traditional Japanese music.

Calabretto also refers to the writing of Philip Brophy, as referenced in Chapter One, who also analysed the sound design of *Kwaidan* in regard to the dialectic it produces in which single, isolated sounds present moments of sonic significance among other articulated sounds. Again, Brophy does not directly refer to specific Japanese aesthetic concepts used in the scoring practice. However, his writing reflects an understanding of the score's unique sonic makeup, which is distinctly Japanese:

> The base elements of music — rhythm, melody, harmony — are perceived sans the grounding principles of, respectively, tempo, key and tonality. This is why the many forms of traditional Japanese folk and theatre music generate such strange and unsettling listening states. [269]

William Whittington recognises a scoring practice that is not only uniquely Japanese but is defined by its associations with horror and the ghostly and calls it 'J-horror sound'. Whittington's research is delivered in the context of presenting 'the differences between narrative traditions and characterizations of evil, the influence of digital technologies, and the transnational exchanges

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[267] Calabretto, 'Takemitsu's Film Music', 187.
[268] *Ibid.*, 197.
[269] Philip Brophy, 'How Sound Floats on Land: The Suppression and Release of Folk and Indigenous Musics in the Cinematic Terrain', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (eds.), (California: University of California Press, 2007), 145.

between Japanese and American filmmaking as they relate to sound design.' [270] Using the example of Shimizu Takashi's 2002 film *Ju-on: The Grudge*, Whittington places his discussion of the sonic hauntings in contemporary Japanese 'ghost' films in the context of Japanese folklore tradition and director Nakata Hideo's specific intentions for the sound design. One of the examples of an approach to audio that Whittington references from an interview with Nakata is a concept known as the 'aesthetics of subtraction.' [271] Whittington directly quotes the director's intended meaning from the interview. However, he does not explain how the strategy establishes the film story's location, linking the film's spiritual presence to notions of instability through this aesthetic practice. The confines of the article length do not allow Whittington to expand upon this further in relation to how the 'aesthetics of subtraction' is defined and used in the broader context of Japanese arts, and how this meaning translates so well onscreen that it is used in several Japanese 'ghost' films. This chapter will address the need for such a discussion.

James Wierzbicki provides two of the most in-depth and detailed assessments of how aesthetic concepts in Japanese arts can be identified in examples of Japanese horror film scoring. In the first of his contributions, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications', Wierzbicki analyses the music and sound of two contemporary Japanese supernatural horror films – Nakata Hideo's *Ringu* (1998) and Shimizu's *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002). He also mentions other popular Japanese examples that deal with the supernatural theme and the American film remakes of the two listed film examples.

In his 2010 essay, 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese ghost films and their Hollywood remakes' Wierzbicki examines how the application of Japanese cultural concepts to music and sound design have influenced a number of contemporary Japanese horror film scoring approaches. In this article, he references traditional Japanese theatrical forms and 'a specific timbral-gestural effect apparently related to the conventions of *kabuki* theatre.' [272] Wierzbicki's discussions of aesthetic concepts related to music and sound are dominated by the influence of kabuki and noh theatre. His research is integral to opening a critical discussion on how it is useful to understand how such

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[270] William Whittington, 'Acoustic Infidelities: Sounding the Exchanges between J-Horror and H-Horror Remakes', *Cinephile* 6 (2010): 11.
[271] *Ibid*., 14.
[272] James Wierzbicki, 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese Kaidan films and their Hollywood remakes', *Horror Studies* 1/2 (2010): 194.

concepts can be applied to the representation of the supernatural in Japanese theatre traditions, and how these practices have then influenced the use of traditional Japanese concepts in film, particularly in the treatment of music and sound. My research expands significantly on this work by tracing the roots of these aesthetic concepts from earlier origins in other Japanese art forms and music. This is because the contexts and functions of musical performance in Japan are culturally determined and often tied to many relevant influential developments. The theatre is included among these developments because, as Takemitsu noted, 'the leading music in the Edo period developed in connection with theater, and this is an important factor to consider in understanding traditional Japanese music.' [273] The influence of dominant theatrical traditions in the country has brought attention to shaping the characteristics of music and several unique Japanese concepts applied to the musical treatment in stage performance. However, it is vital, as Japanese musicologist Kikkawa Eishi notes, that these influences are also recognised as part of a broader consideration of societal and artistic developments from early lifestyles:

> [W]e must look to the broader artistic outlook of the premodern Japanese. In *Oto, ongaku, otofūkei to nichijō seikatsu* ('Sound, Music, Soundscape, and Everyday Life'), Yamagishi Miho develops Kikkawa's aesthetics in a bio-regionalist direction, arguing that agrarian life in premodern Japan necessitated the development of a heightened sensitivity to regionally specific environmental cues indicative of climatic change, including the voices of seasonal insects and birds, the sounds of wind and rain, and even the atmospheric conditions on the reverberation of ambient sounds (2006: 246-247). [274]

As the above quotation highlights, in order to meaningfully engage with a diverse range of aesthetics and their directions of development, proper consideration must be given to the broader scope of the Japanese musical tradition, including the impact of historical and social developments. As well as considering the influence that theatre has had upon music '[o]ne cannot deny, in any event, that the feudal class system established in the Edo period had great influence upon the exact

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[273] Takemitsu Tōru, 'Mirrors', Sumi Adachi with Roger Reynolds (trans.), *Perspectives of New Music* 30/1 (Winter, 1992): 48.

[274] James Edwards, '"Silence By My Noise": An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture And The Sound Art of Akita Masami', *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 15.1 (October 2012): 94.

characteristics of its music.' [275] Consideration of performance practice outside of the theatre will also be addressed in this chapter's assessment of how cultural concepts have been used to represent the supernatural in various Japanese art forms. Therefore, the next section of this chapter presents aesthetic concepts in Japanese arts whose influence can be identified in examples of Japanese 'ghost' film scoring – the label of 'arts' used here is inclusive of all forms of traditional Japanese music from *gagaku*, the ancient court music of Japan through to the music of the noh and kabuki theatres and contemporary composition of the Shōwa era (1926-1989). These concepts will be presented using the semiotic function framework described in the introduction to this chapter.

2.2 *Ma*: A concept of silence, space, and time

2.2.1 The Orientation of Ma:

> [T]he important, expressive sounds of Japanese culture go far beyond the individual tones of musical scales into the realm of natural sounds, sounds of motion and gesture, and sounds that flirt with the deepest concepts of silence. [276]

In Japanese, there are multiple definitions of the term 'silence'. [277] The concept of silence that Jane Elkinton refers to above regarding sound in Japanese culture is known as *ma* 間. Made up of a combination of 門 (door/gate) and 日 (sun or, in earlier use, the moon), *ma* roughly translates as 'space'; 'interval'; 'pause.' *Ma* 'is an interstice occurring within the linearity of temporal space, and is central to the way Japanese perceive the concept of time and space.' [278] The forms of time and space take many guises, and the term can be applied to aspects of most areas of Japanese life. For example, a room may be described as *ma* because it refers to the space existing between the walls. By extension, the concept also takes on a relational meaning through its use in the compound word of *ningen* 人間 ('human being') as it refers to a person (*nin*) being 'among' others – the among being the *ma*, which

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[275] Takemitsu, 'Mirrors', 49.

[276] Jane Elkinton, 'Cha-in/the sound of tea: the sounds of the Japanese tea ceremony and their relation to traditional Japanese music' (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1995), 1.

[277] The most common word is *chinmoku* (沈黙) which translates as 'to keep oneself in a certain state' (沈) and 'not speaking' (黙). *Mokusatsu* (黙殺) is another word which means 'to be silent in a way that could be described as ignoring someone, keeping a staunch silence or, 'to show silent contempt'.

[278] Lena Pek Hung Lie, 'The Dialectic of "Ma" and "Sound": A Critical Reading of Tōru Takemitsu's Music for Teshigahara's *Pitfall', The London Film & Media Reader 2: The End of Representation? Essays from Film and Media 2010 The Second Annual London Film and Media Conference*, Phillip Drummond (ed.), (London: The London Symposium, 2013): 27.

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also alludes to its dynamic nature through a sense of standing with or among. As Richard B. Pilgrim notes, '[t]he word, therefore, carries both objective and subjective meaning'; that is, *ma* is not only "something" within objective, descriptive reality, but also signifies particular modes of experience.' [279] It is a unique conceptual term that is productively vague in description, as theatre scholar Komparu Kunio observes: 'it includes three meanings, time, space, and spacetime…it is the multiplicity of meanings and at the same time the conciseness of the single word that makes *ma* a unique conceptual term, one without parallel in other languages.' [280]

For some, the ambiguity of *ma* and its ability to defy boundaries also makes it a word so full of meaning that non-Japanese scholars may find it challenging to interpret. Discussing *ma* from a musical perspective, Takemitsu notes, '[o]f course *ma* can never be determined. It is really hard to speak about *ma*. You know *ma* in Japanese is not only that which is "in between," but phonetically it also suggests "magic," so…it's very hard to say…' [281] The very framing of the concept's characters also suggests its ambiguity, as Morishita Chikako highlights in her thesis, quoting Pilgrim:

> *Ma* is represented as in kanji consisting of the character for gate, a fixed object, and the enclosed character for sun shining through the gate which pre-supposes something invisible and indefinable yet somehow concrete (Pilgrim, 986, p.258). The gate, functions as the framework illustrate the existence of something unstable or indefinable. [282]

The term's ambiguity welcomes interpretation, and Takemitsu acknowledges the concept's borderless nature, commenting that it is 'very suggestive,' [283] opening up possibilities in its application to various cultural spheres. Pilgrim also notes the terms' wider cultural application on intervals in space and time: 'the deeper meanings of *ma* can be found most explicitly in the arts.' [284] Taking into consideration such viewpoints, and existing literature that has applied the concept to film, such as Lena Pek Hung Lie's critical reading of Takemitsu's score for *Otoshiana* (*Pitfall*), this section will

[279] Richard B. Pilgrim, 'Intervals ("Ma") in Space and Time: Foundations for a Religio-Aesthetic Paradigm in Japan', *History of Religions* 23/3 (February 1986): 256.
[280] Komparu, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives*, 70.
[281] Takemitsu Tōru quoted in Takemitsu Tōru with Tania Cronin and Hillary Tann (trans.), 'Afterword', *Perspectives of New Music*, 27/2 (Summer 1989): 213.
[282] Morishita Chikako, 'A Music Engagement with "Ma"- Japanese Aesthetics of Space and Time' (Master of Arts by Research diss., University of Huddersfield, 2011), 11.
[283] *Ibid*., 11.
[284] Pilgrim, 'Intervals ("Ma") in Space and Time', 257.

demonstrate how the concept has been used in traditional Japanese arts to represent the supernatural and how Japanese 'ghost' film scoring can sometimes usefully be read in terms of *ma*.

In music, *ma* exists in the space between sounds. Hillary Tan highlights how this is different from 'the Western concept of a rest, a silence, which can often mean emptiness.' [285] Discussing space-time in music in a short essay from 1994, Takemitsu observed:

> The sounds of a single stroke of biwa plectrum or a single breath through the shakuhachi can so transport our reason because they are of extreme complexity; they are already complete in themselves. Just one such sound can be complete in itself, for its complexity lies in the formulation of *ma*, an unquantifiable metaphysical space (duration) of dynamically tensed absence of sound. [286]

When analysing different forms of traditional Japanese music and performing arts, composers, performers, and scholars continually highlight the importance of spatial arrangement and the use of silence. For Takemitsu, the relationship between the silences that separate these short connections of sounds demonstrates 'a dynamic change in the sounds as they are constantly reborn in new relationships.' [287] Japanese musician Odamura Satsuki draws upon this analogy of birth as an experience created beyond the straightforward spatio-temporal boundaries in music, allowing for this seeming 'nothingness' to be filled with some other kind of information. This is related to the description often used for *ma* as delivering a 'pregnant pause' or 'pregnant nothingness' [288], which also links back to Takemitsu's definition that *ma* is 'a living space, more than actual space.' [289]

This 'living space' highlights the importance of the quality of transition, rather than existence of a homogenous flow found in the Western conception of space-time. This aligns with an understanding of *ma* as an experiential space, which musician Odamura defines as 'an immeasurable space-time where two worlds cross… In this space lies an experience beyond the boundaries of sounds and silence, instruments and performers, physicality and sensibility, [it] is the transcendent aspect of

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[285] Hillary Tann, 'Afterword', 212.
[286] Takemitsu, 'One sound', *Contemporary Music Review* 8/2 (1993): 3.
[287] Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, Glenn Glasow and Yoshiko Kakudo (eds., trans.), (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.), 84.
[288] See Pilgrim, 'Intervals ("Ma") in Space and Time', 259.
[289] Tania Cronin, 'Afterword', 213.

musical performance.' [290] This definition highlights an experiential dimension to the concept of *ma* through its 'aesthetic immediacy'. It creates a positive space by its presence, or as Morishita summarises: '*ma* is an experiential space which evokes a heightened sense of reality – the simultaneous awareness of the unification between form and its absence, which is perceived throughout the immediacy of experience.' [291] Similarly, Pilgrim explores the experiential immediacy of *ma* and the present through a religio-aesthetic paradigm, concluding in the assertion of *ma* as affirming its meaning through intervals in time, space and being that suggest a richer reality of presence.

Pilgrim's definition draws a direct parallel with Takemitsu's treatment of *ma* in the composer's work with space and time and the relationship with sound and image, highlighting the transformational quality of the term that encourages its use in representing the supernatural in Japanese arts. The Japanese architect Arata Izozaki is often referenced in discussions of *ma* as the leading figure who introduced the concept to the West. [292] Izozaki examines the concept's use in ancient Japanese religious practices and its interpretation of time-space in contemporary architecture. Izozaki's interdisciplinary "MA: Space-Time in Japan" exhibition held in Paris at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1978 (and later in New York, Houston, Chicago, Stockholm and Helsinki in 1979 and finally in Tokyo in 2000) not only expounded the concept of *ma* based on its definition from the *Iwanami Dictionary of Ancient Terms*, but explored a traditional Japanese cultural meaning through spiritual reference in Shintoism. More specifically, Izozaki asserted that *ma* is tied to the sacred spaces (*himorogi*) that spirits/Gods (*kami*) were believed to have filled with their spiritual forces – spaces believed to be open and pure to allow for their descent to the earth:

> Sanctified places were sometimes delineated by the setting up of four posts, one in each of the
>
> corners of the area […]. Kami were thought to descend into such enclosed spaces, which were

[290] Odamura Satsuki quoted in Morishita Chikako, 'A Music Engagement with "Ma"- Japanese Aesthetics of Space and Time', 8.
[291] Morishita, 'A Music Engagement with "Ma"', 11.
[292] See Jonathan Chenette, 'The Concept of Ma and the Music of Takemitsu', *National Conference of the American Society of University Composers* (Arizona: University of Arizona, 1985); Richard B. Pilgrim, 'Intervals ("Ma") in Space and Time: Foundations for a Religio-Aesthetic Paradigm in Japan,' *History of Religions* 25.3 (February, 1986); Anne Rutherford, 'Volatile space, Takemitsu and the material contagions of Harakiri', *Screening the Past* (2010) http://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-27-first-release/volatile-space-takemitsu-and-the-material-contagions-of%C2%A0harakiri/, 2 December 2016.

usually totally vacant. The very acts of preparing such a space and waiting for kami to descend into it had immense influence on later modes of space-time cognition. Space was thought of as void—like the vacant holy zone—and even concrete objects were thought to be void within. Kami were believed to descend to fill these voids with spiritual force (chi). Perceiving the instant at which this occurred became decisively important for all artistic endeavor. Space was perceived as identical with events or phenomena occurring in it; that is, space was perceived only in relation to time flow. [293]

Izozaki's assertion of an ancient understanding of *ma* tied to Shintoism highlights an example of an aesthetic trait representing or embodying a bridge between the human and the spiritual world in Japanese culture. This way of understanding *ma* in cultural practice creates a point of orientation when defining the concept. It creates a path to an information classification that invites an understanding of how *ma* is utilised to convey the ghost in Japanese arts. In the next section, this is realised through *ma's* connection, specifically through traditional Japanese theatre.

2.2.2 Ma and the Supernatural: An Information Classification

The founder of almost all noh theatre's conventions, Zeami Motokiyo, one of noh theatre's most influential playwrights, performers and theorists, discussed the use of 'no-action' – moments of dancing, singing, movement and mime performed by the actor and occurring in between (*hima*). [294] These moments of 'no-action', which occur between actions, illustrate both spiritual attributes and a spatial nature: 'Zeami is suggesting implicitly the existence of *ma.* He is saying that noh acting is a matter of doing just enough to create the *ma* that is blank space-time where nothing is done, and that *ma* is the core of the expression, where the true interest lies.' [295] Komparu's study of time and space in noh 'identifies *ma* as a negative space-time defined and enclosed by a positive space-time. In line with this concept of *ma*, both types of space-time – negative and positive in noh theatre – manifest themselves through performers' drama or stillness of action.' [296] This space-time definition is best

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[293] Chenette, 'The Concept of Ma and the Music of Takemitsu', 3.
[294] *Hima* is an older alternate word used for *ma*.
[295] Komparu, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives*,73.
[296] Lena Pek Hung Lie, 'The Dialectic of "Ma" and "Sound": A Critical Reading of Tōru Takemitsu's Music for Teshigahara's *Pitfall'*, 29.

exemplified through Zeami's style of *mugen noh* (phantasmal noh). [297] These are plays of dreams or allusion that feature ghosts, spirits and phantoms, or other beings that encounter the *waki* (secondary character in the play), who is generally found to be visiting the place where the *shite's* spirit resides in the play. The principle of having one main character (the *shite*) in *mugen noh* differs from 'modern Western drama that develops by means of conflict between characters.' [298] In *mugen noh,* the one character principle 'reflects an attempt to create of the stage space, by symbolism, a constantly transmuting, transforming space (*ma*) of action.' [299] There is the *waki*, a secondary character who essentially prepares the scene for the *shite*. Typically, the *waki* is a travelling priest, exorcist or imperial envoy who engages with the *shite*, the demon who is disguised as a human in the first act, then reappearing in their true form in the second act. 'Waki characters are the mediators who enable audiences to enter the world of demons and explore the demons' soul.' [300] So the tension between characters is replaced here by the tension created between the *shite* and *ma*.

Komparu also highlights *ma's* abstract nature when it is used as a structural element. This is particularly the case whenever the supernatural is presented in noh, as exemplified in the category of *mugen noh*. In this category, concepts of time and space are used to develop its sophisticated dramatic structure based on supernatural storytelling. Describing noh, Komparu draws attention to the understanding of space and time being treated as separate elements, with 'the ancient Japanese characteristically reshaping something imported from abroad' [301] fusing concepts of space and time. This fusion is particularly well used in *mugen noh*. These plays explore the manipulation of time and space between the human and spiritual world, often transcending common sense '[i]t makes possible a perfectly natural form for the coexistence of opposites, this world and the other world, reality and nonreality.' [302] *Yamanba* (mountain crone/hag 山姥, literally 'mountain old woman') [303] is an example of a play from the *mugen noh* repertoire that demonstrates how silence and space can be culturally

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[297] Another type of noh is *genzai noh* meaning present time or realistic noh. The story unfolds along with the passage of time. See 'Invitation to Nohgaku' (https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/noh/en/play/).

[298] Tōru Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, 57.

[299] Komparu, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives*, 72.

[300] Nishiyama Jitsuya, 'Confronting *Noh* Demons: Zeami's Demon Pacifying *Noh* and Nobumitsu's Demon Killing *Noh*' (MA diss., Portland State University, 2019), 67.

[301] Komparu, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives*, 71.

[302] *Ibid*., 77.

[303] "Yamanba" was the romanization of the term that was common in the 1970s and 80s. However, romanization standards now recommend *Yamanba*. Karen Brazell and Monica Bethe note that the kanji for the term 山姥 may also be pronounced 'Yama-uba.'

embedded and used in the performing arts through culturally informed delivery methods that are not recognised in western conceptions of silence. The *yamanba* is a female half-human demon (*kijo* 鬼女) who lives away from human society in the mountains. [304] The play tells of the *Yamanba* 'fated to wander through the mountains in the guise of an old woman dragging with her the distinction between good and evil.' [305] It begins with Hyakuma Yamanba, an entertainer who skilfully performs a song and dance about *Yamanba* through a *kusemai* (storytelling with dance) that she created. Becoming well known in Kyoto for her dance enacting the mountain crone, she makes a pilgrimage with her retainers to Zenkō-ji Temple. Arriving at the village of Sakaigawa on her way to the temple, the sun suddenly sets, and the group are unable to cross Mount Agero on foot. It is then that a middle-aged woman appears and offers them overnight refuge in her lodge. The woman reveals herself to be a mountain crone who quickly made the sun set to ask the dancer to perform the play *Yamanba*. The frightened dancer tries to recite a part of the play but is stopped by the mountain crone, who tells them that she will reveal her identity and dance if the dancer recites the play in the middle of the night when the moon has risen. The woman then vanishes into thin air. The dancer and her retainers wait for the mountain crone's arrival. She appears in her true identity, telling her story of her life in the mountains as the dancer and retainer listen sympathetically. She then performs a dance to show how a genuine *Yamanba* makes her mountain rounds. She then disappears and is not seen again.

The above synopsis will guide comprehension of the next section which will highlight that the understanding of *ma* as the 'pregnant pause' generates one of the most relatable definitions from a Western perspective. Its use in Japanese performing arts provides several opportunities to discover more about the expression and how it is particularly well used in portraying supernatural elements through the example of the noh play *Yamanba*, drawing attention to the porous boundaries between the living and the dead in the play.

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[304] Reider Noriko T. notes that in contemporary Japanese society the *Yamanba/Yamauba* is an ugly old woman who lives in the mountains and devours human beings. Karen Brazell describes the *Yamauba* as a contradictory character. In the 17th century the demon figure was recognised as the mother of *Kintarō*, a legendary super-child who was raised in the mountains. In the late Edo period she was also portrayed as an alluring and seductive figure. However, the representations in the medieval noh play described above exerts the most significant influence. See Reider Noriko T., *Japanese Demonlore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present* (Utah: Utah State University Press, 2010).

[305] Monica Bethe and Karen Brazell, 'Dance in the Noh Theater Volume One, Dance Analysis', in *Cornell East Asia Studies Number 29* (New York: Cornell University, 1982), 57.

Noh is constructed of primary units or sub-sections of performance called *shōdan,* with each having poetic, melodic, rhythmic, and kinetic characteristics. *Dan* describes the scenes in each act with the *shōdan* within the *dan* having important specific functions. For example, the *shōdan* are used to make up basic types of scenes, such as entrance, conversation, and presentation scenes. One of the segments central to many presentation scenes features is known as the *kuse* (narrative dance song), which is traditionally a rhythmic song of three sections, sung mainly by a chorus. [306] Monica Bethe and Karen Brazell draw attention to these 'presentation scenes in which the main performer, aided by the chorus, presents the kernel of the play, either through dance or instrumental accompaniment (eye-opening scenes) or through song, which may be accompanied by dance (ear-opening scene).' [307] These narrative highlights of the play are often used in scenes that reveal spirits or demons, and there is one such scene in *Yamanba*:

> The nō draws on legends of an old woman living in the mountains which have inspired Japanese artists for centuries. She is an enigma—a god, a demon, an entertainer, a mother; enlightened, tormented, helpful, and harmful. Capitalizing on the ambivalence, the nō adds new dimensions to the figure of Yamanba. It highlights the questions of appearance, reality, and art by introducing an entertainer who impersonates Yamanba to the real Yamanba who in turn entertains her impersonator. [308]

In *Yamanba*, the *kuse scene* is a central performance device, used at a moment of revelation in play that focuses on the mountain crone's tales. *Yamanba* is one of the few noh plays that preserves a form close to Kiyotsugu Kannami's original medieval dance song. (See footnote 278). It features both

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[306] *Kuse* originates from *kusemai*, with interrelated meanings in this context it is an independent performing art that originated in fourteenth century and was performed by itinerant women. The attraction of *kusemai* centred on its highly rhythmic singing and a dance form of the same name for which a fan was used. Kiyotsugu Kannami (credited with establishing the form of noh as it is currently known in Japan, along with his son, Zeami) adopted a style of performance and song form as a type of *kusemai* that features in a noh play, usually in the fourth dan, in which the *shite* relates a narrative. The *kuse* scene is made up of the *shodan* segments, which are often used with the following headings: *shidai* (theme song); *kuri* (ornate passage); *sashi* (recitative) and *kuse* (main segment, divided into stanzas which in full form is A, B, C, A1, B1, C1, beginning and ending with the same poetic refrain.) The *kuse* in its developed noh form can be performed as a relatively conventional dance, always accompanied by a sung text and a select instrumental ensemble. However, not all *kuse* are danced, the *shite* can remain seated which is described as *i-guse*, seated *kuse*. When it is danced it is called *mai-guse* (danced *kuse*). However, it is the *kuse* that I focus on here as Zeami used the *kuse* as one of the main dances in the play to create his narrative and characterization of the Yamanba, depicting a supernatural character with human qualities.
[307] Monica Bethe and Karen Brazell, *Noh as Performance: An Analysis of the Kuse Scene of Yamanba*, published by the China-Japan Program (now the East Asia Program) (Cornell: Cornell University, 1978), 7.
[308] *Ibid.*, 8.

kuse that is performed seated (*i-guse*) with the chorus and actor singing but with no dancing and *kuse* performed with the *shite* dancing (*mai-guise* or *kusemai*). The sequence of segments in the scene is presented as *shidai*: theme song sung by the chorus (*jishidai*); the *kuri*: an ornate passage that incorporates the highest set pitch (also *kuri*) and ends with a long embellished syllable; *sashi*: the main segment of recitative delivered as unmetered poetry to a non-congruent rhythm. [309] It is divided into stanzas as follows: *Kuse A*, *Kuse B*, *Kuse C*, *Kuse A1*, *Kuse C1*. *Kuse A* is delivered as *i-guse*, the *shite* sings the first line with the chorus taking over as the shite rises and begins to dance the opening sequence to the *kusemai* in *Kuse B*.

The *i-guse* can be described as an ear-opening scene. The mountain crone describes how she suffers living in the mountains. The *shite* sits in the centre of the stage, completely still, like a rock. As Komparu describes '[t]o the flow of the choral chanting of the story and the instrumental music he dances only with his heart, going beyond the visual to attain infinite expression. The operation of putting a quiet stillness where we would expect a duration of eloquent dancing — this is the pursuit of the expression through *ma*.' [310] This description is reflected in *Yamanba's i-guse* (*Kuse A*). The *shite* remains still during the chorus' delivery of the first six lines of their sung narrative. The lines are sung in a regular rhythm congruent with the ground patterns (*ji no rui*) produced by the drums, forming background rhythms. In *Kuse A's* lyrical theme, 'the deep silence of untouched nature is extended and leads to the identification of mountains and valleys with two religious paths.' [311] This example can be linked to Odamura's definition of *ma* referenced earlier as perceiving meaning through the immediacy of experience, in her words, 'a negative space filled by imagination.' The identification of setting leaps from the *ma* produced by the silence of *Kuse A* in the *Yamanba* play.

Positive space ascribed to the blank is also demonstrated through the noh theatre's visual and audio composition, which is described using three levels of formality: *shin*, *gyō*, and *sō*. These levels also apply to the example of *Yamanba*. At the *shin*-level, the audio-viewer recognizes the actor/character, their background, and in relation to space and silence, they hear the notes and rests of the music performed onstage. At the *gyō*-level the audio-viewer should organise the performance

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[309] See Monica Bethe and Karen Brazell, 'Introduction to Yamanba 山姥', (http://www.glopad.org/jparc/?q=en/node/22775, 30 October 2021).
[310] Komparu, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives*,73-74.
[311] Bethe and Brazell, *Noh as Performance,* 101.

through narrative, working out the chronological order of the onstage events. In *mugen noh*, time is depicted as passing in a non-linear fashion with the action switching between multiple timeframes and/or using flashbacks. The audio-viewer should also recognise the use of sparse instrumentation. The *sō*-level is a much more expressive part, existing only to give shape to the blank. This is achieved by the audio-viewer seeking to understand the sparseness of sounds, ascribing shape to any voids in the visual and audio representations and thus reading into the spaces. The audio-viewer is also given the decision of ascribing what sort of relationship exists between the *gyō* as a figure level and the *sō* as a ground level. As Komparu summarises:

> The blank part created by the symbolic expressive part is the core of the composition, *ma*, an entity that really exists. In a *gyō* composition the decision regarding the relationship of figure to ground rests with the viewer; in *sō* we seem to return to *shin*: figure and ground are made explicit. The difference […] is that in a *sō* level composition the significance is not in the figure but in the ground. [312]

The examples from *Yamanba* also demonstrate how *ma* creates an experience allowing the audio-viewer to perceive two different types of events simultaneously: the illustrative example performed in front of them, and the atmospheric trigger, mainly demonstrated by the onstage music (*hayashi-kata*). For example, the use of music to express the complex character of the *Yamanba* and her struggle under the burdens of good or evil, yearning for Buddhist salvation, is portrayed through the play's final dance, the *tachimawari* (立回り) that falls under the category of *hataraki* or realistic action. The *tachimawari* is usually called a 'stroll', and in it, 'the dancer mimes *Yamanba's* peregrinations of the mountains with her metaphysical burden.' [313] The slow movement of the performance in which the dancer circles to the left of the stage is joined by the non-congruent rhythm of the instrumental music (*hyōshi-awazu*). This ensemble is made up of the *fue* (flute), *ko-tsuzumi* (shoulder drum), *ō-tsuzumi* (hip drum) and is emphasised by the *taiko* (stick drum), which intensifies the beat. The tempo quickens in the last moment of the performance when the *Yamanba* is transformed into a mountain demon:

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[312] Komparu, *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives,* 72.
[313] Bethe and Brazell, 'Dance in the Noh Theater Volume One, Dance Analysis', 176.

Tachimawari To slow, weighted beats of the three drums and long drawn-out notes on the flute, the shite paces around the stage leaning on her staff. At center stage, she kneels and lays the stick across her shoulder as though shouldering a heavy burden […]. She rises and returns to the shite spot.

SHITE (Deliberately, to noncongruent drums):

To shelter under a single tree, draw water from a single stream,

these acts cause links in other lives; much stronger our bond

for you sing my name, wandering around a sad world, [314]
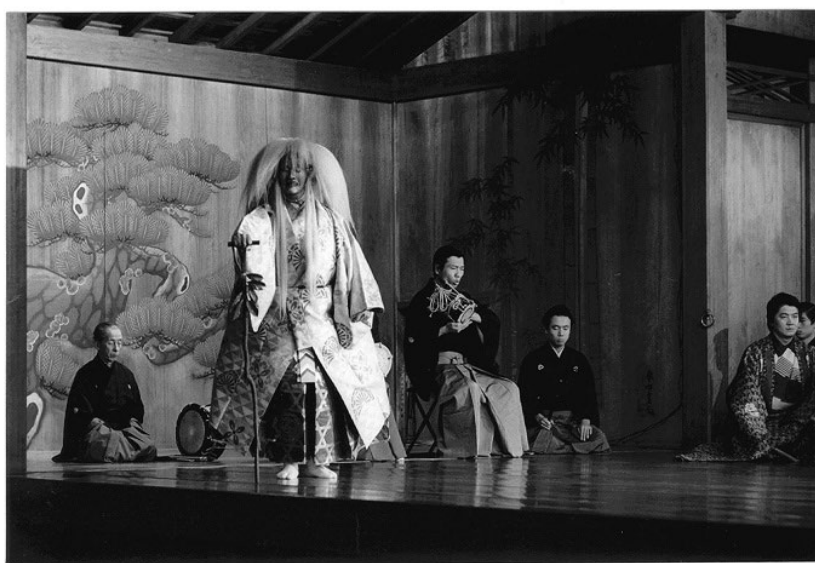
Figure 10. Still of the *Tachimawari* from *Yamanba noh*; Copyright 1998-2008, Courtesy of the Global Performing Arts Consortium.

Music is used here to heighten the supernatural experience as the mountain crone expresses the burden of her un-enlightenment through dance. Morishita Chikako reinforces this point further, noting the framing of events or phenomena, as connected to the 'useful definition of the Japanese cultural pattern of *ma* is the quality of "interpenetration" understood as an experiential space where ambivalent statuses and opposite worlds are crossed and interpenetrated.' [315] Put into analytical practice when applied to film, these can be understood

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[314] Hiroshi Kiyoma et al. and Sanari Kentaro, 'Yamanba: A demon play, usually attributed to Zeami' in *Traditional Japanese Theater: An Anthology of Plays*, Karen Brazell (ed.), Monica Bethe and Karen Brazell (trans.), (New York and West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1998), 224.
[315] Morishita Chikako, 'A Music Engagement with 'Ma'- Japanese Aesthetics of Space and Time', 8.

as examples of cinematic events that can be recognised in culturally resonant scores for

Japanese 'ghost' films that do not try to rationalise the mysterious forces portrayed, but

instead reinforce their irrationality through music and sound design.

2.2.3 Ma and the supernatural in film: An Inspiration Classification

As referenced in Chapter One, the score for Kobayashi's film anthology *Kwaidan* (*Ghost Stories*, 1964) is unique for its experimental sound design and its incorporation of Japanese concepts, including *ma*. In her article on the use of electronically manipulated natural sounds combined with traditional Japanese music in *Kwaidan*, Koizumi Kyoko directly references *ma*, observing that Takemitsu's score emphasises the use of the concept 'to give the in-between moments a positive meaning.' [316] As noted in Chapter One, Koizumi examines *ma* and the importance of the single sound through various technical devices in her writing. However, the opening titles of *Kwaidan* sets the scene reinforcing the supernatural and the absence of human presence – by applying Japanese cultural concepts to the sound design.

Visually, the title sequence is presented in an abstract manner, anticipating the uncanny nature of the stories that follow, as shots are shown of coloured inks being dropped into a swirling expanse, almost like paintbrushes being dipped into the water. These shots are intercut with the credits of the four films, presented in the kanji alphabet, which adds momentum to the visual track. These images are contrasted using sound in the title sequence, which, except for the crackling of the audio lead, could be described as running virtually in silence if not for the chimes of a small metallic gong. Two chimes are heard at various moments on the soundtrack, the first tone pitched around E4, followed by A4, and left to resound until naturally fading out. While the chimes are heard whenever a shot of the coloured watery swirls appear on screen, their temporal placement is not synchronised, thus creating a rhythmic elasticity: the images seem to float along in the asynchronous placement of the sounds. This striking audio-visual placement is reminiscent of Japanese composer Lim Liza's description of her 1995 composition for *koto* and voice *Burning House*. She highlights how the calligraphic *koto* notation was 'a visual representation of how the sounds "float" in space that is congruent with the Japanese

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[316] Koizumi, 'Creative Soundtrack Expression: Tōru Takemitsu's Score for *Kwaidan*', 85.

aesthetic of *ma*- the "heart" of silence that is present both within and between sounds.' [317] The floating

aspect in *Kwaidan's* opening credits resonates with Lim's floating description. This also recalls the

aesthetic of a single sound which scholar Shimosako Mari notes when she describes how, in practice,

'the Japanese first enjoy the unique timbre of a single sound and [then] they enjoy the *ma*, the "space"

created after it.' [318]

In *Kwaidan*, *ma* is identified by placing cues seconds apart, forming a disquieting

harmony through disunity. These cues also represent the parallelism of the supernatural world of the

film and the living, foreshadowing *Kwaidan's* exploration of ghostly terror crossing over into the

human world. In these opening credits, there is a telling moment of synchronisation between the image

and the soundtrack. When a swirl of red ink is synchronised with the first chime of E4, the realms of

the supernatural and the human briefly touch. Through highlighting this blurring of boundaries, *ma* is

best utilised in contemporary Japanese supernatural horror films, including such examples as Nakata,

Hideo's 1998 film *Ringu*. Discussing cultural constructions of the supernatural in *Ringu*, Valerie Wee

notes that that the film is 'primarily structured by the Buddhist notion of dualism, which sees

opposites (for example, the supernatural and natural) as linked forces that result in a balanced

whole…reflecting a "Both/And" mindset. This notion of dualism underpins the film's narrative

structure and logic, and it impacts on the film's visual style and characterization.' [319] However, I argue

that audio style also reflects this supernatural/natural dualism in *Ringu*, and the concept of *ma* is used

to achieve this, as the following example from the film will demonstrate.

In *Ringu,* whenever someone watches the cursed videotape, they immediately receive a phone

call after they have watched the footage; they then receive another seven days later, just before their

death. The phone itself is a communication tool, but for Avital Ronnell, it also operates on the premise

of death:

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[317] Lim Liza, quoted in Morishita Chikako, 'Ma'- heart of silence', *CeReNeM Journal* 1 (2010): 15.

[318] Shimosako, Mari, 'Philosophy and aesthetics', *The Garland encyclopaedia of world music Vol. 7. East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea*, R.C. Tokumaru Provine, Y. and J.L. Witzleben (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2002), 551.

[319] Valerie Wee, 'Cultural Constructions of the Supernatural: The Case of *Ringu* and *The Ring*', in *The Scary Screen: Media Anxiety in 'The Ring'*, Kristen Lacefield (ed.), (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 81.

In as much as it belongs, in its simplest register, in order of the mechanical and technical, it is already on the side of death […] The telephone flirts with the opposition life/death by means of the same ruse through which it stretches apart receiver and transmitter or makes the infinite connection that touches the rim of finitude. Like transference, the telephone is given to us as effigy and as relation to absence. [320]

The very dualism that the telephone represents is also highlighted through what Caetlin Benson-Allott describes as its 'ultimate function': '[i]nstead of transmitting calls that remind their receivers of the beyond, the telephone now delivers *the* call from beyond.' [321] Here, musical *ma,* through the dial tone, parallels the phone's terror function in *Ringu*, demonstrating how a unique cultural concept like *ma* can also be identified in this transmitter of a Japanese ghostly force.

The title credits of *Ringu* conclude with a shot of a stormy sea that cross-fades into an extreme close-up of television static, which then cuts to close-up footage of a baseball game. Following this close-up, the camera slowly starts to zoom out, and ominous rumbles of two electroacoustic sound effects enter the soundtrack. They are almost gong-like in their entries and bathed in reverberation, suggesting the lingering decay of a gong being struck. However, there is no definite sense of pitch: the effect is used as a rhythmic marker to emphasise and draw attention to the caption that appears on the screen: 'Sunday, September 5th'. As the sound is left to fade away, a female's dialogue is heard overlapping the sound's decay. The dialogue continues, and the camera zooms out to show the full television screen in this establishing shot before cutting to the master shot of two girls sitting in a bedroom, confirming the location of the television shown in the background. One of them, Masami, tells her friend Tomoko a story she heard about a VCR that a boy watched and then received a phone call telling him that he would die in a week. Masami's dialogue is interrupted by Tomoko, who concludes the story by saying that the boy died one week later. Tomoko then goes on to tell Masami about a mysterious tape that she and some other friends watched and that as soon as it finished, the telephone rang, but nobody was on the other end of the line and that today marks one week since they

[320] Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 84.
[321] Caetlin Benson-Allott, '"Before You Die, You See The Ring": Notes on the Imminent Obsolescence of VHS', *The Scary Screen: Media Anxiety in The Ring*, Kristen Lacefield (ed.), (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 120.

watched the videotape. However, as the tension is broken by Tomoko admitting that she is teasing her friend, the phone suddenly rings.

Besides the dialogue that is heard after the sound of the date marker, all audio in the scene is environmental. There is no underscoring used, and the dialogue remains the primary audio source:

> The mise-en-scène in this sequence is overtly and conspicuously realistic and ordinary. The lighting and color scheme/saturation is naturalistic, the set design resembles a typical Japanese house, the editing and camera angles are not stylized or marked in any way. The soundtrack, which is devoid of background music, contains instead the ambient sounds common to a domestic scene. All this works to position the viewer within a realistic and naturalistic scene of two teenage girls having an ordinary evening at home, teasing each other with a spooky story about curses and mysterious deaths. [322]

However, this opening sequence is set up to create a startle effect. The musically startling ringing of the telephone creates such an effect and generates a sense of foreboding. Tomoko, appearing to shake her head in disbelief, stares up at the clock on the wall, the camera adopting her point of view as it reads close to 21.40. As both girls visually acknowledge the clock and the time, the clock's ticking becomes prominent in the soundtrack, alongside the continued ringing of the telephone. The ticking is only silenced after Masami asks her friend, 'It was true, wasn't it?' and then proceeds to jump up and run from the room, her movements amplified to drown out the clock ticking with Tomoko calling and chasing after her as she runs away.

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[322] Wee, 'Cultural Constructions of the Supernatural: The Case of *Ringu* and *The Ring*', 84.

Figure 11. Tomoko hears the phone ringing.

In discussing what makes the telephone ring so unnerving, Steven T. Brown refers to Michel Chion's acousmatic, 'the auditory situation in which we hear sounds without seeing their cause or source.' [323] Brown observes that '[i]n everyday life, we are frequently confronted with the acousmatic voice, such as when we use the telephone or listen to the radio. In such context, the acousmatic voice is not disturbing because it often carries with it "a mental visual representation" of the presumed cause or source.' [324] However, this opening sequence to *Ringu* uses the acousmatic sound of the telephone to create a disturbing atmosphere. Referring back to Benson-Allott's observation of the telephone's dualism, in this opening scene, the phone is immediately associated with the supernatural through the explanation of the girls' dialogue. Therefore, when the telephone rings, the audience already establishes its connotation. As each telephone ring is heard, attention is first paid to the sound itself and then to each gap between the rings. This is because the audio-viewer has been drawn into the naturalistic environment of the girls and their intimate conversation. Like them, the audio-viewer is alert and responsive to every out of place sound in the scene, and every form of silence created, in this case by the telephone.

Each break between the telephone's rings forms, as such, a 'pregnant pause, an example of *ma*; a space full of meaning as the audio-viewer, like the girls, begin to fill each gap with the anticipation that something is about to happen. This is in keeping with the definition of *ma* as 'operating in the form of discrete silences between sounds in continuity

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[323] Michel Chion, *Film: a Sound Art*, Claudia Gorbman (trans.), (New York and West Sussex: Columbia University Press [2003] 2009), 465.
[324] Steven T. Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations* (Cham: Springer Nature/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 44.

[and] add[ing] depth in terms of what is being portrayed.' [325] Furthermore, just as the girls attach meaning to the ringing telephone guiding the audience's interpretation, so too does *ma* as it 'cradles the experience perceived by the protagonist, thus exposing viewers to this experience.' [326]

As an aside further demonstrating *Ringu's* attention to sonic detail and desire to use sound in ways that differentiate the Japanese production from a Hollywood style, the sound of the phone was given a specific ring quality in production, unique to Japan. This is clarified by *Ringu's* director Nakata Hideo, who in an interview highlighted that 'just for the sound effects alone we had 50 tracks and for the sound of the telephone, they mixed four different qualities of phone sounds because they did not want them to sound like Hollywood phones!' [327] The phone rings also differ in pitch between scenes. In the opening sequence, the ring is roughly an octave higher than when it is heard again after Reiko watches the tape at the cabin. Therefore, the ring of the tone loses its familiarity even within the context of the film. Instead, it now 'possess the disquieting conglomeration of sounds that [t]he videotape did. It is something once familiar (a normal phone ring) that has returned, altered (and mixed with numerous other phone rings).' [328]

This discussion of the telephone in relation to *ma* can be related to the overall tone of the film's portrayal of the ghostly and horror, as there are no clear visual markers of the supernatural throughout *Ringu* until its climax, and even then, the visuals are dominated by the distorted, electro-acoustic sound design. As Wee notes, '[b]eyond a vague sense of disquiet, the visuals remain largely unremarkable. In fact, any sense of unease is largely implied rather than clearly depicted because Tomoko's death does not even occur onscreen.' [329] This implication is demonstrated by the telephone and its role as a mediator between the human world of the girls and the otherworldly realm of Sadako's curse, which plays an essential role in the opening sequences reflection of 'the Japanese perspective on the supernatural as that which exists alongside the ordinary and everyday, even as it has

[325] Lena Pek Hung Lie, 'The Dialectic of "Ma" and "Sound": A Critical Reading of Tōru Takemitsu's Music for Teshigahara's *Pitfall'*, 34.
[326] *Ibid*., 34.
[327] Nakata Hideo, interviewed by Totaro, Donato, 'The "Ring" Master: Interview with Hideo Nakata', *Offscreen* 4/3 (2000). (http://offscreen.com/view/hideo_nakata , 13 January 2017).
[328] Sarah Mackay Ball, 'The uncanny in Japanese and American horror film: Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* and Gore Verbinski's *Ring'* (Masters diss., NC State University, 2006), 44.
[329] Wee, 'Cultural Constructions of the Supernatural: The Case of *Ringu* and *The Ring'*, 97.

the ability to cross over and intrude into the physical world.' [330] Therefore *ma* is an example of a concept unique to the aesthetic of Japanese artistic and cultural practice that proves to be transferrable into the world of film, highlighting the unexplainable and supernatural. [331] This will be explored further in the case studies of Chapter Three and Four.

2.3 Non-musical phenomena in the concept *sawari*: The Orientation

2.3.1 The Orientation of sawari

When discussing *ma,* another concept often referenced is *sawari*. Writing about the pair of concepts in his article on music and sound in recent Japanese supernatural films and their Hollywood remakes, Wierzbicki, referencing Yuasa Jōji, notes how timbre is one of the most essential characteristics of Japanese music, with the complexity of a single sound often described as delivering a compound sonority. 'The beauty of this sonority – coloured by noise, complex, dynamic – is enhanced when the sound is set off, or highlighted, by a potent silence that Japanese musicians have long identified as *ma*.' [332] While the previous section explored 'the full presence [of *ma*] that surrounds each musical sound' [333], *sawari* invites an understanding of movement within the sound itself, highlighting the importance of sound colour. As will be seen, such movements are another way Japanese arts enhance representations of the supernatural.

In *Nihon ongaku no biteki kenkyū* ('Research on the Aesthetics of Japanese Music'), Music historian Kikkawa Eishi asserts 'that historically, the Japanese have not strictly discriminated between "musical" and "non-musical" sounds (1984: 68).' [334] This non-discrimination was also reflected more broadly in the fact that Japan had no all-embracing term for music before contact with the West. While

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[330] Wee, 'Cultural Constructions of the Supernatural: The Case of *Ringu* and *The Ring'*, 97.
[331] For more examples of the use of *ma* in Japanese film and film scores, see James W. Boyd, 'Intervals (*Ma*) in Japanese Aesthetics: Ozu and Miyazaki', *Japan Studies Association Journal* 9 (January 2011): 47-56; Lena Pek Hung Lie, 'The Dialectic of "Ma" and "Sound": A Critical Reading of Tōru Takemitsu's Music for Teshigahara's *Pitfall', The London Film & Media Reader 2: The End of Representation? Essays from Film and Media 2010 The Second Annual London Film and Media Conference*, Phillip Drummond (ed.), (London: The London Symposium, 2013).
[332] James Wierzbicki, 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese *Kaidan* films and their Hollywood remakes', 199.
[333] Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau, 'Introduction', *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (eds.), (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), xx.
[334] Edwards, '"Silence By My Noise": An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture and the Sound Art of Akita Masami', 93.

Hosokawa Shūhei notes that, instead of a generic term, the Japanese used specific genre names, he asserts that 'Western concepts of genre do not necessarily correspond to the vernacular classification of Japanese music (*shu-moku*). Here I use the term "genre" for convenience.' [335] However, sound practices were referred to using vernacular terms concerning sound. For example, *mononone* ('sound of things', 'sound of instruments'); *utamai* ('song and dancing'); *asobi* ('play'); *ongaku*, consisting of two characters – 音 (*on* or *oto*, sound) and 楽 (*gaku*, a species of human sound expression). [336] James Edwards observes, in light of the differences in early Japanese music history and this non-discrimination between 'musical' and 'non-musical' sounds, that

> there was no indigenous equivalent to the Western tradition of musical aesthetics…Drawing
> on a range of sources, including classical literature, visual art, and musician and organological
> analysis, Kikkawa reconstructs what could be called an indigenous aesthetics (*bigaku*) of
> sounding and listening practices. The quality he locates as its heart is *onshoku*, or "sound
> colour". [337]

This focus on sound colour in Japanese music was part of the 'bundle of parallel developments of distinct genres and schools [rather] than the kind of dynamic succession of stylistic change that characterizes music in the West.' [338] For example, 'at the same time Western instrumental music was developing towards an ideal of "pure", "measurable" tones, the Japanese were devising means of making the timbres of imported instruments noisier.' [339] This was well documented with the concept of *sawari*. In Japanese, *sawari* means 'touch' and can also mean 'obstacle'. [340] Takemitsu provided the latter translation to describe a different approach to sound in Japanese music in which he

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[335] Hosokawa Shūhei, '音楽 Ongaku, Onkyō/ Music, Sound', *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* XXV (December 2013): 19.
[336] *Ongaku* is the most established equivalence of music in Japan today thanks to modern education. First recorded in the *Shoku Nihongi* (794-97), according to Kikkawa, it was used to designate music of Chinese origin around the 8th century. However, Hosokawa notes that 'in recent years the concept of music/*ongaku* has become obsolete for some contemporary electronic improvisational artists, who redefine their sonic artifacts simply and polemically as *onkyō* (sound, the sonic).
[337] Edwards, '"Silence By My Noise": An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture and the Sound Art of Akita Masami', 94.
[338] Hosokawa, '音楽 Ongaku, Onkyō/ Music, Sound', 10.
[339] Edwards, '"Silence By My Noise": An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture and the Sound Art of Akita Masami', 94.
[340] *Sawari* also refers to a device used in a bunraku, kabuki play or *jōruri* recital. Synonymous to an aside or a soliloquy in a western play, this emotional passage *gidayū-bushi* (chanted recitative) passage differs from its western counterpart by being exclusively put into the mouth of the female character, revealing the emotions of the doll puppet that represents the woman character in bunraku. In kabuki the emotion would be impersonated by the *onnagata* actor.

describes *sawari* as being the '"apparatus of an obstacle" itself. [341] In a sense, it is an intentional inconvenience that creates a part of the expressiveness of the sound.' [342] This inconvenience can be identified as a reference to instrumental alterations made to produce the *sawari*, such as the example of the Japanese long-necked, three-stringed fretless lute, usually known as the *shamisen.*

One of the most distinct qualities of the *shamisen* comes from its string positioning. The lowest and thickest of the *shamisen's* strings (*ichi no ito*) was kept off the small metal upper bridge of the instrument (the *kami-goma*) with the string resting on the bare wood. Just below the *kami-goma* near the top of the neck is a little wooden ridge is visible on the *shamisen* known as the *sawari no yama* (mountain of the *sawari*). This was created so that the second and third strings (*ni no ito* and *san no ito*) had enough height not to make contact with the *sawari no yama*. However, the *icho no ito* 'touches slightly at the point of the "mountain" toward the end of the vibration and produces overtones.' [343] The brushing over the *sawari no yama* thus results in an acoustic interference described as a trailing sound or a buzzing, the *sawari*. While this buzzing results in the generation of noise-like inharmonic components in its aftersound, the decay of harmonic components is also prolonged as the rich sounds the *sawari* emphasise the higher harmonics. Furthermore, while the other two strings are not in direct contact with the neck when they are plucked at a higher register (in the harmonic overtone series), *sawari* can still be heard due to sympathetic resonance, causing the *ichi no ito* to vibrate, especially if it has been tuned correctly. As scholar Shimosako Mari describes it: 'When you strum a syamisen, the string produces a "thick" sound such as "de-re-e-n" as it comes into contact with and then leaves the top of the *sawari*; this is called the *sawari* sound.' [344]

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[341] Takemitsu also referenced Kikkawa's research in identifying several different connotations of *sawari* from a specific part of the *shō* (bamboo mouth organ), through to the definition of coming into contact with a foreign style. As this chapter is addressing the effect of *sawari* as it has developed as an aesthetic term, these additional connotations will not be examined further in the context of this thesis.

[342] Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, 64-65.

[343] Kishibe, Shigeo. *The Traditional Music of Japan* (Japan Foundation, 1982), 75.

[344] Mari Shinmosako, 'Philosophy and Aesthetics', *The Garland encyclopedia of world music. Vol.6. The Middle East*, Virgina Danielson, Dwight Reynolds and Scott Marcus (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2002), 552.
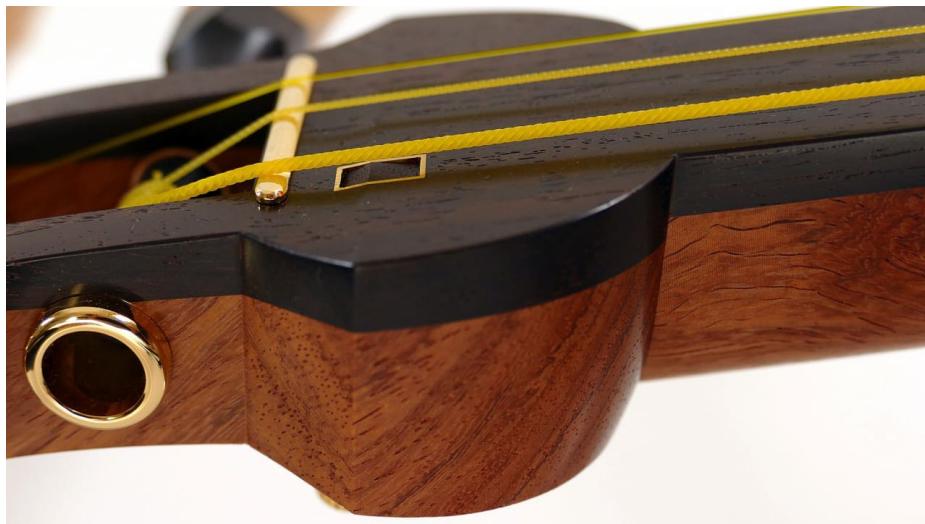
Figure 12. Close-up of *sawari no yama* and *kami-goma* of the *shamisen*; Copyright 2021. Courtesy of Kyle Abbott.

Contemporary musical developments in some genres of *shamisen* music have worked to enhance the *sawari* by creating an 'unnatural' device called the *azuma-zawari*. Produced in the 1890s, the addition of the metal screw plate that can be turned was added to control the level of buzzing created when playing the *tsugaru shamisen*. This collective term refers to both the type of instrument used from the 1950s onwards and the music played by it, an influential regional style of Japanese folk music developed in the district of Tsugaru. [345] Adjusting the height produces a clean, warm buzz. The effect of *sawari* created by this alteration of the *shamisen* aligns the term with what Takemitsu notes as 'foreign elements' or 'obstacles to performance that result in noise effects and the noise-producing "touching" of one object against another.' [346] Similar modifications were made to the *biwa* to produce *sawari* by creating an upward curvature plate given to the frets. This resulted in the right side of the fret surface being apart from the string but touching when it vibrated once played. William P. Malm notes that the *sawari* sound was 'an attempt to imitate the much stronger reverberation of the biwa strings, for the biwa was the original instrument of the first experimenters with the shamisen.' [347] In examining why *sawari* was such a desirable timbre, Takemitsu noted that '[m]any types of East Asian

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[345] The *azuma-zawari* is also used for *min'yo*, a traditional Japanese folk style played on the *Tsugaru shamisen*. The *min'yo* style can also be played on other sizes of *shamisen* too.

[346] Tōru Takemitsu, 'Tōru Takemitsu, on Sawari', *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, Frederick Lau and Yayoi Uno Everett (eds.) Hugh De Ferranti and Yayoi Uno Everett (annotated, trans.), (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004): 200.

[347] William P. Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959), 215. The *biwa*, while producing natural *sawari* was not as portable as the *shamisen* and had less melodic flexibility which led to the sound modification of the *shamisen* to produce this unique sound quality.

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music incorporate noise like elements with great care, but I think it is only in Japan that we developed an aesthetic term, *sawari*, in reference to such effects.' [348] In his personal writings, Takemitsu clarifies the importance of the concept in the Japanese music tradition (through a discussion on the characteristic sounds of the *biwa*):

> The major characteristic that sets it apart from Western instruments is the active inclusion of noise in its sound, whereas Western instruments, in the process of development, sought to eliminate noise. It may sound contradictory to refer to "beautiful noise", but the biwa is constructed to create such a sound. That sound is called sawari. [349]

Takemitsu's description of *sawari* is one example of the importance of *onshoku* in Japanese music. The techniques and sound gestures that reinforced the 'Japanese "principle of esteem for sound color" (*onshoku sonchōshugi*)' [350], including 'shifting pitches (*glissandi, portamenti*), grace notes (quasi-harmonic gestures), timbral transformations (sound and noise) and shifting tempi (*accelerandi, ritardandi*),' [351] are also described in Japanese music scholarship under the reference of 'noise', or *sō-on* 騒音, which translates as 'noisy sound'. While extended playing techniques are used in Western music to produce unpitched sounds, [352] such techniques do not produce the same meaning because first, western instruments were designed to produce harmonies and resonating sounds and second, the unique sound quality produced by the design of traditional Japanese instruments, including the *shamisen* and *biwa*, are intended to produce 'noisy sound'.

The impure sound quality likened to the concept of *sawari* was well integrated into the musical repertoire of the performing arts, not just by the very fact that the *shamisen* was part of the primary make-up of kabuki and bunraku's musical ensembles. James Wierzbicki refers to the concept as a stock effect of kabuki music in relation to the aural representation of *yūrei* and *goryo-shinko* ('vengeful souls') in contemporary Japanese supernatural horror films. However, while Wierzbicki explains what *sawari* is regarding the kabuki tradition, he does not provide specific examples of how

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[348] Takemitsu, 'Tōru Takemitsu, on Sawari', 200.
[349] Takemitsu. *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, 64.
[350] Edwards, 'Silence By My Noise: An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture and the Sound Art of Akita Masami', 94
[351] Basil Athanasiadias, 'The Japanese Aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and its Potential in Contemporary Composition' (Ph.D. diss., University of Kent, July 2008), 25.
[352] For example the playing technique of *col legno*, used by string players.

effective the *sawari* can be in representing the supernatural in specific examples from the theatre tradition.

2.3.2 Sawari: An Information Classification

This section will highlight how *sawari* helped to heighten representations of the supernatural in Japanese performing arts. In kabuki, '[i]nterpretative music forms part of almost every play. To produce certain moods in the audience, the drummers and samisen players are accustomed to make sounds and rhythms to increase the emotion or picturesque effect of a scene.' [353] This focus on the audience reflects an era in kabuki theatre development that welcomed plays dealing with supernatural themes. The Edo period was an era of stability in Japan with a more secular approach to storytelling. This contrasted with the earlier moral emphasis in supernatural storytelling, delivered by Buddhist monks who turned tales into sermons to scare the population into practising moral and good behaviour, especially after a previous reliance on religion during times of warfare and crisis:

> In the Edo period, as the fear of living through social unrest rapidly became a thing of the past, it seems reasonable that the authors of the ghost stories and other supernatural tales were more at liberty to emphasize the entertaining aspects of their narratives and subsequently this genre became a lasting popular facet of Japanese culture in word and image. [354]

Kabuki was still a favourite pastime of the era, but theatregoers not content with the existing plays looked for something more entertaining. *Kaidan-mono* (ghost plays) emerged due to these demands. Just as the audience demanded visual stimulation from the plays, their sound and music approach also answered the need for ghostly entertainment. The *shamisen* was vital here, playing a significant role in the kabuki theatre. It is used for both the on-stage music of the *debayashi* – performing both narrative (*tokiwazu*, *kiyomoto*, and *takemoto*) and lyrical (*nagauta*- 'long song')

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[353] Zoë Kincaid, *Kabuki: The Popular Stage of Japan* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1925), 19-20.
[354] Sara L. Sumpter, 'From Scrolls to Prints to Moving Pictures: Iconographic Ghost Imagery from Pre-Modern Japan to The Contemporary Horror Film', *Explorations: The UC Davis Undergraduate Research Journal* 9 (2006): 7.

music styles – and for the off-stage music and sounds of the *geza-ongaku* or *kage-bayashi* (shadow *hayashi*). [355]

Early literature on kabuki music draws attention to the fact that 'shamisen music depends almost completely on rhythm, rather than the melody, to interpret emotion.' [356] Kincaid also goes on to note that:

> Ripple-clang-bang; smoothness, roughness, villainy, tranquillity; falling snow, a flight of birds, wind in the tree-tops; skirmish and fray, the peace of moonlight, the sorrow of parting, the rapture of spring; the infirmity of age, the gladness of lovers – all these and much more the shamisen expresses to those who are able to look beyond the curtain that shuts this musical world away from Western ears because of its baffling conventions of sound rather than melody. [357]

The *shamisen*'s role as part of the *nagauta* ensemble [358] achieved these many expressions in performance both on-stage for dance plays and off-stage (providing background music) during dialogue plays. The sounds of *sawari* in *nagauta* were especially advantageous in conveying supernatural elements of the sung narrative or to imitate naturalistic sounds that would draw attention to the connections between nature and the supernatural. For example, in the kabuki version of the noh play *Yamanba* [359] – which was popular because it presented the story in a more violent form – the drama shows a woman fighting off a group of men in the mountains with a tree she uproots using the strength of the blood from her dying husband. Malm also notes the interesting nature of the *nagauta*

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[355] The *Geza-ongaku* creates atmosphere for the stage using a mixture of off-stage song (*uta*) *Aikata* (*shamisen* music without singing), *meriyasu* (off-stage segment of *nagauta* music usually performed by a solo singer to *shamisen* accompaniment during scenes without dialogue to accentuate a character's or characters' emotional feeling/s), and the use of instruments to create naturalistic sound effects. All other instruments other than the *shamisen* are called *narimono*. This term can also mean the player of music other than *nagauta* too.

[356] Zoë Kincaid, *Kabuki: The Popular Stage of Japan*, 199.

[357] *Ibid.*, 199-200.

[358] The on-stage set up of *nagauta* was made up of a back row of *shamisen* players and singers, who sometimes perform as an ensemble in their own right. However, the majority of the repertoire is performed by the additional support of a combination of front row instruments of flutes (*nohkan* from noh theatre or the *takebue* - a simple melodic bamboo flute) and drums (*ko-tsuzumi* - small right shoulder drum), *ō-tsuzumi* - large left hip drum and *taiko* – stick drum), collectively known as the *hayashi*. Other off-stage instruments were also incorporated depending on the nature of the text of the piece.

[359] *Yamanba* is based on the legend of the old woman spirit who wanders through the mountains found in Japanese folklore as in "Yamauba mono" in *Seikai dai hyakka jiten* Vol. XXX (Heibonsha's World Encyclopedia) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972), 475.

composition in that 'it was not meant for theater at all. As a concert piece in a *shamisen* genre that is primarily lyrical rather than narrative, it could draw freely on the basic concepts and mood of both versions of the story.' [360] This lyrical quality is reflected in the *nagauta* of *Shiki no Yamanba* [361] through its use of *sawari* that reinforce connections between nature and the supernatural. For example, in the *nagauta* text, the narrator sings about an image of nature rather than providing a precise sequence of story events or ideas. Instead, meaning is created from what Malm describes as 'a mosaic of impressions' [362]. He highlights how '[t]his is in keeping with an aesthetic found in many Japanese arts, in which only the outline of a subject is given.' [363] The following example combines story with an emphasis on the four seasons and nature:

18	Onaji omoi ni naku mushi no, matsumushi	The insects of fall
19	matsumushi suzumushi kutsuwamushi	cry in sympathy
20	umaoimushi no yaruse naku	over the helplessness of it all;
	(ai)	(interlude)

Malm notes that this *nagauta* text's lines 'are primarily lists of the names of insects and are sung piecemeal during a virtuoso *shamisen* interlude, while lines 38 and 39 are onomatopoeic snow.' [364]

| 38 | chiri ya chiri ya | and sends snow flakes fluttering |
| 39 | chiri chiri chiri chiri | chiri ya chiri ya |

With these performance instructions the audience would expect the quality of the sound, the *sawari,* to have a particular resonance at these points in the *shamisen* scoring as the *shamisen* is used to imitate

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[360] William P. Malm, '"Four Seasons of the Old Mountain Woman": An Example of Japanese "Nagauta" Text Setting', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 31/1 (1978): 87. The quotation also contains the following footnote after 'narrative': 'For details on the distinctions between narrative (*katarimono*) and lyrical (*utamono*) *shamisen* music see *Encyclopedia Brittanica* (15th ed.), XII, pp. 687-88.'

[361] The addition of the word *shiki* ('four seasons') is a seasonal reference also found in the text of the climatic dance of the noh play. Shiki relates the viewing of one item in the context of a one-year cycle, a traditional topic in Japanese art forms.

[362] Malm, '"Four Seasons of the Old Mountain Woman": An Example of Japanese "Nagauta" Text Setting', 87.

[363] *Ibid*., 87.

[364] *Ibid*., 89.

the names of the insects called out. Figure 13 below presents the *chiri-kara* kabuki style of *tsuzumi* drumming played by the *ō-tsuzumi* and the *kotsuzumi*. It also demonstrates the *shamisen* imitating the singer as they call out the insect names.

Figure 13. Section from line 19 of the *nagauta* from *Shiki no Yamanba;* Copyright 1978. William P. Malm

More generally, across Japanese performing arts, the *sawari* of the *shamisen* and the *biwa* were used to imitate insect sounds, such as those of the cicada. In the nagauta *Aki no irokusa* ('The grasses of autumn', 1845) [365] , there is a musical phrase that refers specifically to the sounds of an insect: 'matsumushi no ne zo tanoshiki' ('the sounds of the matsumushi [a kind of cricket] is pleasant') that is split in two:

'The sound of pine crickets.'

("The Sound of Insects")

'How fine! A sweet cacophony! Supple and mellifluous is their strange music.' [366]

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[365] *Aki no irokusa* is an example of *nagauta* being produced as an independent performing art form with pieces intended for concert performance without dance. As a result, the *shamisen* and vocals in these *nagauta* were more virtuosic with extended instrumental interludes.

[366] Lord Nambu. 'The International Shukuhachi Society: *Aki no irokusa*' (http://www.komuso.com/pieces/pieces.pl?piece=1369, 30 March 2017).

This 'Sound of Insects' refers to a musical interlude that uses onomatopoeia to express the sound of a cricket's chirp through the use of a fixed musical pattern in the *shamisen* part called 'cinchirorin.' Kikkawa Eishi elaborates further on the use of this musical interlude:

> This "chinchirorin" is said to have been taken from the piece "Mushi no ne" ("The sound of insects") which is a piece in the *jiuta* repertoire. This piece is based on the *nō* play "*Matsumushi*" ("The chirp of the crickets"), a drama that was written in the Muromachi period. It offers evidence of the extent to which the sounds of insects were appreciated by the Japanese during this period. [367]

Mushi no ne is also a noh play that features spirits returning to recount their tale and again demonstrates how performance techniques on the *shamisen* draw attention to the importance of nature spiritually. Takemitsu observes that '[t]he inclusion in music of a natural noise, such as the sound of the cicada symbolizes the development of the Japanese appreciation of complex sounds.' [368] This complexity is also reflected in the *shamisen*'s representation of other textual connections to the supernatural. For example, in the *nagauta Shiki no Yamanba*, a transition section (*tsunagi*) is placed before lines 10-11, the section of the text that deals with summer. Following the delivery of these lines, there is an instrumental interlude that leads into the *kudoki* section (the most-lyrical section of *nagauta*, in which percussion is rarely heard):

10	Natsu wa suzushi no kaya no uchi	In the cool of a summer eve, she joins a lover
11	hiyoku no goza ni tsuki no kage	on straw mats inside a mood-bathed mosquito net
	(ai)	(interlude)
	(kudoki)	(lyrical section)

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[367] Eishi Kikkawa, 'The Musical Sense of the Japanese' *Contemporary Music Review* 1/2 (1987): 88.
[368] Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, 65.

The interlude is not only used as a form of musical transition to connect the above passage to the *kudoki,* but its flexible performative qualities and the resonance produced by the *sawari* also draw attention to the transitive nature of the moon in the supernatural setting of this *Yamanba* kabuki. As Malm highlights, the *shamisen* 'begins in a very high register, perhaps to catch the mood of the shadow of the moon (*tsuki no kage*) with which the line ends.' [369] *Sawari* is just one example of a particular sensitivity of the Japanese ear towards differences in sound colour, something which, as demonstrated above, is used for dramatic effect in Japanese theatre. It is also used in film for the same purposes, often drawing attention to the heterogeneity of film sound and music, and demonstrating the unique way in which timbre blurs the boundaries between sound-design and score, as the following section will demonstrate.

2.3.3 Sawari: An Inspiration Classification

Analysing the duel scene from Kobayashi Masaki's 1962 film *Harakiri*, Anne Rutherford draws attention to what she describes as a 'sensory flipping', a visual that cannot truly be understood without reference to the audio:

> The howl of the wind pulls our attention into the grass, the rippling close-ups that agitate the whole shot, spreading the texture of chaotic movement across and beyond the frame. In a film with very few diegetic sound effects, suddenly the insistent presence of the wind in the grass, a scratchy aural close-up, impinges on the viewer in its haptic proximity. [370]

As Rutherford highlights, the sound of the wind in the grass is no inert background audio. It is part of a 'performative understanding of mise en scène: to understand that pictorial composition is but one dimension of the complex, dispersed rhythms and intensities of sound and image.' [371] As part of this dynamic, sonic intensity highlights that the visual complexity is far more complicated and also draws attention to a cultural foundation for this sound beyond historical accuracy. In Japanese ancient poetry and folklore, the sound of the susuki grass is associated with the autumn moon, a telling association given the setting of the two samurai leaving behind the overt beauty of spring as they meet

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[369] Malm, '"Four Seasons of the Old Mountain Woman": An Example of Japanese "Nagauta" Text Setting', 99.
[370] Anne, Rutherford, 'Volatile space, Takemitsu and the material contagions of Harakiri', *Screening the Past* http://www.screeningthepast.com/2015/01/volatile-space-takemitsu-and-the-material-contagions-of%C2%A0harakiri/, 3 March 2017 [2010]).
[371] *Ibid*.

to duel to the death. Sound also punctuates this scene, delivering a meticulous choreography that may seem to turn into audio chaos but is again tied to cultural formation by emphasising the use of *sawari*. In the duel scene, when the samurai walk onto the grass plain, the rhythmic beat is maintained by the sound of footsteps against the cacophony of sound that is the howling wind blowing through the susuki grass, itself carrying on the rhythmic structure of the music from the previous scene through the mimicry of crescendos heard in the last musical cue.

These naturalistic sounds, along with the clash of their swords and wordless vocal interjections, are all that accompany the samurai as they begin to fight. Two minutes and forty seconds after one of the samurai is shown stepping onto the plain, the sounds of the *biwa* are heard. The camera cuts to a close-up shot of the susuki grass as the first strums of the *biwa* occur, the camera panning across to the right, matching the aural close-up that Rutherford refers to in her quotation, and creating an agitated feel to the whole shot that replicates the tension of the duel. However, it is the performance technique and the rhythms of the *biwa* that choreograph this scene:

> To know *Harakiri* is to be in awe of the dramaturgical quality of this instrument, the way its high frets and loose strings allow the sound of a single strum to degrade and decay through unpredictable, undefineable transitions that can only be grasped once they are complete. [23] The biwa rivets the viewer into the quality of the sound itself, the 'sawari', its emotional resonance, as it jars and jangles the space. [372]

This use of timbre to capture the emotion of the duel scene is specific to the use of sound culturally-rooted through the concept of *sawari*. Three percussive markers are added to the final phrases of the rhythmical *biwa* in the soundtrack along at the same time as the disconcerting horizontal tilting shots of the camera just before the deadly strike that takes Hikokuro's life. Attention is drawn to the sound of the *biwa*, and its resonance as sound lingers in the shifting tension of the scene, marking the quiet moments with shades of sound that draw attention away from the visual. Furthermore, as I highlight through other examples in this chapter, this demonstrates a careful placement of the instrumental

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[372] Anne, Rutherford, 'Volatile space, Takemitsu and the material contagions of Harakiri', *Screening the Past* (http://www.screeningthepast.com/2015/01/volatile-space-takemitsu-and-the-material-contagions-of%C2%A0harakiri/, 3 March 2017 [2010]). [23]: 'See Takemitsu, '"The Distance from Uid to *Biwa*"' for an account of the sound quality of the *biwa* (in *Confronting Silence,* 53-55).'

technique that produces *sawari* which encourages the audio-viewer to question the boundaries between sound-design and music, and which ultimately, as will be demonstrated in the case studies of Chapters Three and Four, shows how audio can be used to highlight the permeable boundaries between the living and the dead that is a primary theme within Japanese 'ghost' films.

More obvious cinematic references to the *biwa* and its active inclusion of noise in its sound through *sawari* are demonstrated in Kobayashi Masaki's film anthology *Kwaidan*. In *Hoichi the Earless*, instrumental music dominates the soundscape. The performance aspect takes up the central plot development, providing a culturally encoded soundscape based around the *biwa* and its blind player, Hoichi. Performing a popular secular piece of narrative music called *Chikuzen* [373] with a gentle instrumental style and highly ornamented vocal line, it 'constituted the first work to emerge from a confrontation with a traditional Japanese musician, Tsuruta Kinshi of the Chikuzen biwa school.' [374] Charged with playing the ballad of the battle of *Dan-no-Ura*, Hoichi is unaware that those who command him to perform are the very ghosts of those who fought and died there. Music replaces all sound effects as the visuals of the battle are played out on the screen to Hoichi's vocal and instrumental narrative 'with the extraordinary sound and resonance of the *biwa* heightening the effect of the images as arrows rain down on the adversaries.' [375] The resonance here is about the *sawari* of the *biwa*, which in this performance context pertains to the traditional noh drama *Genjo*, which featured a *biwa* player performing for spirits. Hoichi's *biwa* playing in *Kwaidan* is dramatically enhanced through 'a dialectic between real and re-elaborated sound which injects considerable drama into the musical score.' [376] The noh drama is also alluded to with the sounds of noh vocal interjections of 'You, Ya—a, Yo—; 'Ha--, Ho, Ho—'; 'Iya--, Iyo—,' used here as an audio contribution to the half-theatricality the film anthology delivers. This also highlights the importance of theatrical origins in Japanese 'ghost' films and, in this example, a manifestation through traditional sound in noh theatre.

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[373] Like *satsuma-biwa*, *chikuzen-biwa* has strong historical connections with *mōsō-biwa* the ancient Buddhist ritual instrument.
[374] Calabretto, 'Takemitsu's Film Music', 184.
[375] *Ibid.,* 196.
[376] *Ibid.,* 193.

Figure 14. Hoichi the blind *biwa* player playing the ballad of the battle of *Dan-no-Ura.*

2.4 *Onshoku* – 'Sound Colour' and Other Unpitched Instrumental Techniques

2.4.1 Onshoku – 'Sound Colour' Orientation Classification

Sawari is just one example of the particular sensitivity of Japanese listeners toward differences in sound colour. There are many other examples of *onshoku* that are used as aural representations of the supernatural. [377] The most relevant examples will be discussed in this section. It is important to cover these examples succinctly in this context, as they will prove to be valuable in later chapters when analysing music and sound in the two case studies, *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (Nakata, 2002) and *Ju-on: The Grudge* (Shimizu, 2002). Examples will be presented from both of these films, which demonstrate how timbre is used to portray the ambiguity between the worlds of the living and the dead, as well as how sound colour/*onshoku* is used to highlight the tension between the pre-modern and the modern that produces unique alternative scoring practices.

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[377] The word *neiro* is also used to describe 'sound colour'. Both *onshoku* and *neiro* can be used in this context as they are made up of the same kanji characters 音色: 'sound' and 'colour', and they both literally mean 'sound colour'. Sato Eriko notes that there are some pairs of *kango* (Sino-Japanese words) and *wago* (native Japanese words) that are written with the same kanji and represent a similar concept. However, she notes that 'the kango version *onshoku* (音色) is associated with objective sound qualities such as bright, dark, hard, and metallic, whereas the *wago* version *neiro* (音色) is associated with subjective sound qualities such as soothing, warm, and beautiful. Thus, the former is suitable for educational or professional contexts for musicians, while the latter is suitable for literary works and informal conversations.' See Sato Eriko, 'Translanguaging sequel: Origin-based lexical varieties and their implications for translation', in *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts*, 7/2 (September 2021): 181. Therefore, *onshoku* is used for the purpose of this study.

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The importance of *onshoku* is demonstrated through performance techniques common to the *koto*, [378] with Henry Johnson referencing how 'the instrument has a number of idiomatic ornamental techniques that often have symbolic meaning and further help delineate the instrument's place in Japanese culture.' [379] Modern-day *koto* music features performance techniques influenced by Western music, such as arpeggios, tremolo, harmonics, staccato, pizzicato, vibrato, amongst other percussive effects played on various parts of the strings. In more traditional *koto* practice, twenty-five techniques of ornamentation were performed. [380] Gen'ichi Tsuge identifies eight of these as being characterised by non-musical sound or 'noise'. [381] The most common reference of these eight non-musical sounds is *suri-zumi* (literally meaning 'scraping pick/stroke'). To perform this, '[t]he index and middle plectra scrape with their right side first from right to left along two adjacent strings, pause, and then scrape from left to right along the same strings. This technique is usually notated with arrows indicating the direction of the plectra.' [382] Another technique not listed in Tsuge's eight 'noisy' performance techniques is *soetsumi*, 'the inserted pick,' described thus by Dean Britten:

> [T]he player inserts the left index fingernail under a designated string, making light contact with that string, and plucks as usual with the right-hand pick. A high buzzing noise results, simultaneously with the pitched sound of the string. [383]

Unpitched sounds are also prominent in the performance practice of the *shakuhachi* (a form of end-blown bamboo flute, tuned to the minor pentatonic scale). Like the *koto*, *shamisen* and *biwa*, the *shakuhachi* produces unique tonal colours that continue to be interpolated into Japanese music. 'The effective use of sounds of breath in *shakuhachi* technique goes beyond the normal parameter of pitched sound and incorporates non-musical timbres into the musical flow.' [384] Overblowing

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[378] The thirteen-string Japanese zither is also called *sō, sō no koto* and sometimes *jūsangen*. It is adopted within a diverse range of musical styles, for example *kumiuta* (song cycles with *koto* accompaniment) and *danmono* (instrumental pieces).

[379] Henry Johnson, *The Koto: A Traditional Instrument in Contemporary Japan* (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2004), 16.

[380] These twenty-five techniques were described in the historical compendium of Yamada Shokoku's *Sōkyoku taiishō*. Vols i-vi (Edo, 1779) vol. vii (1903); Hirano Kenji (ed.), (Tokyo: Ongakusha,1981).

[381] See Gen'ichi Tsuge, 'Symbolic Techniques in Japanese Koto-Kumiuta', *Asian Music*, 12/2 (1981): 113-114.

[382] Johnson, *The Koto: A Traditional Instrument in Contemporary Japan*, 141.

[383] Dean Britten, 'That 'Howling' Music. Japanese Hōgaku in Contrast to Western Art Music', *Monumenta Nipponica*. 40/2 (Summer, 1985): 155.

[384] Alison McQueen Tokita and David Hughes, 'Context and change in Japanese music', *Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*, Alison McQueen Tokita and David Hughes (eds.), (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 26.

techniques often result in a hissing noise, with the delivery of breathy sustained notes also being used to exploit noise to produce expressive paramusical effects. [385] Examples of these overblowing techniques include the *fukikiri*, which produce a timbral transformation with a note: 'a special ending to a tone or phrase accentuating the sound with a sudden and strong breath of air.' [386] The rough texture of the *muraki* technique (uneven or intensive breath), an overblowing technique applied at the start of a note or during results in an exclamatory, dramatic airy sound which involves the use of 'very strong air pressure, relaxation of the cheeks and tongue and a slightly larger lip opening.' [387] The breathy sound, whose usage was largely developed in the 20th century, is often described as capturing the sound of the wind. Discussing the *muraiki* technique in *shakuhachi* music, Flora Henderson likens the rough effects of the *muraiki* blowing technique to the Japanese aesthetic of *sabi*, particularly noting Elliot Weisgarber's research:

> Delicacy and refinement of tone such as we find, let us say, in Western flute playing-particularly that of the French-are not highly valued in the shakuhachi world. What is often sought after is a quality of roughness-not crudity, but a roughness not unlike that which is desired in a valued piece of pottery such as a tea bowl. In other words something which is old and faded. This is the famed aesthetic ideal known as sabi. [388]

Through the timbre of the *shakuhachi* and the imperfections that have been maintained in the instrument, including 'unique projection, homogeneity, and virtuosic agility' [389] the aesthetic of *sabi* is achieved through rustic patina and the stark, natural beauty and ability of the *shakuhachi* to produce a broad spectrum of sounds. The *muraiki* technique is used as an umbrella term to capture degrees of performance technique. The forceful but not intense technique is called *muraiki*. *Kazaiki* is a stronger version of *muraiki*, the most forceful with an explosive attack applied at the start of the note and

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[385] Philip Tagg used the term paramusical to distinguish a semiotic relation to a particular musical discourse without being structurally intrinsic to that discourse. I.e. *extramusical*, literally alongside the music.

[386] Kogo Masayuki, quoted in Alison McQueen Tokita and David Hughes 'Context and change in Japanese music', *Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*, Alison McQueen Tokita and David Hughes (eds.), (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 77.

[387] *Ibid*., 78.

[388] Elliot Weisgarber, 'The Honkyoku of the Kinko-Ryū: Some Principles of Its Organisation', *Ethnomusicology* 12/3 (September, 1968): 318.

[389] WM. Theodore De Bary, 'The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III', *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader,* Nancy G. Hume (ed.), (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 53.

sustaining a breathy tone. *Solane* is softer than *muraiki* and produces a light, airy sound without the intensity of *muraiki* in its short overblowing.

Some examples of early Western scholarship note the deliberate unpleasantness of sounds produced by traditional Japanese instruments, but draw the wrong conclusions and, in doing so, reveal layers of problematic agenda. For example, Sir Francis Taylor Piggott notes, when describing the role of the *hichiriki*, [390] that it produced sounds that 'are entirely gruesome to the Western ear.' [391] Piggot goes on to demonise the sounds of the *hichiriki*, observing how:

> Hichiriki players are even greater sinners than the flautists in the matter of those superfluous quarter-tones […] the antecedent slur is often a prolonged wailing slide through a full tone, more or less; the note finishing with an excruciating rise of a semitone, more or less, cut off short. [392]

Writing in 1890, Joseph Chamberlain was also dismissive of Japanese music, commenting that '[m]usic if that beautiful word may be allowed to fall so low as to denote the strummings and squeals […] has supposed to have existed in Japan ever since mythological times.' [393] Piggott and Chamberlain's criticism highlights a pre-perception of what a sound should be from a narrowly Eurocentric viewpoint in which 'the musical sounds is a culturally defined tone with a pitch which melodies can be forged.' [394] This highlights a cultural predefinition of sound rather than an attempt to hear and understand the sound for what it is. While this criticism was written centuries ago, my research responds to predetermined claims like Piggott and Chamberlain's criticism which may also still exist today. It highlights the importance of this study and in particular this Chapter and the subsequent case studies, which provide a detailed study of how Japanese arts, culture and society can inform a nuanced understanding and appreciation of Japanese music, and of how Japanese film music and sound design highlight broader socio-cultural contexts. As Nick Bellando and Bruno Deschênes

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[390] The *hichiriki* is a reed instrument that resembles a small flute, closest to the piccolo in dimensions.
[391] Sir Francis Taylor Piggott, *The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan* (London: BT Batsford [1893] 1909), 151.
[392] *Ibid.*, 151.
[393] Joseph Chamberlain quoted in Luis Frois, S.J. *The First European Description of Japan, 1585: A Critical English-language Edition of Striking Contrasts in the Customs of Europe and Japan*, Richard K. Danford, Robin D. Gill and Daniel T. Reff (annotated, eds., and trans.), (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 236.
[394] Nick Bellando and Bruno Deschênes, 'The Role of Tone-colour in Japanese Shakuhachi Music', *Ethnomusicology Review* 22.1 (2020): 53.

note, this kind of 'pre-perception predetermines what and how we perceive any tone or melody, and furnishes the criteria for what we perceive as being musical, to the extent that we only "hear" what corroborates the said criteria.' [395] In Japanese culture, attention is paid to hearing the sound for what it is, for its sensory quality and its tone-colour, before any form of categorization as music or noise. Bellando and Deschênes signpost that 'the origin of this mode of thinking is not related to music or to acoustics, but to how Japanese people culturally relate to the sounds of nature and of their social environment.' [396] This does not suggest a fundamental difference in the way Japanese people hear sounds, but that musical meaning is placed elsewhere. In this case, Japan's traditional approach to sonic environments reveals how sound quality 'infuses the moments of everyday social, culture, and spiritual life with symbol and metaphor.' [397] Takemitsu, for example, states that 'the Japanese are a people who have been endowed with a keen receptivity towards timbre from ages past.' [398] He also recognises that non-musical techniques are used in Japanese performing arts, as in his example of guttural vocalisation in the *gidayū-bushi* (a form of chanted narrative used in bunraku puppet plays), to draw attention to the sound colour they produce. Whether an audience defines the sound produced as pleasant or not, these techniques are used to heighten the timbral complexity of musical sounds in different performance contexts. Moreover, various *onshoku* or tone-colour concepts are used to evoke elements of the supernatural in the stories being told.

2.4.2 Onshoku – 'Sound Colour' Information Classification

In many Western performing art forms and traditions, various elements such as setting are predominantly represented visually. For example, in the Western Romantic movement of the 19th Century, the interest in realism and historical plays led to the production of elaborate visual sets. Charles Kean's 1858 production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at the Princess's Theatre in London worked hard to deliver a version of historical accuracy. The English actor-manager presented four different

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[395] Bellando and Deschênes, 'The Role of Tone-colour in Japanese Shakuhachi Music', 53.
[396] *Ibid*., 53.
[397] *Ibid*., 53-54.
[398] Takemitsu Torū, quoted in Peter Burt, *The Music of Takemitsu Torū* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 238.

sets for a recurring stage direction of 'a room in a castle'. [399] In Japanese traditional performing arts, by contrast, audio representations often dominate.

Jane Elkinton notes a unification of form, instrumentation and performance technique when producing various natural sound representations in Japanese music: 'Synthesis, not mimicry, is the method of choice for the Japanese musician in describing the world of nature.' [400] For example, audiences of the kabuki theatre enjoy the soundless sound of snow falling as a synthesis of the non-realistic acting tradition, and the muted brushstrokes of the drum, beating a low, constant rhythm known as *yuki-oroshi* that is recognised by the audience to signify the falling of snow in a particular scene. Just as the *shamisen* is used to create off-stage sound effects as part of the off-stage ensemble, other instruments are also used to create various sound representations. The *geza* functions as a kind of invisible music box, creating synthetic sound effects and other specialised musical incidents often represented visually in other dramatic traditions. These effects have specific names such as *ame oto* – the sound of rain; *yuki oto* – the sound of snow; *kaze oto* or *kaza oto* – the sound of wind and *mizu oto*- the sound of water. The range of instruments deployed to perform such functions include:

> a gigantic barrel drum (Ō-daiko), various smaller drums (Daibyōshi, Okedō, etc.), gongs (Atari-gane, Dora, etc.), bells (Tsuir-gane, Rei, etc.), clapper (Binzasara), rattles, bamboo flutes etc. There are many small compositions which vary according to their usage and purpose. These include sounds representing nature, such as snow, wind, rain, storms, waves, thunder, etc. [401]

The effects of wind and rain played on the *ō-daiko* – a large membranophone drum with two tacked heads, struck with two long tapered sticks – can be altered to create a more profound extra-musical association: 'A pattern can be altered to indicate different intensities of rain, for once the convention has been established the audience becomes capable of recognizing several shadings of meaning.' [402] Some of these effects expressly cue a sense of fear or supernatural presence for the audience members. For instance, there is 'a musical signifier that is long associated in kabuki with

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[399] See Kenneth Grahame Rea, "Western theatre". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15 Nov. 2019, (https://www.britannica.com/art/Western-theatre, 4 October 2021).

[400] Elkinton, 'Cha-in/the sound of tea: the sounds of the Japanese tea ceremony and their relation to traditional Japanese music', 354.

[401] Kishibe, *The Traditional Music of Japan,* 64.

[402] William P. Malm, *Nagauta: The Heart of Kabuki Music*, (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1963), 109.

ghosts. It features wobbly flute tones called *netori* set over a drum pattern in which a series of sharp accents is surrounded by single-stroke rolls that rise and then fall in volume level. The combined flute-and-drum gesture is known as *dorodoro*.' [403] Ghost plays are shown in the summer due to the chills they created, in theory providing some relief from the hot temperatures theatre-goers experience. The *dorodoro* gesture, which also featured in bunraku, was an onomatopoetic sound gesture signifying the roll of cool air it was said to bring to the back of an audience member's neck. Other drum sounds such as *netori*, *ōdoro*, and *usudoro* (a light beating off-stage) are often used when ghosts appear.

Many audience members would be aware of the symbolic meaning of these sound effects. They were used in the theatre as gestures associated with ghostly appearances and as a way of drawing attention to the syncretic relationship between the on-stage, off-stage visual aspect of musical performance in Japanese theatre. For example, the music and sound of noh often breaks into the visual action of the stage as if to create a new character or another supernatural realm amongst the dramatic action. This is particularly exemplified in the plays that deal with the supernatural and can occur in combination with a use of sound colour, portraying a culturally specific supernatural realm of sound. An example of this occurs in the *Noh Dōjōji*, a play in which *onshoku* breaks into the visual realm and – as will be seen below in this thesis – in Japanese ghost films.

The famous tale of *Dōjōji* (based on *Dōjō-ji* Temple) or *Dōjō-ji setsuwa* has many variations. The earliest known source of this tale which has appeared in slightly different versions, first appeared in two setsuwa collections: the *Hokkegenki* dated around 1040-43, and the *Konjaku monogatarishi* tentatively dated around 1120. Around 1450, during the Muromachi period (1338-1573), an emaki (picture scroll) version of the story was produced called *Dōjōji engi emaki* (Picture Scroll of the Founding of *Dōjōji*). It was the *emaki* version of the story that strongly influenced the noh play, though, in its final part, it follows the *Konjaku nonogatari* version. [404] The *Noh Dōjō-ji* presents the story on a spring day as a new great temple bell is being remade, and a ceremony is being held to inaugurate it. A woman or *shirabyoshi* (a courtesan woman in male attire) appears in the temple. After

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[403] James Wierzbicki, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications', Philip, Hayward (ed.), *Terror tracks: music, sound and horror* cinema (London: Equinox Publishing, 2009), 256.

[404] See Susan Blakeley Klein, 'When the Moon Strikes the Bell: Desire and Enlightenment in the noh Play *Dōjō-ji' Journal of Japanese Studies*, 17/2 (1991) for the specific details of the noh play's story influences from the *Dōjōji engi emaki* and the *Konjaku nonogatari* versions.

first being refused entry by a temple servant (*noriki*), her charm wins him over, and she is invited to dance and sing. She performs but then jumps under the bell and disappears inside it. The *noriki* goes to the chief priest to inform him of what has happened. This reminds the priest of an incident that happened many years before, and he recounts it for the *noriki*, telling him how the temple bell was initially destroyed.

There was a Lord whose daughter believed she would marry a visiting *yambushi* (mountain priest). Surprised to hear that the Lord's daughter expected to marry him, the monk flew to *Dōjō-ji* temple where he hid under the temple's bell. The daughter pursued the priest across the Hidaka River, turning into a dragon-serpent to cross the river. Following her pursuit, she wrapped herself around the temple bell and blew flames of resentment, lashing the bell with her tail and causing the bronze bell to turn red hot, destroying it and the priest. As the priest finishes his story, they return to the bell. Despite the priests praying for the woman's salvation, she reveals herself from underneath the bell as the same dragon-serpent, a ghost, remaining in the worldly realm. The priests perform an exorcism of the spirit that results in the ghost's eviction back to the depths of the Hidaka River.

The tale of *Dōjō-ji* with its magnificent prop bell brings rich visual representations to the noh stage. This representation is also echoed in the visibility given to the musicians of the *hayashi-kata* (noh instrumental ensemble), particularly in moments of emphasising supernatural spectacle. In the play's climax, there is the *kaneiri*, which roughly translates as the performance of jumping in under a falling bell, or 'bell-entering', along with another highlight known as the *ranbyōshi* scene. *Ranbyōshi,* meaning disordered rhythm, is a scene in which the *shirabyoshi* (dragon-serpent) performs a hypnotic serpent-like dance, tricking the *noriki* with her slow circling movements (*mai*) as she continuously stomps out a rhythm that is accented by the beats of the *ko-tsuzumi* (shoulder drum) and embellished by the occasional *nohkan* melody entries. The stamping is described as *byōshi*.

Figure 15. 道成寺絵巻 (*Dōjō-ji emaki*) Important cultural property. Muromachi Period

(1338–1573). Copyright © 2006-. Courtesy of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies,

Kyoto, Japan.

As this scene plays out, the silence between each beat of the *ko-tsuzumi* drum is broken by the

high-pitched calls of the shoulder drummer (*kakegoe*), which adds to the tension of the performance as

a whole and leads up to the final climax of the *kaneiri*. Interestingly, the *ko-tsuzumi's* role in this scene

is distinguished from the player's usual performance role, which is heard in collaboration with the

other musicians on stage. Here the vigorous beating represents the pounding of the heart. It is singled

out and is distinctly connected with the movements of the *shite* that it crosses into the action, breaking

through the traditional performance barrier of the stage to form an ambiguous realm. This disruptive

moment marks the critical point of change in the scene, and the distinct timbre of the *ko-tsuzumi*

beating away is a strong example of music breaking into the visual action. At this point of intensity in

the drama, it is directly paralleled to the supernatural figure on the stage, as if forming a supernatural

entity itself in its unorthodox percussive delivery, better to evoke the agony and sadness of the dragon-

serpent.

Like the other examples of *onshoku*, noh challenges perceived borders of the audio-visual

relationship in culturally specific ways. The following section will demonstrate how examples of

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onshoku are used to create ambiguity, heightening a sense of the supernatural through manipulations of the audio-visual relationship of film that challenge sound sources, creating ambiguity and suggesting the porous boundaries between the human and spirit world.

2.4.3 Onshoku – 'Sound Colour' Inspiration:

In Japanese performing arts, the approach to music and sound that delivers a narrative is concerned with using culturally specific musical concepts, recognised by audiences familiar with the traditions, and challenging the boundaries between a text's audio and visual spaces. This is demonstrated in the example of the *Nō Dōjō-ji* above, which uses the on-stage positioning of the musicians to draw attention to the breaking down of a visual hierarchy, and draws on the *visible* music of the *hayashi-kata* to heighten its use of sound colour and expose an ambiguous supernatural component in the play. This is also achieved in cinema.

The examples of *onshoku* presented in the orientation classification of sound colour above draw attention to playing techniques producing sounds for different performance contexts within Japanese music and the performing arts. Like the example of *sawari* earlier on in the chapter, examples of *onshoku* are also produced through instrumental modification. Another example is that of the *nohkan*, an instrument constructed from tubes of varying lengths and with spaces between finger holes of various widths that are different from one *fue* (flute) to another. Therefore, despite each *nohkan* instrumentalist adopting the same fingering, different pitches are produced. This is tied to the Japanese tradition of deemphasizing the importance placed on melody. The ear becomes aware of the physiological intensity of the sounds of the *nohkan*, and the deliberate non-use of fixed pitches and the fluctuating notes that are produced as a result.

The distinct sound colour of the *nohkan* is often used to emphasise rhythm, a method that originates from its role in the noh theatre, in which it directs attention to the carefully placed movement of the actors on stage. The *nohkan*, as referenced earlier in the orientation classification of *onshoku*, can also be paired with the *ō-daiko* drum to produce a musical signifier associated with ghosts. An example of this can be found in Kurosawa Akira's 1990 film anthology *Dreams*. One of the episodes, 'Sunshine Through The Rain', presents an example of how the *onshoku* of the *nohkan* can both represent the

supernatural and enhance ambiguity in a film's audio-visual design. In the film's first episode, a young boy – who, from the autobiographical nature of the project, is supposed to be a young Kurosawa – goes into the woods and observes a *kitsune* (foxes) wedding procession against the warning of his mother. The episode's title comes from an old Japanese legend that when the sun is shining through the rain, the *kitsune* have their weddings known as the *kitsune no yomeiri* (also a common phrase referring to a sun shower). The mother's warning comes from the part of the legend that notes how the '[k]itsune create[d] rain during their weddings so that humans don't go into the mountains and spy upon their ceremonies.' [405] As the boy is shown walking through the forest, only the amplified ambient sound of rain is heard. However, as he approaches a clearing, the camera adopts a point of view shot from the boy's perspective to reveal a rolling mist. It is then that the tones of a *shakuhachi* enter.

The boy moves towards the visual source of the misty haze with the sounds of the *shakuhachi* continuing to be heard. Zvika Serper notes that the 'cloud of smoke appearing from out of the rain and the trees, from which the foxes appear (Fig. 1), is the same smoke through which superhuman characters sometimes emerge in kabuki.' [406] As one of the tones of the *shakuhachi* lingers and slowly decays, the camera cuts to show the boy hiding behind a tree. It is in the rest of the *shakuhachi* breath – a *ma*-filled pregnant pause – that the beats of the *ō-daiko* followed by the *taiko* (stick drum) enter. The irregular pattern of the drum beats also invite *ma* into each delayed beat. The sounds of a small high-pitched bell chime used in kabuki theatre known as *orugoru* also joins the drums. Using a range of camera angles, the boy observes the supernatural figures of the *kitsune* [407] as they process along the path. After the introduction of the percussion instruments, the high-pitched notes of the *nohkan* enter over the sound of the rain, producing the *netori* set of 'wobbly flute notes.' [408] The pairing of the *nohkan* and *ō-daiko* are registered in the measured movement of the wedding procession.

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[405] Zack Davisson, 'Kitsune no Yomeiri – The Fox Wedding' (https://yokai.com/kitsunenoyomeiri/, 04 November 2021).

[406] Zvika Serper, 'Kurosawa's *Dreams*: A Cinematic Reflection of a Traditional Japanese Context' in *Cinema Journal* 40/4 (Summer 2001): 86.

[407] In Japanese culture the *kitsune* has many different associations tied to the supernatural and religious significance. A temptress of men, a playful spook and a possessing spirt, the *kitsune* is an associate of divinities and of heretic sorcerers alike. See Michael Bathgate, *Fox's Craft in Japanese Religion and Folklore: Shapeshifters, Transformations, and Duplicities* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[408] Wierzbikci, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications', 256.

While no instrumental source is shown on screen, the procession moves in a silent march, pausing and crouching in fox-like poses in time to the rhythm of the ō-daiko and its pauses, which are filled with *ma*. This matches the horizontal movement similar to noh dance movement and the notion of cut-continuation in the physical aspect of noh dance: 'The actor slides the foot along the floor with the toes raised, and then "cuts" off the movement by quickly lowering the toes to the floor-and beginning at that precise moment the sliding movement along the floor with the other foot.' [409] Serper observes how the 'juxtaposed human and animal features of the foxes, whose basic smooth movements, performed with stabilized pelvis are similar to Okina's solemn dance in noh, which features a repeated movement with sliding steps. The foxes' jerky animal gestures, which occasionally interrupt their smooth movements, are addressed toward I, who is hiding behind a big tree.' [410]

The first episode of Kurosawa's *Dreams* anthology takes its roots from noh through its overtly designed artificiality as a synthesis method over mimicry in Japanese theatre traditions. This is evident from the fakery of the foxes' elaborate makeup. They are supposed to depict the animals as they appeared from origins within traditional theatrical representations and folklore festivities, not 'actual' foxes. The same artificial stylisation is also represented in their movement to the soundtrack: 'Even their choreographed procession, which involves them marching in unison and turning to look to the side at regular intervals, is merely a ritual pantomime of seeing.' [411] The characters may respond to the music, yet there is no visual source – no musicians shown performing as part of the stylised wedding procession.

Furthermore, the boy only seems to acknowledge the visual presentation of the passers-by; he shows no apparent bodily response or change in expression that would suggest he hears any music. The initial recognition of the mist confirms their presence, as reinforced by the camera adopting the boy's point-of-view. Therefore, this would suggest that only the *kitsune* hear the music that

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[409] Basil Athanasiadis, 'The Japanese Aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and its Potential in Contemporary Composition' (PhD diss., Canterbury Christ Church University, 2008), 27.
[410] Serper, 88. The reference to *Okina* in the quotation is a comparison of the foxes' movement with the dance movement of the noh theatre's most ancient work in its repertoire – *Okina* (*The Old Man*).
[411] Bilge Ebiri, 'Akira Kurosawa's Dreams: Quiet Devastation', *The Criterion Collection* (https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/4299-akira-kurosawa-s-dreams-quiet-devastation, 02 April 2017).

accompanies their progress, and we, as audio-viewers, are invited to recognise, or even enter, this spiritual realm of sound.

2.5 Aesthetics of pathos, impermanence and subtly

2.5.1 An Orientation Classification:

Japanese folk music researcher Kojima Tomiko takes a sociological approach to explain why the Japanese favour songs and instruments that sound close to natural sounds. His words parallel the introduction to this chapter, in which scope for looking at the origin of musical concepts in pre-modern Japanese society is asserted:

> A sense of timber [(timbre)] is determined over a long period of time by the kind of life style and natural environment people live in. People in Japan have lived mainly by farming and fishing in a climate where the four seasons are distinct. Consequently they developed sharp sensitivity toward changes in weather, making them alert to natural sounds such as rain and a wind. [412]

The sensitivity Kojima highlights is tied to responses derived from the transient nature of things: the concept of *mono no aware* (*mono* – things, *aware* – pathos), the 'pathos of things' [413]. This concept, along with the others discussed in this chapter is part of classical Japanese philosophy that 'understands reality as constant *change*, or (to use a Buddhist expression) impermanence.' [414] The concept of *mono no aware* can be found across several art forms, including literary theory with writer Norinaga Motoori producing a study of *The Tale of Genji* 'that showed this phenomenon to be its central theme. He argues for a broader understanding of it as concerning a profound sensitivity to the emotional and affective dimensions of existence in general.' [415] Another literary example is found in the famous 8th century collection of poetry, *Manyōshū* ("Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves" Japan's

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[412] Kojima Tomiko, '日本人の音楽感覚' (A Musical Sense of the Japanese), 喉頭 *Koutou* (*THE LARYNX JAPAN*) 9/2, (Fukuoka: THE JAPAN LARYNGOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION: 1997): 91. The original (mis)spelling of timber has been kept in the quotation, this should be read as timbre.

[413] Donald Richie describes *aware* as 'a slightly sweet and sad quality as appreciated by an observer sensitive to the ephemeral nature of existence'. See Donald Richie, *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics* (California: Stone Bridge Press, 2007), 72.

[414] Graham Parkes, 'Japanese Aesthetics', 2018 [2005] (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/japanese-aesthetics/#MonoNoAwarPathThin, 30 October 2021).

[415] *Ibid*.

oldest existing poetry collection), in which the calls of birds trigger the feeling of *aware*. WM. Theodore De Bary discusses the work of an unknown scholar who 'discovered that an *aware* emotion was most often evoked in the poets by hearing the melancholy calls of birds and beasts.' [416] *Heike Monogatari* ('The Tale of the Heike Clan' also known as *Feique Monogatarai*), a 1240 story collection, summarizes the essence of impermanence that is *mono no aware*: 'The sound of the Gion Shōja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the *śāla* flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind.' [417]

Mono no aware became a term synonymous with gentle sorrow, 'adding not so much a meaning as a color or a perfume to a sentence. It bespoke the sensitive poet's awareness of a sight or a sound, of its beauty and its perishability.' [418] Placing such a high value on transience comes with the risk of an evolving sadness, as the experience of beauty is fleeting. Traditional music is directly linked to the fleeting nature of *aware* nature through its temporal status, and to an appreciation of timbre in music. This is because if one sound is only to be heard, then attention should be given to the timbre of that sound, listening to the sensory quality of the sound so that the listener may appreciate the transitory nature of a sound's beauty, evoking the wistful feeling of *mono no aware*.

One of the most well-known examples of transience in nature and life is the tradition of *hanami* (cherry-blossom viewing). Thousands of Japanese people participate every year, recognising the beauty of the blossoms and then watching them begin to fall. As James Edwards observes: 'Such associations have bound contemporary understandings of *mono no aware* strongly to the visual; certain sounds, however, were traditionally perceived as equally rich with *aware*.' [419] One example highlighted earlier in the chapter through its representation in the off-stage music of kabuki was the imitation of the cicadas captured in the *sawari* of the *shamisen*. Edwards likens the historical seasonal listening practice of *mushikiki* ('insect-listening') from the Edo period as being analogous to *hanami*

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[416] De Bary, 'The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III', 44.
[417] Anon. *The Tale of Heiki*, Helen Craig McCullough (annotated and trans.), (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1988), 23.
[418] De Bary, 'The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III', 44.
[419] *Ibid.*, 95.

and an example of it, noting that 'the voices of insects, heard as "a medium which invites the tears of men", became a seasonal marker for autumn (249).' [420]

This aestheticization of *mono no aware* that demonstrates the transient nature of sound is also connected to another key Japanese principle of beauty, one that extends into darker, more mysterious territory. A dominant aesthetic ideal across the arts is the concept of *yūgen*, a word that embraces the mysterious, the profound and the remote: it is an idea of lyrical beauty pursued in many Japanese art forms. Its establishment as an aesthetic value word was in the theory of poetry 'which, around the 12th-13th centuries, suddenly flourished and reached the height of popularity in the circle of the court poets.' [421] One mystery of the term comes from its difficulty to define or translate, as many scholars have noted. [422] 'Yū means hazy, dim, dark, deep, quiet, or otherworldly…Gen means subtle, profound, or dark, and it is also a name for the other world.' [423] Daisetz T. Suzuki defines *yūgen* as 'a compound word, each part, *yū* and *gen*, meaning "cloudy impenetrability," and the combination meaning "obscurity," "unknowability," "mystery," "beyond intelligent calculability," but not "utter darkness."' [424] *Yūgen* derives from the Shinto concept of universal harmony. A thing's appearance, purpose, relation to nature and people are all intimately related and can only be understood subconsciously. Its ineffability lies in its ability to enter the realm of subtlety and gracefulness. [425]

Yūgen, though not exclusively used in reference to the noh drama, is often called '"the art of yūgen"' [426] in association with noh theatre and particularly the fantastical *mugen noh*, with its highly stylised and subtle beauty of stock dance patterns, movement, gestures and diction, practised through 'form' (*kata*) to achieve movement that imitates expression and is unrealistic. Its 'ultimate expression

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[420] Edwards, '"Silence By My Noise": An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture and the Sound Art of Akita Masami', 95.
[421] Toshihiko and Izutsu Toyo, *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers BV, 1981), 26.
[422] See Tsubaki Andrew T., 'Zeami and the Transition of the Concept of *Yūgen*: A Note on Japanese Aesthetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Crticism* 30/1 (Autumn 1971) and WM. Theodore De Bary, 'The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III', *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader,* Nancy G. Hume (ed.), (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995).
[423] Komparu Kunio, *The Noh Theater: principles and perspectives* (New York: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1983), 13-14.
[424] Suzuki Daisetsu Teitarō, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), 220.
[425] For a historical overview on how the concept of *yūgen* has changed from its transmittance to Japan from the original Chinese term meaning "to be so mysteriously faint and profound as to be beyond human perception and understanding" through to its understanding in Buddhist literary work and then in purely aesthetic circumstances and other poetic expressions see Tsubaki Andrew T., "Zeami and the Transition of the Concept of *Yūgen*: A Note on Japanese Aesthetics" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30/1 (Autumn 1971).
[426] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: principles and perspectives*, 12.

of this is when the actor, sitting quietly upon the stage, and without moving at all, is able to display the quintessence of his inner acting skills.' [427] De Bary also notes *yūgen's* conception in the music of noh: 'There is *yūgen* in the sound of the noh flute, which stirs us imprecisely but with an almost painful urgency to an awareness of the existence of something beyond the form.' [428] This beyondness is connected to the mysterious, unknown nature of the concept, so it is not surprising that *yūgen* is often associated with the fantastical and the otherworldly. The supernatural stirs something unusual in the audio-viewer, a subjective experience that is triggered by an awareness of *yūgen*. As Komparu concludes: 'it was labelled *yūgen* because it is a special spirit that causes us to feel something; that if we say that the observation is based on spatial perception, then *yūgen* is somehow related to pure continuous time – in other words, that *yūgen* basically does not exist objectively but it is the subjective experience of the human being who knows it.' [429]

Another significant Japanese aesthetic connected to *yūgen* is *sabi,* particularly through its connection with the noh theatre. Andrew T. Tsubaki explains this connection further through a discussion of Zeami's noh theatre:

> The most significant aspect of Zeami's *yūgen* is found in this transformation of the concept. By inheriting from poetry the concept of *yūgen* which originally meant *yojō* (overtones) [that do not appear in the words alone], establishing the beauty of gentle gracefulness in Nō, and elevating its quality to *sabi*, Zeami selected the material and carved out the basic design of the idea of *sabi*, which was later to be refined by Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) to denote tranquil loneliness, as the most representative aesthetic ideal of the middle age. [430]

This development of *sabi's* meaning from a number of sources became an aesthetic term to define things and is often paired with the term *wabi*, a more philosophical concept which could define circumstances, being concerned with process and direction. Donald Richie observes that '*WABI*, LIKE *SABI*, recommends the appreciation of an austere beauty and a serene and accepting attitude toward

[427] 'Types of Noh Plays' *Noh and Kyogen* (https://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/noh/en/play/types.html, 2 April 2017).
[428] De Bary, 'The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III', 52.
[429] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: principles and perspectives*, 14.
[430] Tsubaki, 'Zeami and the Transition of the Concept of *Yūgen*: A Note on Japanese Aesthetics', 56.

the cold vicissitudes of life.' [431] Together, *wabi sabi* is a concept of beauty as impermanent, transient and imperfect. Unlike *mono no aware*, which recognises the soon-to-pass nature of things in a melancholic nostalgia, *wabi sabi* counts imperfections as one of the highest hallmarks. It is a concept interlined with Buddhist thinking and is based on the Buddhist teaching of the three marks of existence. Presented here in Japanese terms, these are impermanence (無常 *mujō)*, suffering (苦 *ku*) and emptiness (空 *kū*). *Wabi sabi* is also associated with 'a plain and austere beauty with Zen sparseness and transformation.' [432]

The character of *wabi* is derived from the adjective *wabishii* (侘しい) meaning 'lonesome' or 'wretched' and the verb *wabiru* (侘びる), a word of several meanings but mainly translated as 'to grieve or worry'. [433] The meaning of *wabi* in its aesthetic sense is defined as 'lacking things, having things run entirely contrary to our desires, being frustrated in our wishes.' [434] The character of *sabi* can be translated as 'patina', 'rustic patina', 'antique look', and 'elegant simplicity.' It is a chronological term concerned with time and its effects. *Sabi* originates from the adjective *sabishii* (寂しい) meaning 'lonely' or 'desolate' [435] and the verb *sabireru* (寂れる) which translates as 'to decline in prosperity or 'to become desolate.' [436] It is also connected to the term *sabiru* (錆びる) which translates as 'to rust' [437] or 'to mellow'. [438] The currently most accepted definition of *wabi* relates to natural, unpretentious simplicity or an understated elegance that can apply to people or objects. 'Wabi is thus an aesthetic of unequal composition in which the most important component lies within that which is

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[431] Donald Richie, *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2007), 46.
[432] Sondra Horton Fraleigh, 'Zen and Wabi-Sabi Taste: Setsuko Yamada's Performance in Toronto', *Dancing into Darkness: Butoh, Zen and Japan* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1999), 214.
The infusion of Zen is apparent in *wabi's* rustic, elemental grace and *sabi's* understated dignity. However, these connections with Zen Buddhism (which considers language as an obstacle to real understanding) mean that theoretical definitions used to understand the dual concept proves a challenge. Basil Athanasiadis notes how '*wabi sabi* through its deliberate avoidance of an interpretative fixity has become an advocate of the inverted relationship between the external emptiness and inner richness that describes both the conception and interpretation of traditional Japanese arts.' See Basil Athanasiadis, 'The Japanese Aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and its Potential in Contemporary Composition' (Ph.D diss., Canterbury Christ Church University, 2008), 4.
[433] Marc P. Keane, *Japanese Garden Design* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing: [1996] 2017), 76.
[434] Zen-cha Roku, quoted in Haga Kōshirō, 'The *Wabi* Aesthetic through the Ages', *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader,* Nancy G. Hume (ed.), (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 246.
[435] Marc P. Keane, *Japanese Garden Design*, 76.
[436] Graham Parkes, 'Japanese Aesthetics' (https://plato.stanford.edu/Archives/fall2013/entries/japanese-aesthetics/#4, 8 April 2016).
[437] R. H. Blyth, *A History of Haiku Volume Two: From Issa Up To The Present* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1964), vii.
[438] Marc P. Keane, *Japanese Garden Design*, 76. The kanji used for *sabi* as an aesthetic principle is different from the kanji used for 'rust' (錆びる), despite being related in a sense.

being overtly expressed; the internal element is superior to the external.' [439] *Sabi* is a beauty that comes to the fore with time because of age. For example, 'one may prize such a bowl for the tarnished quality itself, for its oldness, for its imperfection, and this is the point where we feel *sabi*.' [440] Together, *wabi sabi* is the acceptance of imperfection, transience and impermanence. This includes characteristics such as asymmetry, roughness, asperity, irregularity and simplicity.

The concept is reflected in the music traditions of Japan. However, as Basil Athanasiadis observes, there is a notable lack of concrete examples that explore *wabi sabi's* connection with music:

> Despite its importance and rich associations with Zen, classical arts and music, its unusual elusive quality and interpretative ambiguity has made *wabi sabi* a rare subject of concrete theoretical analysis. Today, there only exist a handful of relevant books in English, with hardly any reference to its links with music. [441]

The examples provided through the *Inspiration* Classification in this chapter and the case study chapters add to Athanasiadis' exploration of possible perspectives in applying *wabi sabi* to traditional and contemporary music. Athanasiadis' focuses his analysis on a *fue* piece that is part of the noh dance *Chu-no-mai* (moderate dance) and *Etenraku*, one of the most famous gagaku pieces. Focusing on *Chu-no-mai*, Athanasiadis draws attention to the dance's asymmetrical structure, which resembles an irregular rondo. [442] He notes that '[w]ithin its integrated staged performance, *Chu-no-mai* demonstrates a deeper level of asymmetry, where flute, percussion (including the vocal interjections) and dance seem to unravel independently, each fixed and consistent to their own logic.' [443] In addition to the characteristic of asymmetry in the dance, simplicity also captures the concept of *wabi sabi* in *Chu-no-mai*. Discussing the dance, Athanasiadis notes that due to its simplicity, the melodic material 'has an astonishingly haunting quality. Freed from any harmonic associations; it seems as if the entire dance is reduced to a single melodic cell, a six-minute variations based on the tone G.' [444] He goes on to say

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[439] Haga Kōshirō, 'The *Wabi* Aesthetic through the Ages', 247.
[440] De Bary, 'The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III', 53.
[441] Basil Athanasiadis, 'The Japanese Aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and its Potential in Contemporary Composition' (PhD diss., Canterbury Christ Church University, 2008), 4.
[442] This is an interpretation of structure as the creation of an absolute score for noh music from a Western sense cannot be presented.
[443] Athanasiadis, 'The Japanese Aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and its Potential in Contemporary Composition', 26.
[444] *Ibid*., 27.

this simplicity is counter-balanced with 'a subtle yet elaborate web of spatial, temporal and timbral nuances.' [445]

In summary, the beauty of *Chu-no-mai* comes from its inner control delivering subtle musical expressions that provide a different meaning to the description of virtuosity as *Chu-no-mai* is 'characterised by a lack of brilliant virtuosity and spectacle. The instrumental writing is clearly not concerned with the demonstration of the flute potential. Instead, the music, usually danced by a heavenly maiden or spirit, focuses on the internal attainment of the essence of a mysterious and subtle beauty.' [446] Athanasiadis also demonstrates how an example of *gagaku,* the music of the Imperial court, associated with ceremonies and entertainment, demonstrates a more extreme example of unassuming virtuosity and simplicity. It is particularly through the general characteristic of the music achieving maximum effect from a deliberately restricted amount of music material (a few basic sounds are focused on to enhance their effectiveness). As Athanasiadis notes in his focused analysis on *Etenraku*: 'gagaku seems bare, almost simplistic. In *Etenraku,* for example, one of the most famous *gagaku* pieces, the *biwa* and *koto* despite their virtuosic ability, are limited to playing short stereotyped patterns that mark off time units in the music.' [447] An effective simplicity and quietness are also found in *gagaku's* absence of dramatic substance, demonstrating an example of rhythmic elasticity that welcomes *ma*. As Athanasiadis concludes:

> The music, unravelling slowly in moderate dynamics, is in keeping with the concept of *jaku* (quietness) contained in *sabi*. Dramatic gestures are altogether absent and the musical interest is channelled towards the spatial aspects of the irregular instrumental entries, their timbral qualities and distilled microcosmic gestures. Even through the last simple sounds of *Etenraku*, in the space between the pluck of the unaccompanied *biwa* and *koto*, one can feel a powerful intensity, a meaningful rest, the Japanese aesthetic pause (*ma*). [448]

Anthanasiadis also provides an example of *wabi sabi* in the *honkyoku* piece (*Futaiken*) *Reibo* for *shakuhachi*. However, I would like to focus on the identification of the concept in the timbre of the

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[445] Athanasiadis, 'The Japanese Aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and its Potential in Contemporary Composition', 25.
[446] *Ibid*., 28.
[447] *Ibid.,* 29.
[448] *Ibid*., 31.

shakuhachi and the 'imperfections' that have been maintained in the instrument through its lack of timbral homogeneity throughout the *shakuhachi* register. This is a result of a Japanese tradition abstaining from '"improving" the instrument. Instead, by incorporating these very "imperfections" into music, they developed a significant repertoire (traditional and contemporary), rendering *shakuhachi* acoustic discrepancies into a highly sophisticated expressive tool.' [449] *Wabi sabi* is achieved through the *shakuhachi* rustic patina and the stark, natural beauty of the instrument's broad spectrum of sounds. As Athanasiadis concludes: 'Supported by the aesthetic tendency towards refined imperfection (rustic patina) and natural beauty, and based on the natural ability of the instrument to produce a wide spectrum of sounds, ranging from pure noise to pure pitch, the Japanese incorporated noise into the music and elevated it to a status of equal importance to the pitched sound.' [450] As we will see in musical examples from the case study films *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* in Chapter Three, and *Ju-on: The Grudge* in Chapter Four.

2.5.2 Aesthetics of pathos, impermanence and subtlety: An Information Classification

According to Sondra Horton Fraleigh, '[b]ecause of its ephemeral quality, *wabi* can be compared to dance, appearing and disappearing in present-centred time.' [451] This connection is mainly realised through the contemporary avant-garde dance form of butoh (in its basic form, it translates as 'dance step'). [452] Born in Japan after the turmoil of the post-World War II era, butoh is a dance whose basic form relies on the body in various changing conditions; its minimalist movements place the body and face in a state of constant transformation as the butoh dancer 'endeavours to reveal his relationship to

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[449] Athanasiadis, 'The Japanese Aesthetic of *Wabi Sabi* and its Potential in Contemporary Composition', 33.
[450] *Ibid.*, 33-34.
[451] Horton Fraleigh, 'Zen and Wabi-Sabi Taste: Setsuko Yamada's Performance in Toronto', 215.
[452] The term *butoh* is made up of the characters 舞, meaning 'to dance', and 踏, meaning 'to step' which would be rendered as *butō*. However, because of the cultural connotations attached to terms for 'dance' in Japanese, the Hepburn romanization is used here with an introductory definition. The experimental dances of butoh initially went by different names. As Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario note, they 'termed the experiments "dance experiences" or "terror dance" and then *ankoku buyō* (dark black dance), and later still *ankoku butō. Buyō* is the general word for "dance." The word *butō* – composed of two Chinese characters meaning "dance" and "tread/ "stomp" usually indicated Western style dances such as flamenco, ballet, and waltz. So *ankoku butō* originally meant something like the "waltz of darkness" or "the ballet of darkness". In time this was shortened to *butō*, and then was romanized butoh.' See Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario, 'Introduction: Dance experience, dance of darkness, global *butoh*: the evolution of a new dance form' in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*, Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario (eds.), (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 3. Nanako Kurihara notes that 'Hijikata created the term "ankoku butoh" [which originated as *ankoku buyō* in the 1960s,] to denote a cosmological dance which completely departed from existing dances and explored the darkest side of human nature.' Ankoku butoh is translated as both 'dance of darkness' or 'dance of utter darkness'. Nanako notes the meaning of Ankoku as 'utter darkness' See Nanako, 'Kurihara, Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh' *TDR/Drama Review* 44/1 (165) (Spring 2000): 12.

the inner world, to the unconscious'. [453] Butoh is often described as theatre art, drawing 'upon the traditional Japanese dance forms of kabuki and noh, even as it seems to repudiate them. It also travels back to the foundations of Expressionism in the Western modern dance of the early twentieth century.' [454]

Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario discuss butoh's roots in-depth, noting how 'influences ranging from German modern dancers like Mary Wigman, to Japanese and European surrealism, to modernist and avant-garde literature and painting, the dance form gestated by Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo urgently sought new modes of bodily expression that would be commensurate to the task of engaging with and rebelling against a rapidly changing society.' [455] This connection with a Western aesthetic was incorporated into Hijikata's response to Japan's post-war society to resist the past in Japan while keeping aspects of it alive 'both for political reasons and to revolutionize their art. The body/flesh plays a key role in such explorations.' [456] Furthermore, the mix of Japanese and non-Japanese artistic influences led to developing a new dance form that grew out of traditional Japanese roots, 'borrowing back what the West had already borrowed from Japan. [457]' This is a reference to butoh's traces of Expressionism and the cyclical process of art that originated in Japan having inspired Western artists, i.e., the 'myriad stylizations belonging originally to Japanese culture that we have explored as Japonisme in the West's fascination with Japan.' [458]

A central trope of butoh is darkness as something that must be experienced to appreciate the transformation and integration that takes place in the form. The meaning of this darkness and its origins is explored in-depth in the collection of articles in the edited collection *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*. However, to present such historiography of the multiple origins of butoh is beyond the scope of this thesis. This chapter will focus on the connection between butoh and *wabi sabi,* where the darkness associated with *butoh* found in 'Hijikata's early aesthetics [which] certainly flaunted intense corporeality, sexual transgression, criminality, as well as the grotesque and

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[453] Jean Viala and Mourit Masson-Sekine, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988), 17.
[454] Sondra Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Ilinois Press, 2010), 3.
[455] Baird and Candelario, 'Introduction: Dance experience, dance of darkness, global butoh: the evolution of a new dance form', 1.
[456] Sara Jensen, "Returns and Repetitions: Hijikata Tasumi's choreographic practice as a critical gesture of temporalization" in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*, Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario (eds.), (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 109.
[457] *Ibid.*, 16.
[458] *Ibid.*, 21.

the abject.' [459] The dark landscapes of Northern Japan were also often central themes of Hijikata's

dance, an influence from his childhood growing up in poverty in the harsh climate of a farming village

in Akita, Tohoku, where he was born. Inata Naomi notes the reference to this in his early approach to

dance in the 1960s, '[s]pecifically, the posture of bow-legs and bent waist, characteristic of bodies

deformed by farm work over many years, were adopted in the dance as forms (kata) and interpreted by

the intelligentsia as essentially Japanese.' [460]

Transformation in butoh can be viewed as a way of coming to terms with ugliness,

recognising in 'ugliness' a 'beauty' that people may be unfamiliar with. This is explored in Leonard

Koren's publication *Wabi Sabi: For Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers* on *wabi-sabi* and

resonates butoh's values. Awareness of spiritual ancestors is often shown by the *butoh-ka* (butoh

dancers), who practice the shamanist art of transformation, acquiring the ability to represent shifts in

shape and bodily form from human to nature, animals and sometimes Gods. As Sara Jenson observes:

'Hijikata juxtaposes life and death, speaking to the tension between presence and absence central to

dance and an important theme in his movement language and writing. He sets out to materialize the

immaterial: wind, air, the sky, sounds, shadows, death, and time.' [461] Hence, butoh offers minimalistic

movement with the body and the face being in a constant state of transformation, exploring 'states of

becoming in metamorphic dances with transformational cadences, especially reflected in changes of

facial expression and costume.' [462] As Horton Fraleigh goes on to add, butoh possesses '[w]abi

simplicity in the tendency to value the creatively odd and human moment,' [463] acknowledging

awkwardness and pathos.

This awkwardness comes about because butoh dances are often visually uncomfortable to

observe and are frequently accompanied by *sō-on* (sound) effects that accentuate the unnatural

movement of the dance form. Metamorphosis is part of this unnatural presentation, as the dancers can

'transform' at any moment in the choreography, producing interesting contortions. It is often

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[459] Arimitsu Michio, "From vodou to butoh" in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*, eds., Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 56.
[460] Inata Naomi quoted in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*, Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario (eds.), (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 56.
[461] Sara Jansen, "Returns and Repetitions: Hijikata Tasumi's choreographic practice as a critical gesture of temporalization" in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*, 109.
[462] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy,* 43.
[463] *Ibid.*, 169.

suggested that the movements represent a form of grief following the atrocities committed during World War II, and show a people trying to find a form of healing through expression following the American occupation. [464] The typical white powdered features of the butoh dancers are sometimes likened to bodies arising 'from the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki' [465] , but this is too singular an explanation, as Sara Jansen clarifies. Part of the mystification around the representation of Hijikata's performances is due to the lack of documentation, critical engagement and methodology being publicly available. She observes that the compulsion to draw on conventional interpretations of butoh is common:

> *Butoh* is frequently marketed as a representation of a post-apocalyptic world and a direct response to the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All too often it is psychologized or pathologized and framed in the context of personal traumas of the artist, the Japanese trauma of the loss of WWII, several waves of Japanese identity crises, or the healing effects of the methods developed by his disciples. Despite the dance's radical countercultural beginnings, *butoh* and the *butoh* body became utopic sites, and the object of projection, orientalism, nostalgia, and nationalism. Hijikata's "dance of darkness" aims to be opaque, draws on an eclectic range of sources, and indeed provides ample openings for appropriation, misreading, and mystification. [466]

Opening up readings of butoh beyond the explanations and representations connected to World War II, it can be argued that the white powder used by butoh dancers universalises the body and releases 'the East's potential of no-self…It represents the limping imperfection in all of us, when we are able to embrace the darkness and let go.' [467] This again is tied to the principle of *wabi sabi*, where an imperfection is turned into something beautiful.

Both the aesthetic concept of *wabi sabi* and the dance form of butoh are centred on the acceptance and contemplation of the imperfection and constant flux of all things. This theme is

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[464] This is directly connected with the personal experiences of one of Butoh's founders Ohno Kazuo who was a pacifist conscripted for service before and during WWII. His experiences of military conflict shaped is outlook on life and dance. See Sondra Horton Fraleigh (2010, 2-3).
[465] Horton Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy,* 54.
[466] Jansen, "Returns and Repetitions: Hijikata Tasumi's choreographic practice as a critical gesture of temporalization" in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*, 99.
[467] *Ibid*., 99.

regularly connected with the supernatural in Japanese art. For example, in Nakajima Natsu's butoh dance performance *Sumida River* in 2000, Fujiwara Denise's performance is based on a mother's search and vigil for her lost son. The boy has been taken to be sold but grew sick and died during the journey to do so. He is buried along the bank of the Sumida River. A year after his death, the villagers gather to perform a ceremonial dance in his memory. His mother, who still searches for her son, arrives at the river and is ferried across by a boatman. Asking what the people are gathering for, the boatman explains about the little boy's death. She immediately recognises him as her own, going to his grave and joining in the villagers' prayers: 'Her son's voice can be heard chanting in the background as she is reunited with his spirit and her madness is transformed into deep, transformative sorrow.' [468]

Figure 16. Fujiwara Denise in Sumida River, 2000. Courtesy of Cylla von Teidmann.

This butoh performance based on the 15th century Noh drama *Sumidagawa* could be categorised as butoh-noh, 'so clearly does it articulate the synthesis of classical Noh with contemporary butoh.' [469] Horton Fraleigh notes that in the performance, 'Nakajima has not attempted to narrate the story but has sought to approach the core of the dance, the *Mai*, in a contemporary way. *Mai* in Noh is a sacred internal dance emphasizing upper body and arm movement rather than *Odori*,

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[468] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 125.
[469] *Ibid*., 123.

the more common word for dance.'[470] The performance demonstrates a state of flux, connected to the aesthetic of *wabi sabi* through the dancer's very movements between representations of the human and the supernatural. In the opening episode, she is moving along the riverbank. Her 'eyes often blink in rapid succession as they look without seeing, allowing an alternative seeing "in-between" to occur…her half-seeing eyes create a state of limbo, suspending…as she conjures the ghostly state of *Sumidagawa*.'[471] This is a description of a story that is lived, not narrated. Horton Fraleigh's description draws attention to imperfect choreographed movement in Fujiwara's performance through butoh's un-orderly and disunified form: 'Morphing through *ma*, *butoh-ka* pay attention to reflexive moments of self-remembering and spiritual awakening.'[472]

References to nature are heightened through costume in the performance. At one point, the dancer is shown with deftly placed feathers and dried weeds. Sound is also used. As the mother is shown disappearing for a while, the howl of a wolf is imitated in the darkness of the stage, though it is not clear if a performer or instrument produces this aural effect. However, in kabuki theatre, the off-stage musicians of the *geza* would produce a range of stylized sound effects. More importantly, this performance shows the connection between *wabi sabi*, butoh and the supernatural theme. Sound is also used to connect the mother with her son in the spirit world. Towards the end of the performance, '[d]arkness once again covers the stage. And as we wait for a renewal of the dance, a brass hand bell sounds offstage. We wait, and a higher tinkling chimes. Mother and child communicate at the burial mound in the call-and-response of the bells—like a call to meditation in the darkness. When the lights come up, the stage is empty. The dance and dancer have vanished into the sound of the bell.'[473] This is like the end of the traditional noh play in which the boatman encourages the mother to console her son's soul by chanting the invocation of *Amitābha* Buddha, *nembutsu*. The mother then chants the sutra playing a *shōko*, a small bronze gong traditionally used in gagaku. *Wabi sabi* is captured through the main simple playing technique of the *shōko* limited to playing the downbeat of each bar. Horton Fraleigh's describes a haunting quality to the ghost-like nature of the dancer's movements in the Sumida River performance and at one point when her 'arms flow and lead the dance obliquely

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[470] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 124.
[471] *Ibid*., 126.
[472] *Ibid*., 62.
[473] *Ibid*., 128.

forward, her feet feeling their way carefully, one after the other, first with the toes pulling the forward foot along, the back foot never catching up. She leans away from the ventured foot as she glides slowly along.' [474]

This highlights the slow line of motion that makes up the somatic affects of butoh. As Horton Fraleigh observes: '*Butoh-ka* cultivates movements like squatting and somatic affects (expressions, shapes, moods, or qualities of feeling) such as shaking and extremely slow motion that are atypical in dance and often seen as off and nonconformist in society.' [475] These somatic affects can be paralleled with the concept of *wabi sabi*, which itself 'refers to a somatic level of slowing down, moving back to points of inception,' [476] as in the tea ceremony, with which the concept is most often associated. Here too, 'the minimal motion in handling tea utensils and serving guests with upmost care and respect is elevated to an art. In fact the tea service is carried out in a dance of small steps and refined motions.' [477]

2.5.3 Aesthetics of pathos, impermanence and subtlety: An Inspiration Classification
I argue that the somatic affects of butoh aligned with the concept of *wabi sabi* are used in Japanese cinema to create subtle effects at key moments. As Horton Fraleigh notes, 'Contextually, *butoh* tends to dissolve movements and morph them one into another, rather than tell stories. It blurs held postures. Its stillness moves. Becoming a rock carries one into such moving stillness.' [478] The ambiguity in narration found in butoh and many other Japanese art forms and literature is evident in Japanese 'ghost' films and will be examined in-depth throughout the remaining chapters of this thesis.

For example, here: in Kurosawa's *Dreams*, the third episode, 'The Blizzard', has no back story and is solely based on what is seen and heard from audio-viewing the episode. The basic premise tells the story of four mountaineers who struggle to return to their camp during a dreadful snowstorm. As three of the men falter and take rest in the snow, the leader, known as the protagonist *I* throughout the whole of *Dreams* appearing in different guises, refuses to give up and has an encounter with a

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[474] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 127.
[475] *Ibid*., 53.
[476] Fraleigh, 'Zen and Wabi-Sabi Taste: Setsuko Yamada's Performance in Toronto', 215.
[477] *Ibid*., 216.
[478] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 54.

yuki-onna, the snow woman. [479] She tries to persuade him to give in to the storm, but 'I' refuses to accept the snow spirit's invitation of death and she vanishes. This action is paralleled with the final stage of the thematic structure in a noh play, an encounter with a demonic threat 'in which the deuteragonist, usually a priest or a warrior, confronts demons and drives them away.' [480] As *I* revives the rest of his party, the storm clears, revealing that their base camp is in sight. Commenting on the narrative structure of 'The Blizzard', Serper notes that:

> In *Dreams,* instead of telling a story, Kurosawa concentrates on I's confrontation with the Snow Woman and his vanquishing of her and also precedes this traditional confrontation with ritualistic elements – the clanking and ringing of climbing equipment and the expressive sound of the gasps of the climbers. [481]

The first five minutes of the episode contains no dialogue. Only ambient sounds of snowfall and the wind are heard, amplified by Kurosawa's use of Dolby sound technology, new at the time of the film's production, drawing the audio-viewer's attention to subtle elements of the sequence – a suggestion of *wabi sabi*. This minimal use of scoring relies on the sounds of nature to comment on the action and portray an atmosphere of unexplainable supernatural presence. The snow-covered winter landscape suggests a strong sense of *yūgen* through its appropriate sense of melancholy and the threat of death approaching against the visually arresting monochromatic visuals of blue-black and white. With Serper comparing the minimal narrative structure to the final part of a noh play, a similar comparison is made to the unusual use of sound in this episode with the noh theatre, thus highlighting the importance of theatrical origins in this supernatural film episode. He observes that '[f]unctioning as traditional music in this context, the clanking and ringing of the climbing equipment serve as drums, while the climbers' marvellously expressive gasps offer a splendid parallel to the drummers' *kakegoe* (nonverbal shouts) summoning the main character – in this case, a demon.' [482]

The first musical excerpt heard in the episode is when the snow woman wakes *I* after he succumbs to falling asleep in the snow with his team. A lone acapella female voice sings a wordless two phrase

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[479] Zvika Serper notes that '[a]ccording to Japanese folklore, the Snow Woman is an evil spirit who causes those who meet her on a snowy mountain to sink and be buried under the snow. Zeami classifies such a demon as a *rikidōfū* – a demon with power of the body and mind.' See 'Kurosawa's *Dreams*: A Cinematic Reflection of a Traditional Japanese Context', 96.
[480] Serper, 'Kurosawa's *Dreams*: A Cinematic Reflection of a Traditional Japanese Context', 96.
[481] *Ibid*., 98.
[482] *Ibid*., 96.

melody as the snow woman covers *I* with her silvery cloth. Serper again parallels this with the music of the noh theatre: 'Like a flute, the beautiful female vocal solo, heard after the three climbers and *I* collapse into the snow, portends the appearance of the demon. The Snow Woman appears initially as a beautiful woman sitting beside *I*, smiling, trying to draw him to his death by convincing him to sink into the "warm" snow.' [483] The raw simplicity of the solo vocal delivered so cleanly (again a factor of the Dolby sound technology) suggests the essence of *wabi sabi*.

The point of audition for the solo vocal line is not confirmed in the sequence. When the snow woman speaks to *I* her voice is manipulated by a different sound effect from the sung vocals which adds a ghostly meta-diegetic nature to the singing and whether it is in *I's* head as he is shown sleeping as it enters the soundtrack. It stops abruptly with the cut to the first full visual of the Snow Woman as she tells him 'the snow is warm.' Her voice seems to mark a departure from the natural environmental sound of the rushing wind, which is completely cut from the audio, placing the audio-viewer in a sound vacuum in which we solely hear the snow woman, whose voice is heavily reverberated with a metallic-effect added to enhance her unnatural appearance in the snowstorm. As the Snow Woman begins to cover *I* with more silvery cloth, the sourceless singing voice enters again, with the acousmatic nature of its delivery being confirmed as the Snow Woman is shown not singing. As *I* begins to resist the Snow Woman's encouragement to succumb to the cold, her hands pushing him down, the solo vocal is suddenly interrupted by the raw and rough environmental sounds of the wind and blowing snow. It is then that the Snow Woman reveals her wild long black hair and true demonic nature, and a crash of a thundery sound, like the splitting of ice, enters the soundtrack as she flies into the air encircled by white cloth and ascends into the clouds. 'Kurosawa calls the transformation of the Snow Woman '*yuki-onna henge* (the apparition of the Snow Woman') […] The scene comprises very short shots in which the woman's forehead wrinkles appear and multiply while, at the same time, her mane of hair is exposed and "grows" within a few seconds.' [484]

Serper observes that the rapid character change of the Snow Woman and her flying through the air 'is very characteristic of kabuki, in which superhuman characters disappear through a special technique of flying (*chūnori*) above the heads of the spectators from the stage to the rear wall of the

[483] Serper, 'Kurosawa's *Dreams*: A Cinematic Reflection of a Traditional Japanese Context', 96.
[484] *Ibid*., 97.

auditorium.' [485] This flurry of theatrically inspired movement contrasts with the spatial features of the earlier part of the episode when the climbers struggle through the snow, their movements in slow motion, capturing their struggle and state of impermanence that is captured in *wab sabi*. The amplification of the environmental sounds that also provide a commentary on the action importantly evokes 'an aesthetic sensitivity and ethical "humility" with regards to nature (Kikkawa 1980:219)' [486] that emphasises the portrayal of ghostly representations in Japanese film.

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The significant conventions and concepts presented in this chapter are used to represent the supernatural and the horrific in the Japanese arts but can also be identified, I argue, as influences or as revealing specific cultural nuances in the music and sound design of Japanese 'ghost' films. There is a strong correlation between Japanese aesthetics, music, film music and representations of the ghost. Jane Elkinton reminds us that 'Japan has a musical tradition that we consider "high context" because of its complex web of interconnectedness.' [487] This interconnectedness has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, which has presented a close examination of a number of Japanese aesthetics and their relationship to different forms of music and other art forms. In a country whose people have throughout its history 'used ghosts and ghost stories to make sense of themselves and their place in world' [488], it is no surprise that tales of the supernatural are regularly cited as providing some of the best examples of culturally specific interrelations between visual and audio in Japan's performing arts, as the use of aesthetic concepts in this chapter has highlighted.

This chapter has sought to present these key aesthetic markers through a classification approach: an orientation explaining their construction, an information classification looking at how the concepts are applied to music and sound in the performing arts, and a final inspiration classification

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[485] Serper, 'Kurosawa's *Dreams*: A Cinematic Reflection of a Traditional Japanese Context', 98.

[486] Edwards, '"Silence By My Noise": An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture And The Sound Art of Akita Masami', 97.

[487] Elkinton, 'Cha-in/the sound of tea: the sounds of the Japanese tea ceremony and their relation to traditional Japanese music', 351.

[488] Christopher Harding, 'Sunday Feature: Supernatural Japan', 22 April 2018, (https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09zmvmm, 30 September 2020).

that looks at how the original orientation and the information classification of theatrical and Japanese performance practice have influenced the approach to sound and music in Japanese supernatural horror films in ways unique to this tradition. The aesthetic traits explained in this chapter, which significantly nuance, widen and diversify the traits hitherto discussed in relation to Japanese horror soundtracks, will now be identified in two Japanese 'ghost' film case studies, again demonstrating the constant flux and transformational nature so prevalent in the aesthetics of Japanese music and, more importantly, at the heart of audio-visual relationships in Japanese filmic representations of the supernatural.

Chapter Three: An audio-visual case study of Nakata Hideo's *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (*Dark Water*, 2002)

3.1 Introduction: The mother, the child, and the 'ghost'.

This chapter examines the first case study of a culturally encoded approach to the film score and sound design in a contemporary Japanese 'ghost' film narrative. It will analyze how it brings together cultural considerations of sound design and music based on Chapter Two's cultural concepts, and in doing so, exemplify some of the ways in which non-Hollywood approaches to Japanese horror scoring are granted nuance and telling cultural specificity hitherto not fully recognised by scholarship and criticism, but central, I argue, to the development of a more replete appreciation of the films' stories, storytelling, and significance.

Honogurai mizu no soko kara (hereafter referenced as *Honogurai mizu*) was released in 2002 and directed by Nakata Hideo, who had risen to fame with his earlier productions, *Ringu* and *Ringu 2* in 1998 and 1999, respectively. However, following *Ringu's* popularity, Lindsay Nelson notes that

> [s]omewhat less attention has been given to Nakata's *Hongourai mizu no soko kara* (literally *From the Depths of the Murky Black Water*, hereafter referred to as *Dark Water*), though the film's original story was written by the same author and the film contains many elements similar to *Ringu* (a vengeful spirit, death by drowning, and a single mother). At the same time, *Dark Water* explores the more commonplace horror of single motherhood and parental neglect in a way only touched on by the *Ringu* films, to the extent that the ghostly horrors portrayed in the film serve almost as a backdrop to the more frightening realities of the protagonist's everyday life. [489]

The realities that Nelson draws upon here are made even more horrific by sound design in the film, which I argue is culturally embedded in ways that 'illustrate the role of the monstrous child figure as an intersection of national anxieties and national hopes.' [490] It should be noted that prior to this Chapter, there is no extensive study of *Honogurai mizu's* sound design or music.

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[489] Lindsay Nelson, 'Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future: Monsters, Children and Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema' *Cinemascope* V/13 (July-December 2009): 2.
[490] Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary World Cinema*, 2-3.

The 'ghost' in *Honogurai mizu* is that of a female child, Kawai Mitsuko, who in life is neglected and becomes victim to a threat that in death turns her into something monstrous. Little is known about the ghost child until the main protagonist realizes all is not well in the apartment building she lives in. The woman suffering from the strange phenomena, through her aural and visual senses, is a single mother, Matsubara Yoshimi. She moves into the apartment block following a divorce and a battle for the sole custody of her six-year-old daughter Ikuko. Both mother and daughter are haunted through several sensory experiences. After investigating things further, Yoshimi discovers that a girl of similar age to her daughter went missing from their apartment building just two years before. It is revealed that the girl was neglected by her mother and left with her father, who, failing to pick her up from kindergarten one day, leaves her unsupervised, which results in the little girl drowning in a water tank on top of the apartment block.

Following her disappearance, Mitsuko's whereabouts are concluded as unknown. The water tower is sealed off, leaving her father to search for the girl and eventually leave the apartment, unaware of her demise. Worse still, Yoshimi discovers that the spirit of Mitsuko has a more sinister agenda as she has become vengeful and latches herself on to Yoshimi as a substitute mother by using Ikuko as a victim. In the end, Yoshimi understands that she has to make the ultimate sacrifice as a mother and joins Mitsuko in the spirit world as her maternal surrogate, saving her actual daughter's life. Ten years later, the film concludes with a flash-forward when Ikuko visits the apartment and truly understands her mother's sacrifice.

Mitsuko's vengeful nature aligns her with the term *onryō*, a ghost 'who has died with some lingering grudge and seeks revenge against those who wronged them.' [491] However, as well as dealing with a pre-adolescent bitter spirit, the film's storyline is equally in line with the description of a family melodrama. Seet Khiam Keong draws attention to the popularity of the Japanese 'ghost' film formula and assesses why this 'new Asian variation of the domestic gothic' [492] is prevalent in East Asian film. He observes that '[m]any theorists have seen this as a result of social upheavals in the past few decades, which has engendered new paradigms of family structure and new twists to configurations of

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[491] Zack Davisson, *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost* (Seattle: Chin Music Press 2015), 215.
[492] Seet Khiam Keong, 'Mothers and Daughters: Abjection and the Monstrous-Feminine in Japan's *Dark Water* and South Korea's *A Tale of Two Sisters*', *Camera Obscura* 71 24.2 (2009): 140.

the nuclear family in hitherto conservative Asia.' [493] These upheavals are partly characterized by the transformation of the Japanese nuclear family and the challenges posed to bourgeois values. This is demonstrated in *Honogurai mizu* through the central mother-daughter relationship within a domestic context. Yoshimi goes through custody mediation and conflicts with her ex-husband, Kunio, whom she describes as an absent father and husband who forgets their daughter's birthday. Yoshimi is also dealing with memories of childhood neglect at the hands of her own mother.

David Kalat observes that in 'the Haunted School' films, 'the single mother and her precocious latchkey child, would remain intact throughout.' [494] This provides a sharp contrast to the traditional family structure in Japanese culture in which the mother is confined to the domestic realm, running the household, while the father would primarily provide for his family financially. [495] However, '[w]ith the collapse of the economic bubble, financial pressures exacerbated domestic tensions and resulted in an increase in domestic violence (Fujimura-Fanselow 233) and divorce rates increased.' [496] Michael Syme Anthony Honig writes about how these 'implications in gender relations can be seen represented in J-horror films, mostly through exploration of the disadvantages that divorced women face and the failure and reluctance of society to accept the new situation.' [497] The most significant disadvantage for Yoshimi in *Honogurai mizu* is her mental stability, which is repeatedly called into question during her custody battle, particularly once the haunting starts. She previously suffered from psychiatric problems and experienced some kind of nervous breakdown after working for a large publishing house as a proofreader of horror novels that dealt with graphic and sadistic content. However, it becomes apparent that Yoshimi's instability and neurotic personality are primarily the results of coping with trauma from her own childhood experience of abandonment. This affects her role as a mother: while she is loving and attentive, her struggle to care for Ikuko effectively is shown throughout the film.

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[493] Seet, 'Mothers and Daughters: Abjection and the Monstrous-Feminine in Japan's *Dark Water* and South Korea's *A Tale of Two Sisters*', 140.

[494] David Kalat, *J-Horror: The Definitive Guide to The Ring, The Grudge and Beyond,* 31.

[495] See *Configurations of Family in Contemporary Japan and Salaryman Masculinity*, Tomoko Aoyama, Laura Dales and Romit Dasgupta (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2015) and Merry Isaacs White, *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval* (London: University of California Press, 2002).

[496] Michael Syme Anthony Honig, 'Ghosts of Modernity: the J-horror cycle' (Ph.D diss., Australia, Monash University, November 2013), 167.

[497] *Ibid*., 167.

This trauma appears in a series of flashbacks discussed in the next section of this chapter, visually and aurally mirroring Yoshimi with the deceased Mitsuko. In the film's opening scene, the audio-viewer is introduced to a bustling schoolyard of children saying their goodbyes at the end of a school day. Rain is falling heavily and dominates the soundtrack. A teacher's dialogue opens the film as she says to a pupil, '[a]nd tomorrow we can practice singing, okay?' [498] A static long shot of the playground opens the film, taken from the interior of the kindergarten building as the camera slowly moves back and the window frame comes into shot. The camera pulls back slowly and moves down to reveal part of the room's interior and the back of a little girl, shown sitting on a classroom floor facing the glass doors into the yard. The camera zooms out before pausing in a static medium long shot as the same teacher heard moments before enters the classroom asking: 'Yoshimi, who's coming to get you?' There is a cut to a reverse shot of a medium close-up of the girl's face, the camera positioned outside the classroom, showing the rain dripping in front of her face as she turns away and continues to watch the rain. The camera slowly starts to zoom into a close-up of her face to highlight her sad, wordless expression. The frame starts to pull back before the graphic match cut to another medium close-up shot of an adult woman looking out of the window, watching the rain in a visual mirror of the previous scene's close-up on the little girl.

Figure 17. *Graphic match cut from Yoshimi as a child to an adult.*

There is no underscoring in these opening sequences; instead, the heavy ambient sound of rainfall is heard alongside the dialogue in the schoolyard and the following mediation sequence. This amplified natural sound provides an example of a sound bridge as the diegetic sound of rain creates continuity bleeding over into the next shot. It connects the different temporal spaces, informing the

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[498] Dialogue. *Dark Water* (*Honogurai mizu no soko kara*). Dir. Shimizu Takashi, 2002, Arrow Films, Amazon Prime, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B01M63XPDT/ref=atv_dl_rdr?autoplay=1 (This is the version accessed throughout this thesis).

audio-viewer that the woman is the little girl in the previous scene, now an adult. This is one example of a kind of aural and visual parallelism that occurs throughout the film. The following section demonstrates a significant role in connecting Yoshimi's childhood experience with Mitsuko's, mainly through sound. The next section will discuss culture constructions of the maternal in Japan before analysing how Yoshimi's childhood experience mirrors Mitsuko's, mainly through sound.

3.2 Motherhood, memory and trauma

Yoshimi and Mitsuko were abandoned as children by their mothers, and Yoshimi, now a mother herself, has to cope with maternal responsibilities. Valerie Wee highlights how this reflects the earlier ideologies of the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taiso (1912-1926) periods in which:

> [T]he idea of *bosei honno*, which defined motherhood and child rearing as an innate and immutable female inclination' [499] as well as the notion of '*ryosai kenbo* ('good wife, wise mother'), which relegated Japanese women to the domestic space while advocating an idealized feminine identity and function that worked to align, and largely confine, female potential and activities to these very specific and limited realms. [500]

Bringing this ideological discussion into the modern context, Wee references Megan McKinlay's observation that '[i]n Japanese society, the notion of motherhood has traditionally served as a powerful and pervasive symbolic function which transcends the pragmatic aspects of the role. To become a mother is not simply to give birth, but to achieve *ichininmae*, to become a real woman'. [501] However, McKinlay also highlights how '[s]ince the 1970s, an emerging literature on maternal ambivalence and the realities of the mother-child relationship has initiated a critical inquiry into the assumptions and ideologies surrounding motherhood.' [502] Second-wave feminism in Japan in the 1960s and 70s turned towards the social construction of the term *bosei* (concept of motherhood) by addressing its 'hidden

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[499] Valerie Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes* (Routledge: New York, 2016), 101.
[500] *Ibid*., 101.
[501] Megan McKinlay, 'Unstable Mothers: Redefining Motherhood in Contemporary Japan', *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* 7 (2002): Para. 1, (http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue7/mckinlay.html, 9 October 2019).
[502] Megan McKinlay, 'Unstable Mothers: Redefining Motherhood in Contemporary Japan', para. 5.

and naturalized functions' [503] and 'problematicising the mother-child relationship and exposing the practical difficulties associated with child-bearing and rearing.' [504]

McKinlay observes 'how public awareness of issues associated with the mother-child relationship—such as child abuse, mother-child suicide and neglect—has risen in contemporary Japan. The mass media has tended to portray such incidents as part of a contemporary problem, and the mothers involved in them as "deviators" from the maternal norm, vilifying them'. [505] This is just one example of the tension between pre-modern and modern Japan that will be explored further in this case study chapter. In *Honogurai mizu,* the themes of motherly love and the longing for the absent mother are central. Before her death, Mitsuko's mother just got up and left one day. This suggests that the mother could not carry out her maternal role due to circumstances not elaborated on. However, this sub-context alludes to 'the tensions between the reality of motherhood, and the expectations of society as influenced by an idealized maternal image.' [506] As a child of a divorce, Yoshimi's daughter's situation is likened to Mitsuko's experience when her kindergarten head teacher comments that Ikuko behaves oddly, talking to herself a lot. Although unbeknown to anyone, it is Mitsuko who is responsible for Ikuko's strange behaviour. He comments on Yoshimi's divorce and that it must be affecting Ikuko: 'We see this a lot with children of divorced parents.' [507] It is then that Yoshimi observes a drawing of Mitsuko on the school wall, and the head teacher responds: '[a]s a matter of fact, she used to behave oddly too.' [508] This alignment of Yoshimi's divorce with child abandonment is symptomatic of the social conditions that inform the film, as Wee highlights:

> The film's depiction of Yoshimi's struggles appear to acknowledge the constraints and social costs that result from divorce. Yoshimi's plight reflects the experiences of Japanese single mothers who encounter a range of financial, social and institutional challenges in a highly traditional society in which child support is rare and where discrimination against single mothers is commonly practiced in various areas including child care. [509]

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[503] McKinlay, 'Unstable Mothers: Redefining Motherhood in Contemporary Japan', para 6.
[504] *Ibid*., para 6.
[505] *Ibid.,* para 7.
[506] *Ibid.,* para 13.
[507] Dialogue. *Dark Water* (*Honogurai mizu no soko kara*).
[508] Dialogue. *Dark Water* (*Honogurai mizu no soko kara*).
[509] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes*, 104.

An example of this is in the film's opening sequence of the bustling schoolyard, which shows all-female parents, carers, and grandparents collecting the children from kindergarten. This highlights Japan's traditionally driven patriarchal system, founded on the clearly defined gender roles that resurface throughout the film. Yoshimi's parents divorced when she was a child, and her mother also played an absent role in her life. Not only is this an example of the tension between pre-modern and modern Japan, but the alignment of a traumatic upbringing between Yoshimi and Mitsuko encourages the audio-viewer to re-evaluate the idea of Mitsuko as a malevolent female ghost. As Wee writes:

> Where traditional female ghosts are often motivated by the need to avenge an untimely and undeserved murder, Mitsuko's ghost is motivated by a seemingly childish demand for maternal attention and affection. As an innocent child who dies accidentally due to parental neglect and indifference, she does not conform to the popular, dominant tradition of the terrifying and destructive female *onryō*.' [510]

Discussing the child's cultural resonance in Japan, Jessica Balanzategui identifies Mitsuko as being an example of 'the eerie, knowing child of Japanese fantastic literature' [511], and notes how the figure who 'thematically and symbolically defies its proper place is deeply bound up with anxieties about national progress: a key feature of millennial J-horror children.' [512] In Japan, the figure of the child is not only an icon of the future and the one for whom social order must be maintained but an icon of the past, of a fixed and unchanging sense of traditional values and identity. Therefore, the child in Japanese cinema exists in the space of temporal paradox. Historically, national progress in Japanese culture has been tied to childhood. Balanzategui, in particular, explores how 'the J-horror child's traumatic temporal dissonance reconfigures the constrictive teleological model of national time that dominated the Japanese cultural imaginary prior to the ruptures of the Lost Decade.' [513] She goes on to highlight how the children in Japanese horror films bring something akin to what Michel Foucault calls '"counter-memory": a form of collective memory that challenges the dominant historical discourse by enacting a "transformation of history into a totally different form of time" (1977,

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[510] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes*, 108.
[511] Jessica Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 161.
[512] *Ibid.*, 161.
[513] *Ibid.*, 185-186.

160).' [514] This can be interpreted as a temporal otherness that connects the present human experience with the ghost. This is also highlighted in Bliss Cua Lim's research:

> The hauntings recounted by ghost narratives are not merely instances of the past reasserting itself in a stable present, as is usually assumed; on the contrary, the ghostly return of traumatic events precisely troubles the boundaries of past, present, and future, and cannot be written back to the complacency of a homogenous, empty time. [515]

In other words, ghostly children like Mitsuko represent the tension, grief, and underlying struggles of post-war progress through their tales of trauma, then transplanted onto the characters of the present they haunt. However, they disturb a modern sense of temporality, and this too relates to Japanese notions of the domestic and familial.

Karen Lury notes how the '"empty homogenous time"' [516] that Lim refers to is 'the concept of a modern, historical temporality in which events proceed in a linear, teleological manner, allowing for a rational interpretation of events, and thus underpinning and naturalizing the ideology of the modern narrative which is committed to presenting as inevitable the idea of development or progress.' [517] José Medina expands on this further by highlighting how the ghosts' eruption into the present as a form of counter-memory 'is not a pluralism that tries to resolve conflicts and overcome struggles, but instead tries to provoke them and re-energize them.' [518] Balanzategui references the pluralism of the pre-modern temporality of ties that children had to *ie*, a 'household' and the community or state, taking precedence over the individual. For example, as Wee highlights, '[c]lassic 1950s *kaidan* films explored the terrifying and tragic consequences that follow actions that privilege personal desires over those of familial and social duty'. [519]

These 'ghost' films explore the importance of *ie* and the importance of communal obligations, known as *giri*, over personal feelings or inclinations, known as *ninjo*. This highlights the '[t]ensions

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[514] Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Donald F. Bouchard (ed.) (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 160 quoted in Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 186.
[515] Bliss Cua Lim, 'Spectral Times: the ghost film as historical allegory', *Positions* 9.2 (2001): 287.
[516] Karen Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairy Tales* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), 21.
[517] *Ibid.*, 21.
[518] José Medina, 'Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction and Guerrilla Pluralism', *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011): 24.
[519] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes,* 62.

and anxieties [that] have long accompanied Japan's complex and often conflicted attitude towards upholding traditional cultural values and practices (expressed in its enduring respect for ritual and convention) and its interest in modernization (seen in the cultural, economic and political advancement toward first-world nation status after WW2).' [520] In *Honogurai mizu,* the pre-modern temporality is explored through the lack of *ie* that exists in Mitsuko's life, predominantly through her parental abandonment, potentially demonstrating the dominance of *ninjo* in her parents' lives, especially her mother, who ignored her maternal role. Disregarding familial obligation is something that Andrew Hock-Soon Ng draws upon in his writing on Gothic Asian narratives. He notes how '[t]rauma and psychic ruptures are often the result of the failure to perform one's obligation to the family, and the ghosts of the dearly departed return to gently cajole the subject into remembering his or her arrears and to heal.' [521] Because Mitsuko's parents no longer reside on the site of her neglect where the ties of *ie* should have existed, the pre-modern temporality of household importance is now transferred to the haunting that Mitsuko carries out on the mother whom herself was once abandoned.

Mitsuko and Yoshimi share a connection to these complex cultural constructions that is both highlighted and heightened through audio-visual representation, as will shortly be demonstrated, while producing the effect of forming what Balanzategui describes as 'powerful personal memories about past events within audience members who did not experience them directly.' [522] By this, she likens the ghostly child's 'embodiment of trauma and sensory attack upon viewers' [523] as aligned with Alison Landsberg's conceptual framework of prosthetic memory. Landsberg argues that this allows us to examine the 'affects and cultural work of these characters', [524] particularly the intersubjective relationships the 'ghost' child forges with other characters and the audio-viewers. The framework can also consider how music and sound work to augment this concept to deliver a culturally unique ghostly narrative through an equally culturally encoded approach to sound design. Balanzategui breaks down Landsberg's concept as follows:

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[520] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes*, 62-63.
[521] Andrew Hock-Soon Ng, 'Introduction: The Gothic Visage of Asian Narratives', *Asian Gothic: Essays in Literature, Film and Anime*, Andrew Hock-Soon Ng (ed.), (London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), 7.
[522] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 186-187.
[523] *Ibid.*, 186-187.
[524] *Ibid.*, 186.

Prosthetic memory 'emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre' (Landsberg, 2004, 2), as the affective register of the movie-viewing experience encourages spectators 'to not simply apprehend a historical narrative but [to take] on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics' (Landsberg, 2004, 2). [525]

Landsberg's prosthetic memories are obtained from mediated representation, tied to a film's ability to '"suture" viewers' [526]. This plays on the corporeal connection of affect to trigger memory which Landsberg describes as 'a sensuous phenomenon experienced by the body' [527], inciting the audio-viewer's engagement with a past narrative on screen that they have not lived. This is achieved in *Honogurai mizu* through the relationship between sound and image that effectively breaks through the film's perceived barriers:

[T]he eerie transfer of memory from ghostly child to those she haunts, and the subsequent tangling of the dead child's traumatic memories with those of her victims, is a major theme of millennial J-horror, mirroring the extra-diegetic manner by which the eerie effects of this fictional child become prosthetic memories for the viewer.' [528]

Balanzategui also highlights that, '[w]hile Landsberg emphasizes the primacy of memory in her own work, she points out that "prosthetic memories, like an artificial limb, often mark a trauma (2004, 20).' [529] Memory and trauma are entwined in discussions of contemporary Japanese 'ghost' cinema, often detailing the cyclical nature of trauma that suggests a painful memory must continue to be re-lived through both the ghost's interaction and with those who encounter them – as the following analysis of a culturally encoded audio-visual example in the film explores. The transfer of memory from Mitsuko to Yoshimi is represented in the film through sound design, music and visuals, and with

[525] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 187.
[526] *Ibid.*, 187.
[527] Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 187.
[528] *Ibid.*, 187.
[529] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 188.

them aspects of the Japanese constructions of trauma, domesticity, the maternal and the child discussed above.

Nearly halfway through the film at 0:38:11 [530], Ikuko has what Nina K. Martin describes as a 'pivotal encounter with Mitsuko at the school, [when] the water that symbolizes Mitsuko's liminal state haemorrhages from her spectral body toward the terrified girl, thus forcing a physical, as well as emotional connection.' [531] Ikuko is playing hide and seek with her classmates, and upon being refused a hiding spot by two girls, she becomes isolated and hides underneath a table alone. There is a cut to a long shot with the camera positioned at the end of the corridor looking along it at Ikuko, who is hiding at the other end of the corridor. A camcorder effect is used to adopt Mitsuko's position as she walks towards Ikuko in her hiding spot. As soon as the camera frame shakily begins to move forward, a gong effect enters pitched around B1 though producing an effect of two gongs struck together. A chorus of wordless manipulated vocals enter with the gong sound, and another gong effect is heard, producing two pitches around F♯/F3 that move to an A2. The gong pattern is repeated with the wordless vocals rising and falling in pitch, producing in waves of sound as the shot cuts to an extreme close-up of Ikuko's face as she hides. When the shot cuts back to the shaky movement advancing down the corridor, the gong pattern is repeated a third time but with an additional fourth gong effect pitched around D♯/E3. The affect of the harmony here is a little dissonant and the gongs add microtones that suggest the slightly sinister nature of the approaching figure.

The shot cuts to an extreme close-up of Ikuko's profile slowly turning so that one eye peeks through the tablecloth she is behind. There is a hesitation as the wordless voices continue, and then as the shot cuts to Mitsuko's water-logged feet that squelch towards Ikuko, a quiet strike on D♯3 enters before a double-gong strike effect around the pitches of D♯3 and F♯2. Slithers of metallic shrieking enter intermittently as the shot remains on the feet moving forwards, and the double gong effect on D♯3 and F♯2 is heard again. The double gongs ring out again as the shot cuts to an extreme close-up of Ikuko peering out from behind the cloth. As the shot cuts back to Mitsuko's feet, the double gong

[530] *Dark Water* (*Honogurai mizu no soko kara*). Dir. Shimizu Takashi, 2002, Arrow Films, Amazon Prime, https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B01M63XPDT/ref=atv_dl_rdr?autoplay=1 (This is the version accessed throughout this thesis).
[531] Nina K. Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 50 (Spring 2008): Para 12. https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/darkWater/index.html

strike enters again, and along with the metallic sound effects, there is the sound of what can be described as a burst of air being blown down a wooden flute-like instrument. It is then that Mitsuko stops, as trickles of water begin to flow freely towards Ikuko. The abrasive metallic rings become more frequent and dominant in the mix, along with the more vigorous burst of sound from a flute-like instrument as the tendrils of water continue to flow towards Ikuko. The wordless voices begin to rise in pitch and deliver a crescendo, producing a king of ascending glissando effect that blends into one sound as the shot cuts back to the extreme close-up of Ikuko, the metallic sound effects continuing to ring out. The build-up of sound morphs into a revving engine effect, and the cut to the following sequence shows a taxi pulling into the schoolyard. In the previous sequence, Ikuko talks to an invisible friend called Mit-chan, telling her mother that she loves the bath and '[s]he's going to stay in it forever.' [532]

These examples demonstrate how Mitsuko can control the water to communicate with Ikuko and later Yoshimi. However, it is the use of sound from the hide and seek sequence that I will expand upon here. At this point in the film the gong cues described above have been heard earlier in the film, and these multiple cues will be discussed in an order that relates to the chapter's narrative themes and application of Japanese aesthetics. In this hide and seek sequence, the audio-viewer, unusually, adopts Mitsuko's point of view as she is accompanied by the dominant sounds of the non-diegetic gongs. The slight harmonic dissonance and addition of the microtones however produce a subtle musical significance here that is an example of Balanzategui's prosthetic memory. The audio-viewer is connected to Mitsuko visually through the point of view shot, but the sounds of the gongs incite our engagement with a past narrative on screen that we have not lived through the use of audio. As this chapter will demonstrate, the sounds of the gong cues are directly connected to Mitsuko, underscoring her presence throughout the film and her past trauma. The sinister effect of the microtonal gongs coupled with the manipulated mesh of metallic shrieks and acoustic overblowing timbres of the additional sound in this sequence trigger more of a corporeal affect, coupled with the shaky unusual visual we adopt, that becomes a prosthetic memory of Mitsuko's parental neglect and trauma for us, the audio-viewer. Furthermore, the transfer of memory from ghost to child is seemingly carried out in

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[532] Dialogue. *Dark Water* (*Honogurai mizu no soko kara*).

this sequence by the visual of water shown reaching out to a hypnotized Ikuko, accompanied by the abrasive sound design. She plays hide and seek alone in this sequence, rejected by her other classmates, as the new kid in school from a separated single-parent home. The musical and sonic connection to the past forged in the hide and seek sequence creates a kind of filmic bridge between present and past, highlighting the way the past and present characters are connected through their breaking with traditions.

Ikuko is later shown at home sleeping in her mother's bed. A cut in the sequence suggests passing time from when Yoshimi checks on sleeping Ikuko to falling asleep by her bedside. Yoshimi appears to have a dream directly connected to Mitsuko, mainly through its similarities with the opening flashback from Yoshimi's childhood memory. At this point, the audio-viewer experiences the blurring of the 'dichotomous schema' [533] of diegetic and non-diegetic sound. As the visuals move from the protagonist's reality into a dream state, there is a movement into what can be described as the meta-diegetic, 'those supposedly narrated or imagined [images] by a character in the film' [534]. The audio-viewer is not entirely sure if this is Yoshimi's dream or if her subconscious has been infiltrated by the secondary narration of Mitsuko communicating with Yoshimi.

As well as obviously symbolizing, the intersubjective relationship between Mitsuko and Yoshimi through their shared childhood trauma, the suggestion of this meta-diegetic state in the film can be linked back to the narrative structure found in the Japanese theatrical dramatic form of *mugen noh* (phantasmal noh). '*Mugen* means fantasy, phantasm, vision or dream.' [535] It is a classification of noh play 'based on an encounter between self and other, between reality and fantasy, between this world and other worlds out of space and time.' [536] As Komparu Kunio highlights, a deity or ghost is the actual figure of *mugen noh,* and this figure from another world is typically the masked character of the *shite* (the 'doer'/protagonist) joined by the counterpart role of the *waki* (deuteragonist). What is most

[533] Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Film* (New York, Routledge, 2001), 42.
[534] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 1987), 22.
[535] Kunio Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives. Nō E No Izanai*, English Ed. (Connecticut: Floating World Editions, [1983] 2005), 71.
[536] *Ibid*., 20.

significant about a ghost is that, unlike a God, which by definition has no past, present or future timeline, it has a past, as portrayed in the noh drama:

> Strictly speaking, a human being who has departed from this world but maintains some kind of attachment becomes a ghost, and at the moment of death such a person loses the future and is fixed into an eternal position. The only time allowed is the past. Thus, the ghost always appears as the figure it was in life and reminisces about the single experience of profound memory that entraps it within the web of delusion. [537]

This movement between space and time is part of one of the guises of time in noh, known as 'reversed' time. Time and space exist in noh theatre beyond the reality of the stage space. There are no set changes and no curtain drops. The dramatic nature of the theatre is unique in its free stream of action. This is because 'in Noh the scene is set with words and the story developed through narration. Time and space in Noh change only within the consciousness of the audience, and their existence is purely theatrical.' [538] Typically in a *mugen noh* play, there is a story pattern presented in two acts:

(1) A traveler (person of the present) pays a visit to a place of historical interest.

(2) A local person (the *shite* in transformation) appears, tells the story connected with the site, and then reveals its real identity by saying, "In truth, I am the ghost of the hero of that tale," and disappears. (This is the *nakairi*, when the *shite* exits.)

(3) Then another local person (of the present) comes along, clarifies and supplements the story in great detail, suggests that the person who disappeared was probably the ghost of that hero in disguise and exits.

(4) While the traveler is waiting in expectation, the ghost reappears, this time in the form it had in life, and tells of its experiences in the past through singing and dancing.

(5) Finally, as the day dawns, the ghost disappears, and all is seen to have taken place in the traveler's dream. [539]

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[537] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives. Nō E No Izanai*, English Ed. (Connecticut: Floating World Editions, 86.
[538] *Ibid.*, 81.
[539] *Ibid.*, 77-78.

This model demonstrates the unique character of noh and its ability to fuse the remembered past with the present in a form that does not produce a contradictory or disjointed experience. Therefore, this invites audio-viewers to recognize how the meeting of the human world and the spiritual world in Japanese culture delivers a more complex reality. As Keiko I. Macdonald highlights in her research, '[s]ometimes, the suffering ghost, like the one in the famous *Motomezuka* (*Sought-For Grave*), cannot free herself from a worldly attachment that proves too strong. In such a case, the protagonist's dramatic motions become a dance of agony.' [540] It is both this ghostly attachment in *mugen noh* and its ability to show how past and present 'overcome their inherent contradiction to intermingle within the consciousness of the audience' [541] that can be paralleled with Yoshimi's dream about Mitsuko's past, mainly through the use of sound, and furthermore demonstrates the importance of theatrical origins manifested through the *mugen* structure that blurs boundaries between the human and spiritual world in a way that stems from the very meaning of the word *mugen*: dream vision.

The dream occurs about halfway through the film (0:49:45) as Yoshimi falls asleep by her daughter's bedside. Only the dripping water's ambient sounds are heard alongside the mother's steady breathing at this point in the sequence. It is then that there is a cut to a close-up of the stain on the ceiling. A low pitched electro-acoustic rumble enters the soundtrack, followed by two heavily reverberated pitched percussive thuds. There is a cut to an extreme close-up of the drips suspended from the damp ceiling patch on the second percussive thud entry. The sound is placed high in the mix, combined with the shift to this extreme close-up, which suggests that the patch of water is the audio source. However, this could also be read as ambiguous because of the uncertainty around whether the audio-viewer is just experiencing Yoshimi's dream state.

These manipulated electro-acoustic sounds are what Michel Chion defines as 'acousmatic' [542], sounds that are heard without seeing their visual source onscreen. While this does not define where the sound is coming from, it adds to the mysterious nature of this sequence, suggesting that just as the source of the sound is not identifiable, the ghostly happenings cannot be explained fully. Therefore,

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[540] Keiko I. McDonald, *Japanese Classical Theater in Films* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994), 128-129.
[541] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives,* 87.
[542] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Claudia Gorbman (trans.), (New York: Columbia, 1994), 71.

this audio is perhaps more in line with Rick Altman's 'sound hermeneutic' [543] definition, leading to 'the full question and answer process, as followed by the film spectator/audience.' [544] The film invites the audio-viewer to interpret what is producing the unusual sounds at this point. This again connects with *mugen noh* and the fusion of the remembered past with the present, intermingling through this audio-visual ambiguity.
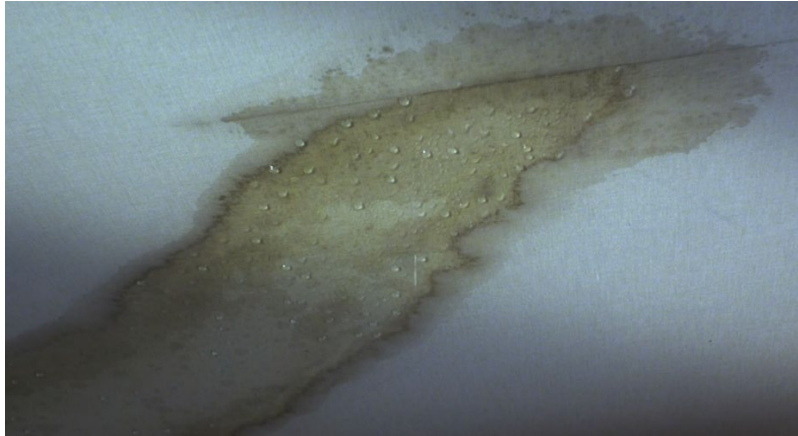
Figure 18. The living ceiling stain.

Whatever the source of the sounds that accompany the visual of the water stain on the ceiling, the audio cue suggests that it has an organic living quality. After the sound of the second percussive thud, a chorus of wordless voices enters as if emerging from the thud's reverberating echo. Their voices are manipulated and signify through screen scoring topics an inhuman quality as there is no sense of tonal harmony to the 'ah' sound they deliver. Interviewing the composer Kawai Kenji, he expressly referred to the use of voices in the film, commenting that 'for the vocal track I used the synthesizer, sorry it is not human sound. London Chorus vocal track is used on the synthesizer.' [545] This manipulated, pre-recorded vocal track works well to produce the ambiguous and inhuman nature of the atonal sound delivered. The visual editing at this point cuts back and to between the stain and a close-up of Yoshimi, establishing a connection between the stain and the protagonist. Despite the build-up of electro-acoustic sound that leads to the shift into Yoshimi's dream, the environmental sounds of the water drips remain at the forefront of the audio mix. The emphasis on the dripping water demonstrates how 'familiar, natural sounds are rendered terrifying because of their capacity to evoke

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[543] Rick Altman, *Sound Theory Sound Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 252.
[544] *Ibid*., 252.
[545] Interview with Kawai Kenji, 26 February 2015.

the unknown.' [546] The importance of water prevails throughout the film, foreshadowing the moment that the audio-viewer finds out that Mitsuko drowned in the apartment block's water tower. The ghostly flashback sequence that follows is confirmed by a yellow-tinted filter applied to the visuals throughout, highlighting an unnatural quality in contrast to the more realistic non-filtered visuals of Yoshimi's memories, which only feature diegetic environmental sounds. At this point, the off-colour grainy visuals obscure clarity so that faces in this sequence are never really seen. Furthermore, the 'visual grain compels our eyes to gaze [at the surface…], troubling the simple engagement engendered by crisp, clean images and encouraging "a more embodied multisensory relationship to the image" (Marks, 2000, 172).' [547]

The diegetic sound of heavy rainfall plays a significant role in delivering this multisensory experience. The opening shot of the dream is directed at the ground, revealing a beam of sunlight shining on puddles as rainwater bounces off them; the shadow of someone with their hood up is also shown in the top left-hand corner of the shot. The audio-viewer may connect the sound of rainfall with the opening shot of Yoshimi as a child. Therefore, despite the tinted visual disparity, Yoshimi must be dreaming about her childhood memory. However, an additional sound layer creates an aural uneasiness, suggesting that these visuals are not solely from Yoshimi's memory. This is an example of the concept of 'reversed' time in *mugen noh*, in which Komparu states 'a drama of reminiscence acts out the past after the present, and that time must overcome the natural flow and run in reverse […] the stream of time flow from the ghost's past is brought into the present as memory.' [548] The additional sound layer therefore alerts the audio-viewer that this memory is not Yoshimi's but that of the ghost, Mitsuko. This aligns with the story pattern set out in *mugen noh*, in which the traveler, upon falling asleep, dreams about the ghost who appears in their human form and recounts their experience: 'a ghost can speak to, but cannot converse with, a person in the present world, except in dreams. Thus it frequently happens that the ghost appears in the dream of a traveler.' [549] However, it also further interconnects past and present and the character manifestation of Mitsuko to Yoshimi.

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[546] Evelyn Tribble, '"When Every Noise Appalls Me": Sound and Fear in Macbeth and Akira Kurosawa's Throne of Blood', *Shakespeare* 1.1 (June 2005): 85.

[547] Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham: Durham University Press, 2000), 172 quoted in Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema,* 195.

[548] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives,* 86.

[549] *Ibid.*, 87.

Figure 19. *The yellow filter of the dream mirroring the opening water imagery.*

This assimilation of a Japanese theatrical form is also connected to Foucault's 'counter-memory' via the ghost's disruption of the present. The additional sound layer is married to the visuals that reveal part of Mitsuko's memory and are of connecting pasts and cultural meanings to Yoshimi, Ikuko and the audio-viewers, through the framework of prosthetic memory, as discussed above. Four resonating gong strikes enter as soon as the visual transition of the dissolve is complete. They are similar to those heard when Mitsuko interacts with Ikuko during the game of hide and seek: another line of connection.

The strikes emerge from the resonance of the electro-acoustic sound layers heard following the first close-up of the stain just before Yoshimi is shown sleeping, confirming the connection between the physical damp patch on the ceiling and the memories of Mitsuko's past brought into the present by Yoshimi's dream. The gong strikes are heard intermittently throughout the dream sequence as it unfolds, with the continuing bass drone also sustained throughout. In analyzing the gong strikes themselves, the meaning goes beyond the dramatic nature of time and space in *mugen noh* to highlight how pitch in traditional Japanese music is not as crucial in this particular audio example as the timbre produced. The gong strikes also function as a leitmotivic timbre in a more traditional way, linking moments of Mitsuko's past trauma with her eruption into the present.

The historical importance of sound texture over 'pure' pitched music in Japanese culture is fully discussed in Chapter Two, focusing on how non-musical natural timbres are celebrated. Chapter

Two also draws attention to the particular focus on Japanese traditional instrumental music's frequent musical references to natural sounds, highlighting Kikkawa Eishi's writing and how 'no strict distinction is made between the sounds of nature and the sounds of music.' [550] This is elaborated on earlier in Chapter Two, discussing both the concept of *sawari* and how it can also be produced through a sound modifier applied to the *shamisen*. This creates a unique non-pitched sustained buzzing sound that is also likened to the sound of a cicada, which Takemitsu Tōru observes is 'equal to a sound in nature'. [551] Overall, Chapter Two draws attention to the critical recognition that 'at the same time Western instrumental music was developing towards an ideal of "pure" immeasurable tones, the Japanese were devising means of making the timbres of imported instruments noisier.' [552] Here in *Honogurai mizu*, the dirtying of gong sounds and raspy metallic pitches associated with the ceiling stain utilize this cultural sensitivity towards timbre to produce a distinct culturally encoded sonic haunting.

Kawai Kenji confirms this emphasis on the significance of timbre when discussing gongs in the film. He describes how the type of gongs used created a particular sound texture: '[F]or *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* I felt that the sound was more vague and more kind of like murky water, marsh-type like. Yeh, that was my image so I used a huge gong from Thailand and lined up many Thai gongs.' [553] While the instrumentation here is not Japanese, there is a distinct correlation with the importance of timbre in Japanese music that drives the use of this particular instrumentation in the film, because these unique gong sounds are assimilated into this Japanese film sound world. There is a history of acculturation in Japanese music, incorporating other international musical influences and forms to enrich its culture while performing a range of cultural work, as in the earlier example of the *shamisen's* modification. The use of Thai gongs produces a much clearer tone due to the raised nipple on the gongs, unlike much flatter gongs such as Chinese gongs that produce a heavier crash and wash

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[550] Kikkawa Eishi, 'The musical sense of the Japanese', *Contemporary Music Review* 1.2 (August 2009): 86.

[551] Takemitsu Tōru, 'Tōru Takemitsu, on Sawari', annotated and trans. Hugh De Ferranti and Yayoi Uno Everett in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, Hugh De Ferranti and Yayoi Uno Everett (annotated and trans.), Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (eds.), (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press: 2004), 201.

[552] Kikkawa Eishi quoted in James Edwards, '"Silence By My Noise: An Ecocritical Aesthetic of Noise in Japanese Traditional Sound Culture and the Sound Art of Akita Masami', *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 15.1 (October 2012): 94.

[553] Interview with Kawai Kenji, 26 February 2015.

sound. The clearer tone and resonance of the Thai gongs allow them to be manipulated to produce unique textures, such as those required in *Honogurai mizu*.

As Kawai confirms, a specific approach to gongs was needed in the film's score. While Thai gongs produce a more definitive pitch, the unconventional approach to how the gongs were played emphasizes the importance of timbre in the film's scoring: 'As for using the Thai gongs to compose my music, I am not even using it properly, the way usually have this kind of beater to strike the gong, but I use hands to touch the gong which creates a sticky kind of sound.' [554] Timbre refinement is celebrated in Japanese music, such as in the examples of the various drums of the noh theatre. The *ko-tsuzumi* (small hand shoulder drum) is meant to produce an ideal, moist and soft timbre. When playing the *ko-tsuzumi*, '[t]he drummer controls the tension of the two skin heads by the braid that runs between the two heads, which are struck with the fingers of the right hand. When the skin is dry, the drummer moistens it by breathing on it or by attaching a small piece of paper wetted by his sputum.' [555] During a performance, the player of the *ō-tsuzumi* (the large hand hip drum) will alternate between two of these drums. He will swap one of the drums part way through a performance for a *ō-tsuzumi* that is kept on a charcoal fire to dry it out to maintain the ideal timbre for the drum that is dry and hard. These refinement techniques are aspired to in Japanese music to produce 'a nicer trailing note' [556], as in the particular case of the *ko-tsuzumi*. This refinement is reflected here in the example of the gong treatment in *Honogurai mizu,* the purpose of which Kawai informs when talking specifically about the timbre of the gongs was because 'the main theme of this movie is that murky water that isn't clear and that image of water that you cannot see through, I tried to transfer that image into sound.' [557]

The entry of the gongs (0:50:23) produces a vague uneasiness throughout the dream sequence in that they shift from a continuous repeating set of four strikes to three strikes. We hear the sustained low rumble of the bass drone and repeated entry of the gongs overlaid with the environmental sound of the rain. We also hear the distinct sound of Mitsuko's footsteps up to and including when she enters the apartment building, where Yoshimi and her daughter reside. The sequence shows the little girl leaving the kindergarten by herself and walking home alone. She walks across the playground and

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[554] Interview with Kawai Kenji, 26 February 2015.
[555] Shigeo Kishibe, *The Traditional Music of Japan* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, [1966] 1984), 28.
[556] *Ibid*., 28.
[557] Interview with Kawai Kenji, 26 February 2015.

then down the path along a river – a path Yoshimi and Ikuko walk down earlier in the film. The same crackles and scratches of electro-acoustic sound that were heard earlier when the shot focused on the ceiling stain again enter intermittently, almost sounding like the distorted chirps of birds or buzz of insects. The continuous thumping of the sustained bass and the gong entries continue to feature prominently in the mix. When the set of four gong strikes move to a group of three strikes, there is an unusual change in the shot, which cuts from a low angle after the first gong strike in the group of three to a blurry high angle shot, as if someone is looking down at Mitsuko from the apartment building. The third gong strike stands out even more at this point as it merges with the fourth strike, the two being struck together, creating a heavily reverberated sound. This subtle musical difference in the gong pattern works well as the lingering tones produce an 'irregularity, versatility and a relationship between elements that is neither too close nor too distant' [558] that is common in traditional Japanese music. More importantly, the ominous angle of the high angle shot coupled with the change in the gongs' musical pattern foreshadow Mitsuko's fate by making her appear vulnerable and emphasizing her susceptibility to the danger of the water tower on the roof.
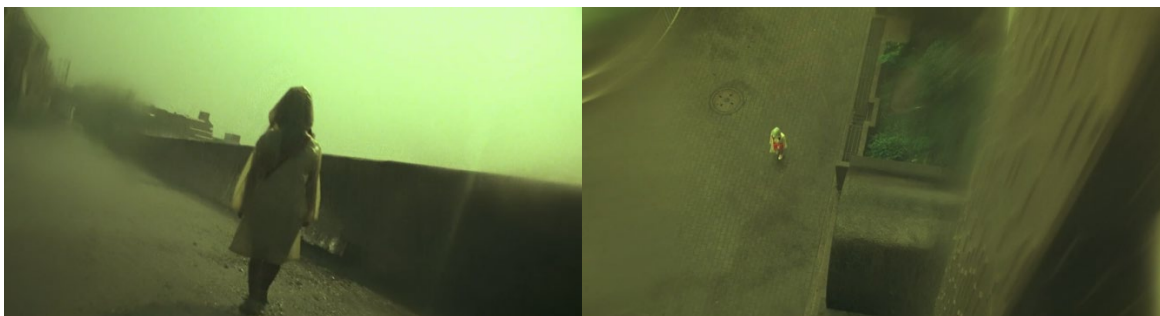
Figure 20. The ominous low and high angle shots never show Mitsuko's face.

The importance of the sound design in this sequence frames the events of the dream onscreen. It highlights how audio draws attention to the ambivalent statuses and interpenetration of human and spirit worlds through sonic placement. The sensitivity towards differences in timbre in Japanese music is also an example of the aesthetics of a single sound in *hōgaku* (traditional Japanese music) [559]

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[558] Mari Shimosako, 'Philosophy and aesthetics' in *The Garland encyclopedia of world music Vol. 7*, Robert C. Provine, Yoshihiko. Tokumaru and J. Lawrence Witzleben (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2002), 554.
[559] Takemitsu Tōru defines *hōgaku* 'as a term for music of the Edo period (1603-1867), but its common usage is as a general term for traditional music types.' See Takemitsu Tōru, Takemitsu, 'One sound', *Contemporary Music Review* 8/2 (1993): 3. Dean Britten notes that '[t]he term is closer to 'art music', omitting, as it does, folk and popular style.' See Dean Britten, 'That "Howling Music": Japanese *Hōgaku* in Contrast to Western Art Music' *Monumenta Nipponica* 40/2 (Summer, 1985): 148. The ancient court music of *gagaku* is also excluded from this umbrella term.

discussed in Chapter Two concerning religious practices in Japan and its rootedness in Japanese sensibility in general. In most Japanese Buddhist temples, a bronze bell known as a *bonshō* can be found. Rung multiple times in succession, '[t]he sound consists of the attack and the echo, which can be considered a unit.' [560] The concept and example of the single sound align with the individual strikes of the gongs heard in Yoshimi's dream world. Koji Matsunobu's study on the aesthetic of a single sound critically highlights Takemitsu's 'traditional Japanese sensitivity toward sound' [561], noting how he found a single pure tone in Japanese music to be so compelling that he identified the depth of music as being 'found in a single tone rather than in a highly developed melody line, complicated rhythms and harmony, and all other features woven in an intricate musical structure.' [562] This principle applies to the single tones of the gongs in *Honogurai mizu*.

Just as the spiritual connection with a single sound is defined, its role in the film presents a unique Japanese cultural soundscape that suggests the otherworldly nature of Mitsuko's spiritual presence infiltrating Yoshimi's consciousness through her dream state. The ambiguity between the human world and the spiritual world is heightened further in the placement of the gong strikes, connected to the significance of the individual sound in *hōgaku* and the cultural pattern of *ma*, as addressed in Takemitsu's observations in Chapter Two and here in his further selected writing from *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*:

> A single strum of the strings or even the pluck is too complex, too complete in itself […] Between this complex sound – so strong that it can stand alone – and that point of intense silence preceding it, called *ma*, there is a metaphysical continuity that defies analysis […] It is here that sound and silence confront each other, balancing each other in a relationship beyond any objective measurement. [563]

The resonance of the gong strikes in the dream sequence produces tension mirroring the onscreen visuals and offering different meanings in each shot of Mitsuko's journey to the apartment building.

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[560] Mari Shimosako, 'Philosophy and aesthetics', 551.
[561] Matsunobu Koji, 'Japanese Spirituality and Music Practice: Art as Self-Cultivation', in *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*, Liora Bresler (ed.), (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 1428.
[562] *Ibid*., 1428-1429.
[563] Takemitsu Tōru, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, Yoshiko Kakudo, and Glenn Glasow (eds., trans.), (Berkeley, California: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), 51.

The moment the wash of the gong fades into the soundscape, a ghostly sense of meaning appears in the absence of sound that falls after and before the next gong entry. The interval of time described here is 'not simply of physical duration, but is also a gateway through which a possibly undefinable "something" may present itself.' [564] In the case of *Honogurai mizu,* this 'something' is the haunting introduction of Mitsuko. More transparently, after the fading echoes of the resonating gong strikes, the audio-viewer searches for meaning in the visuals that are left behind, building an understanding of Mitsuko's past. This example and those presented in Chapter Two highlight how '*ma* and sound do not exist as a technically definable relationship. It is here that sound and silence confront each other, balancing each other in a relationship beyond any objective measure.' [565] This lends itself well to the sound design of a sequence that offers a transition from the diegetic world of the protagonist to a meta-diegetic state in which Mitsuko's secondary narrative aligns with the phantasmal structure from *mugen noh*. Yoshimi's dream demonstrates how the aesthetic of *ma* in Japanese cultural practice is utilized in the soundtrack to represent the crossing of human and spiritual paths and the unknown in-between.

3.2.1 A traumatic connection

The relationship between the spirit's traumatic past or memories of it and the protagonist is central to many Japanese 'ghost' films, as Balanzategui notes:

> Via their temporally dissonant traumas, J-horror children reinvigorate this suppressed plurality. They raise counter-memories not only through their embodiment of long-suppressed traumas, but by invoking visceral traumatic experiences for those with whom they come into contact – both characters and audiences alike.' [566]

This connection of trauma is made from the beginning of *Honogurai mizu* and is established through audio. The film opens with the sound of two water drops hitting a body of water, heavily bathed in reverberation, and the first drop is synchronized with the rumble of a dull gong sound pitched around A1 as the credit 'Kadookawa Shoten presents' appears onscreen. There is a pause, and a third water

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[564] Jim Franklin, 'Japanese Shakuhachi Honkyoku Tradition and its Reinterpretation into a Contemporary Compositional Practice' in *Music of the spirit: Asian-Pacific Musical Identity*, Michael Atherton and Bruce Crossman (eds.), (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 2008), 96.
[565] Takemitsu Tōru, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, Yoshiko Kakudo and Glenn Glasgow (trans.), (Berkeley, CA: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995), 51.
[566] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema,* 186.

droplet sound effect enters as the visual fades to black. The sound of the third droplet hitting the water is noticeably fuller than the hollow, sharper snaps of the first drops hitting the water. There is also more reverberation, as if the final drop is hitting a deeper pool of water in a chamber with a greater echo. These opening sounds are followed by sound effects from extreme tonal registers, producing different timbres that create a feeling of mystery and ambiguity in where each layer of audio comes from as they enter over the opening title credits. A very low sustained rumble effect makes up the soundtrack's bass layer, pulsating away. A shimmer of a higher metallic sound is also sustained, producing the effect of metal sliding across metal and shifting higher in pitch, uncomfortably so. Additional industrial-sounding audio effects are also heard entering intermittently.

After the initial entry of these manipulated sounds, a set of four gong strikes enter over the credits (B0, F♯2, A1 and E2). The interval between the first two gong strikes is around a perfect twelfth, followed by a major sixth from the second to third strike and a perfect 5th from the third to the fourth strike. Another set of four gong strikes enter. The first two strikes repeat the leap of the perfect twelfth, and the interval between the second and third is again a major sixth. However, the interval between the third and fourth gong strikes produce a minor 10th, foreshadowing what this body of water actually represents: Mitsuko's watery tomb. On the fourth strike of the second group of gongs, the film's first visual appears. The shot is filled with what appears to be a body of murky yellow water. A stream of light shines down from above, and unidentifiable objects float around in the water. The colour of the water changes with the stream of light getting darker as the chimes of the gongs are heard.

The first set of gong chimes enter again, reproducing a sonic pattern, but the sound begins to build up as a chorus of high-pitched wordless voices accompany the gong strikes. The metallic high-pitched sounds shift even higher and enter spontaneously, producing an extremely high-pitched cry. The repeating patterns of the two groups of gong strikes ring out seven times. However, the additional metallic sound layers and wordless vocals almost drown out the gongs. The 6th set of gongs changes the order with F♯2, A1, F♯0 and then moves to E2. The 7th set repeats the first pattern of strikes (B0, F♯2, A1 and E2), though faintly. These sets of gong strikes produce a damp resonating sound texture, a sonic link to counter-memory that aligns these visuals with the following sequence from Yoshimi's

childhood memory. This watery perspective would be what Mitsuko experienced after she fell into the water tank. This site of trauma opens the film and although the audio-viewer is yet to be introduced to Mitsuko the opening sonic content paired with the visuals of the dirty yellow water begin to shape prosthetic memory connected to this trauma through the affective register of the audio-viewing experience which shapes subjectivity as to what this ambiguous opening means. This subjective interpretation is particularly shaped in the pregnant pauses of *ma* in-between each gong strike. This opening sequence sets up the gongs and water effects as a narrative symbol and unusual sonic leitmotif associated with Mitsuko, thus moving away from a more typical Hollywood approach to the leitmotif as a repeating melodic phrase or fragment, as discussed in Chapter One.

Figure 21. The view from inside the water tank.

The discoloured water that makes up the opening visual is linked to the typical appearance of dirty water in Japanese horror stemming from early examples such as 1954's *Gojira* when the water in the bay of Tokyo is poisoned after the nuclear explosion. Michael Walker notes that '[i]n the ghost movies, the water from which the ghost emerges is nearly always dirty, in some cases polluted by the corpse itself…This adds unhealthiness to the connotations of the ghost.' [567] This unhealthiness is the trauma Mitsuko experiences, reinforced by the two sets of gong chimes that become a motif of her haunting presence. It is no coincidence that similar groupings of chimes are also heard in Yoshimi's dream. Before the cut to the playground scene, which maintains a similar yellow filter to the hues of the water, the sound has built up to the point that it masks the final low chimes of two further gong strikes. The combination of metallic shrieks and rumbles that have a voice-like wail quality bleed

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[567] Michael Walker, *Modern Ghost Melodramas: What Lies Beneath* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 29.

across, and in particular, a child's cry is heard faintly just before the 7th group of gong strikes preceding the visual cut to black. This faint cry of a child merges into the diegetic sound of children's voices and the ambient sound of rain that follows.

The sound bridge between the first abstract visuals and the memory of Yoshimi's childhood connects her to Mitsuko. Sounds heard by the characters in the film, whether described as diegetic or meta-diegetic, are used to trigger incursions of past trauma and disturb the homogeneity of time in the film's plot. For example, in a scene that mirrors the opening flashback of Yoshimi's childhood, Ikuko is shown waiting for her mother to pick her up from kindergarten. Just as in the film's opening sequence, the same ambient sounds of rain are heard in the diegesis, along with the chatter of children and parents shown walking past the door opening where Ikuko stands. The sequence then cuts to the interior of a publishing office where Yoshimi's job interview is interrupted, and she sits waiting. Yoshimi is aware she is running late to pick up her daughter, and cross-cutting is used in the sequence to show Ikuko waiting at the kindergarten, standing in the classroom doorway. A cut to a medium close-up of Ikuko's face shows her motionless and expressionless.

There is another cut back to Yoshimi, who pulls out her phone and dials a number, presumably trying to call the kindergarten. As Yoshimi holds the phone up to her ear, she is agitated and holds her other hand up to her temple as if she has a headache. At this point, only the ambient sounds of a bustling office accompany Yoshimi as she continues to wait. However, as she holds the phone to her head and it rings, the diegetic ringing is suddenly overlapped with a different ring tone of another telephone, which then overrides the original diegetic dial tone heard from Yoshimi's cell phone. The sequence cuts to what appears to be a classroom at an earlier time, suggested by the yellow haze of the visuals, which also links to the colour of the 'dark water' in the water tank. A little girl is sat with her back to the camera, paralleling earlier shots in the film of Yoshimi waiting in the classroom as a girl and Ikuko stood in the classroom doorway waiting for Yoshimi to pick her up, again inter-connecting the characters through their experiences of neglect. A teacher runs over to answer a telephone and asks who is picking up Yoshimi as she has been waiting. There is a cut to a close-up of Yoshimi as a little girl. After putting the phone receiver down, the teacher informs Yoshimi that her daddy will pick her up. Yoshimi responds with the only dialogue of this flashback: 'what about mummy?' The close-up of child Yoshimi asking this question is followed by a cut back to

the present, and a close-up of adult Yoshimi on the phone as the switch to the original dial tone of her cell phone brings her back to the present. The dial tone sound from Yoshimi's mobile phone directly impacts her as it triggers this traumatic childhood flashback.

Figure 22. Yoshimi's traumatic flashback is triggered by sound.

A final cut shows Ikuko walking out into the schoolyard with her umbrella in the pouring rain. She stops to look at something, and the camera adopts her point of view as she looks at the ghost of Mitsuko in the distance stood under a tree, her face masked by the rain. This moment directly parallels the visuals of the film's opening sequence of Yoshimi as a girl waiting for her mother and the flashback/dream sequence of Mitsuko waiting and looking out at a raining schoolyard. A third parallel is made when Ikuko is also shown waiting for her mother staring out into the rain. This deliberate repetition of images is what Nina K. Martin describes as Nakata's use of the uncanny *doppelganger* trope, which 'doubles and triples images and blurs the past into the present, in order to show the cycle of neglect that impinges on these young heroines.' [568] The cinematic visual repetition is powerful, but the use of sonic repetition is just as impactful as '[t]he coincidence of the waiting scenes is underlined by the fact that in all three instances, it is raining heavily. Water – as puddles, leaks, steam, sweat or rain – not only signals the presence of Mitsuko, but also links the three characters across and within time.' [569] The heightened sounds of rain in the soundtrack demonstrate how 'interrelated uses of sound contexts [are] structured for aesthetics purposes.' [570] As discussed in Chapter Two, ambient sounds

[568] Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*': Para 6, (https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/darkWater/index.html, 24 April 2020).
[569] Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears Fears and Fairy Tales*, 34.
[570] Henry Johnson, 'The Sounds of *Myūjikku:* An Exploration of Concepts and Classifications in Japanese Sound Aesthetics' in *Musicological Research* 18 (1999): 302.

from nature are vital in the broader field of Japanese performing arts. In *Honogurai mizu*, the heightened sound of rain emphasizes the suffering of the three interconnected characters. As section 3.2 has argued, however, the symbolic and cultural work being carried out by the narrative and audio-visuals is considerably more subtle and complex, taking in themes of maternal duty, abandonment, urban decay, and longing for the absent mother. Above all else, however, it highlights *Honogurai mizu's* foregrounding of the ghostly return of trauma through a temporal otherness that connects Yoshimi's experience with Mitsuko's which, as that I will continue to argue in the next section of this Chapter, demonstrates the unique inter-relation of sound-design and socio-cultural contexts in Japanese 'ghost' films.

3.3 Drips and Damp Echos: The [un]natural soundscape of a Japanese haunted apartment

The significance of rain, water and dampness in *Honogurai mizu* is not only tied to Mitsuko's fate: they have further profound cultural significance linked to recent historical events. David Kalat discusses the viral nature of the hauntings and curses in Japanese horror in the late 1990s and beyond as the fallout from fear of bioterrorism and plagues after such incidents as the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack. He focuses on the dominance of water imagery in order to highlight the viral elements of these films, observing that '[a]s an island nation whose fate is linked with the sea's bounties, threatened by tidal waves and tsunamis, Japan's longstanding awe of water goes back farther and deeper than any fear of nasty microbes.' [571] It is therefore not surprising that there is a deeper relationship to water felt by the country's people: 'In Japan the concept "wet" has a meaning not found in English; it also means "emotional."'. [572]

In *Honogurai mizu,* the sensory effect of water is heightened through the continuity of rain across the film: the soundscape is drenched subtly in emotion. From the moment Yoshimi and Ikuko walk out of the estate agents into the pouring rain it is a persistent presence. The rain and the humidity that is sustained throughout the film is commented on in relation to the living circumstances of Yoshimi ad her daughter. When the mother and daughter first visit the apartment building they will

[571] Kalat, *J-Horror,* 13.
[572] *Ibid.*, 17.

live in, the walls and floors are littered with drips and puddles that at first can be put down to the rain and the rain season in Japan that is roughly from the beginning of June to mid-July, each year. However, as it later becomes apparent the sensory overload of leaks, puddles and consistent dampness in the apartment building is because Mitsuko uses water as a conduit for her paranormal activity. Despite this, the damp and dank condition of the apartment building also draws attention to wider social issues in the film surrounding the meaning of the home. As John E. Petty observes:

> In virtually all cultures the home is seen as a place of safety and security, a refuge not only from other people, but from the natural and elemental world as well. The home, with its walls and roof protects us from rain and wind and sleet and snow, and provides us with space secure from invasion or attack. In fact, the *kanji* character for "house" shows a figure with a roof over it, furthering this concept of home as protector.' [573]

The apartment building in *Honogurai mizu* does not represent an ideal living space, and is described as being more in the style of a housing collective known as *danchi* complexes. The government-built suburban complexes were constructed after the Kanto earthquake in 1923, and then post-World War II in the 1960s and 70s to support the post-war housing crisis in response to the rapid population growth in the 1950s. They became the desired living spaces of the 1970s city dwellers, a national economic achievement in solving the housing crisis. They provided communal living as Japan moved away from its military defeat and modernized on a level similar to developed Western countries. However, over time the uniform concrete grey apartment blocks, once an economic housing achievement, became the sites of several social issues for local authorities. The 1991 economy bubble bursting meant that those residents who had not already moved out before this had to continue living in what became dilapidated apartments. Tatiana Knoroz observes how '[s]ome of the danchi neighbourhoods were repurposed as social housing, and now are populated by elderly people, low-income and single-parent families, immigrants from other Asian countries and sometimes

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[573] John E. Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The Influence of Traditional Japanese Theater, Culture and Aesthetics on Japan's Cinema of the Fantastic' (MSc. diss., Texas: University of North Texas, May 2011): 153. 家: The Japanese kanji for 'house'.

representatives of traditionally excluded social classes in Japan.' [574] The decay of the apartment in the film, representing the water and rain getting in also relates to this wider issue of social exclusion.

Those who reside in *danchi* complexes are often labelled as having a low social status. This adds to the film's social commentary as the building from the outset is presented as having specific characteristics that fit with the description above, located in the city's outer suburbs where *danchi* neighbourhoods appeared. The demographic of residents is also closely matched in the film, especially by single parent Yoshimi. The unappealing nature of the apartment building highlights 'the presence of restrictive social and gender codes that maintain economics of subjugation within Japanese society and against which women continue to struggle.' [575] Yoshimi is financially restrained in the pressure she faces in taking the apartment. She observes many things that are wrong with it as she looks around, from the leak in the lift to the dreadful humidity in the apartment and the generally dilapidated state. However, she is bound to her current circumstances. The soundtrack hints that something more sinister than the failings of previous economic investment and societal pressures is at play, but in addition to all the water's encroachment signifiers, it adds another layer of meaning as Mitsuko uses water to communicate with Yoshimi and Ikuko.
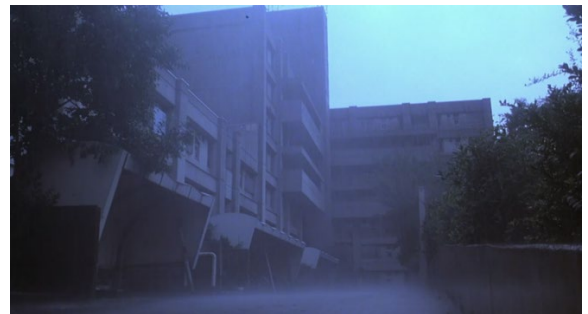
Figure 23. Katsushika Danchi Map Data: Google, @2015 from Street View, March 2015 (left image). Apartment block in *Honogurai mizu* (right image).

Earlier in the film, a sequence shows Yoshimi and Ikuko's journey to the apartment viewing (0:07:20). They walk along the river, filmed from a camera position that uses an establishing long shot to show the city backdrop behind them as the rain continues to fall, completely dominating the soundtrack as

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[574] Tatiana Knoroz, 'The Rise and Fall of Danchi, Japan's Largest Social Housing Experiment', *Strelka Mag*, 5 December 2019, (https://strelkamag.com/en/article/the-rise-and-fall-of-danchi-japan-s-largest-social-housing-experiment?utm_medium=website&utm_source=archdaily.com, 24 April 2020).

[575] Jay McRoy, *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 52.

the sounds of traffic and the city are muted. As the pair walk closer towards the camera in this static shot, a very low bass drone enters made up of manipulated low male vocals and builds to a crescendo merged with the sounds of the water bouncing of Yoshimi and Ikuko's umbrellas. They enter from the far left of the frame and walk off-screen to the right as the prominent drops of rain on their umbrellas fade away. The stasis of the shot and lack of action enables us to take in other aspects and their meanings, not least the audio here, and the painting of the rain as ominous emotional symbolism by the bass drone. The drone also fades slightly but lingers very low in the sound mix. The following visual cuts to a low angle shot of the apartment, accompanied by the sound of a low gong chime over the sustained bass manipulated vocal drone from the previous shot. This chime is joined by a sustained string sound and the continuous ambient sound of heavy rain. Yoshimi and Ikuko walk into the shot of the apartment building, and as they continue to walk towards it, a second lower-pitched gong chime is heard, followed by a second low pitched sustained synthesised sound. The camera then cuts to a high-angle shot from the upper part of the building as Yoshimi and Ikuko walk closer and stop in front of it, looking up as if towards the camera. A third lower gong chime is heard with the sustained synthesized sound and the initial low vocal drone in the mix. However, the third chime is succeeded by the moaning sound of the vocal drone rising in pitch that blend into and drown out the sustained synthesized sound. The sustained vocal drone remains low in the mix, creating an audio continuity as the focus of the sequence becomes the apartment block. This mix of sound continues but with the moans of the vocals delivering a crescendo before dipping in volume as the shot cuts to a medium close-up of Yoshimi and Ikuko continuing to look up, the ever-present sound of rain remaining dominant in the mix.
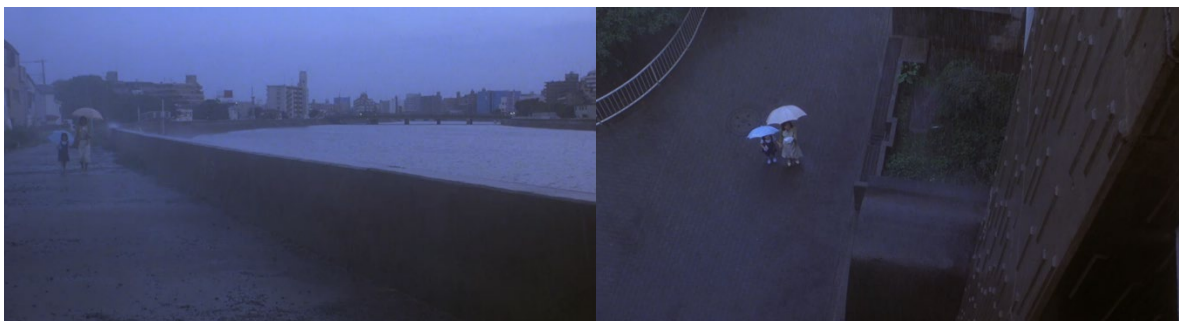
Figure 24. Shots of Yoshimi and Ikuko visiting the apartment block.

The blueish-grey colour imagery used in this sequence, long shots and high camera angles, especially when the protagonist is introduced to the apartment building, menacingly presents its architecture. [576] As Nina K. Martin observes, 'Nakata employs subtler cinematic techniques, primarily through manipulating shot composition, in order to bring the setting into the film's forefront and to situate its mother/daughter protagonists as outsiders, isolated and alone.' [577] Throughout the film, this is often achieved by placing Yoshimi and Ikuko at the edge of the frame or isolated within it stood away from other people' and thus excluded from the group dynamics so important to Japanese culture.' [578] The high angle shot of Yoshimi and Ikuko looking up at the apartment building for the first time is another example of Nakata's *doppelganger* trope, doubling the image to interrupt the film's temporal framework revealing the parallel between Yoshimi and Mitsuko's worlds and the permeable boundaries between the living and the dead. In this high angle shot from an upper part of the apartment building, Yoshimi and Ikuko enter the frame from the left, peering up almost towards the camera. However, their faces cannot entirely be seen because of the height of the shot from the imposing structure. In fact, '*Dark Water* repeatedly imagines its protagonists in relation to the cold, mammoth structure of the looming apartment building'. [579] The same top camera angle from the upper part of the building is used again later in the film when Yoshimi first dreams about Mitsuko. A further camera angle doubling occurs in this sequence when the low angle shot of the building is used as Yoshimi and Ikuko walk into the frame from the left, a shot which mirrors Mitsuko's journey to the apartment block in Yoshimi's dream.

The dominant topography of the building, emphasized by the camera angles, demonstrates how 'the mise en scene overshadows the human characters within the film's diegesis.' [580] Sound, however, is also integral to amplifying the urban solitude and threatening environment of the apartment building. The foremost example of this is the subtle shift from the heavy ambient sounds of rainfall as Yoshimi and Ikuko walk along the riverside to the electro-acoustic soundscape connected with the building, complete with ghostly moaning. The different soundscapes draw attention to the

[576] See Colette Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* page 139 for a general discussion on the different use of colour imagery in the *Honogurai mizu no soko kara*.
[577] Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*', Para 5, (https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/darkWater/index.html, 24 April 2020).
[578] Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*', Para 9.
[579] *Ibid*., Para 7.
[580] *Ibid*., Para 4.

unappealing nature of the building and provide a key example of how the *yūgen* aesthetic 'foregrounds the Buddhist focus on impermanence and worldly suffering.' [581] The building's physical decay parallels the moral decay (viewed from a conservative Japanese standpoint) of the struggle against patriarchy which encourages Yoshimi to fight for her daughter's custody, yet with an appropriate sense of melancholy surrounding her, as she struggles with the continued problems in an apartment illuminating the subtle beauty of *yūgen* introduced in Chapter Two, which can be found here in the dark and dampness that helps to strengthen Yoshimi's maternal duty. As Ueda Makoto highlights, 'yūgen is the beauty of seeing such an ideal person go through an intense suffering as a result of being human.' [582] The concept will be expanded on further in Chapter Four.

As Christine Wilson observes, '[n]early all haunted house narratives focus on how inhabitants try to make their space liveable…At the most basic level, haunted house stories explore the relationship between subjects and their home space.' [583] Such explorations, while common in horror, perform different cultural work in different societal contexts. For example, Kinoshita Chika addresses this topic in her examination of J-horror discourse and discussions of gender. She notes that Yoshimi's relationship with her physical setting as a single mother is typical in Japanese horror cinema. In fact, '[t]his thematic obsession and the J-horror aesthetics of the uncanny nurture each other in the setting of urban everyday life. In isolated apartments, women, often mothers, are particularly susceptible to contacts with supernatural beings, if she herself is not among them.' [584] Kinoshita specifically references Nakata's *Honogurai mizu* as an example that 'capitalize[s] on women's identification with space.' [585] Nina K. Martin explores this relationship further, noting that Yoshimi's 'fragile mental state is revealed through the persistent deterioration of her apartment building – manifested through the omnipresence of leaking ceilings, broken lifts, cracking wallpaper, and faulty plumbing.' [586]

[581] Francisca Cho, 'The Play of Shadows in Japanese Cinema' *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 11/4 (April 2016): 522.

[582] Makoto Ueda, 'Zeami on the Art of the Nō Drama: Imitation, *Yūgen*, and Sublimity' in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, Nancy G. Hume (ed.), (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 182.

[583] Christine Wilson, Haunted Habitability: Wilderness and American Haunted House Narratives', *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, María del Pilar Bianco and Esther Peeren (eds.), (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2010), 200.

[584] Kinoshita Chika, 'The Mummy Complex: Kurosawa Kiyoshi's Loft and J-horror', *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*, Choi Jinhee and Wada-Marciano Mitsuyo (eds.), (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 107.

[585] *Ibid.*, 107.

[586] Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*', Para 3.

Martin also discusses how the 'intruding presence of water both inside and outside the building unsettles the cultural importance of keeping these areas spatially distinct.' [587] Yoshimi and Ikuko continually take off their shoes in the apartment's entrance hall to put on house shoes. This is related to the *uchi* (inside/home) and *soto* (outside/other) that 'are associated with the clean inside of the house, and the dirty outside world, respectively. Japanese houses almost always have an entrance hall where shoes, polluted with this outside dirt, are removed'. [588] The *uchi* is where the family should feel safe, but in the film, this is threatened by a force that intrudes from the *soto*, primarily through the spreading dark ceiling patch in the apartment. Different readings of the stain interconnect through the meanings already outlined as core to the film's story and symbolism. Seán Hudson likens the stain more directly to Yoshimi's emotional state and the subjectivities of the protagonist and her daughter: 'As the fear that Yoshimi and Ikuko will be separated becomes more palpable, the dark patch on the ceiling spreads, and the mother's desperate love intensifies.' [589] Wee describes the growing stain on the ceiling as an indication of the spirit's existence, presenting a 'more obscure and ambiguous depiction of Mitsuko.' [590] Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez's personifying description of the stain on the apartment ceiling is closely related to Wee's observation. She notes that '[w]hat in the beginning seems like a simple humidity stain on the ceiling reveals itself to be a sinister entity that takes over the apartment. It is the ghost of a young girl, always dressed in rainproof yellow overalls, who haunts mother and daughter and mobilizes herself through water.' [591] While these observations comprehend what the dark stain on the ceiling might represent, the scholarship does not address how the audio-visual representation of the stain creates the definitions of meaning that Hudson, Wee and Eljaiek-Rodríguez share. A visual description dominates writing on the film. However, it is the use of audio that triggers the ghostly interpretations described above that will be presented here.

Yoshimi first becomes aware of the ceiling stain while unpacking boxes in their new home. The pair share a special mother and daughter moment, and lying on the bed looking up at the ceiling, Ikuko begins to repeat the phrases her mother says. With only the ambient sound of the cicadas heard

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[587] Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*': Para 11.
[588] Joy Hendry, *Understanding Japanese Society*, (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), 40.
[589] Seán Hudson, 'Dark Water' in *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Horror Films*, Salvador Marguia (ed.), (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 44.
[590] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 117.
[591] Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez, *The Migration and Politics of Monsters in Latin American Cinema* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 119.

at this point in the sequence, Yoshimi suddenly lifts herself up, looking up at the ceiling as if she has

noticed something. As she gets up, exclaiming '[w]hat the', a raspy metallic timbre enters, fluctuating

between pitches. An added rumble effect (it sounds like the footsteps heard moments before) enters

just after the metallic buzz. The shot cuts from a medium close-up of Yoshimi's reaction to the stain on

the ceiling then back to Yoshimi, the build-up of sound becoming more intense. As the shot cuts back

to the stain, a continuing metallic bell-like ring is heard in the background, which transitions to a

higher pitch and merges into another higher pitched ring as an unusual cut to a long shot of the

building exterior in the day appears onscreen. The metallic timbre bleeds over the shot and fades out to

the ambient sounds of birds. The timbre of the shifting metallic sustained pitches heard the first time

Yoshimi spots the stain is slightly different to when Ohta, the estate agent, observes the stain earlier on

in the film. This time the shifting metallic pitches have a raspy, harsh, breathy quality as if produced

from forceful blowing of a wind instrument that has been electronically manipulated.

Figure 25. Yoshimi notices the ceiling stain.

The sound quality produced can be likened to the breathy tones produced by the *shakuhachi* –

for example, the *muraiki* bellowing technique, 'a sound which is part wind and part tone, created by a

very explosive charge of air blown into the *shakuhachi*.' [592] *Muraiki* [593] is also described as

'overblowing to create a breathy effect… at the start or during a note.' [594] The rough texture of the

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[592] Constance L. Kelley, 'Unaccompanied flute repertoire influenced by the Japanese *shakuhachi*: An examination of three representative twentieth-century works' (Ph.D diss., University of Nebraska, May 2008): 12.

[593] The term *muraiki* is used here as a generic term to encompass types of *muraiki*: *muraiki*, *kaziki* a stronger overblowing version of *muraiki* and *sorane*, a softer shorter overblowing version of *muraiki*. This is because the electronic manipulation of the sound used in the film at this point cannot be absolutely determined and so I have chosen the term which best describes the technique.

[594] Flora Henderson, 'Contemporary composition for shakuhachi and western instruments: timbre gesturality in the analysis of cross-cultural music' (Ph.D diss., SOAS: University of London, September 2015): 173.

manipulated metallic tones connected with the stain on the ceiling at this point in the film highlights the prominence of 'tone-colours, subtly enriching their environment' in shakuhachi performance aesthetics: 'Their quality infuses the movements of everyday social, cultural and even spiritual life with symbol and metaphor.' [595] The connection between the *shakuhachi* acoustic properties and its extra-musical embedded meanings in nature can also be applied here, as discussed in Chapter Two. Flora Henderson aligns explicitly the use of *muraiki* with the musical correlations of *wabi sabi*. In particular, she notes how 'in shakuhachi music *sabi* is analogous to the effect of the *muraiki* technique'. [596] She draws on Eliot Weisgarber's research, which highlights where value is placed in playing the shakuhachi: 'What is often sought after is its roughness not unlike that which is desired in a valued piece of pottery such as a tea bowl. In other words something which [sic] is old and faded. This is the famed aesthetic known as sabi.' [597] Henderson then goes on to highlight how Weisgarber links *sabi* to the appreciation of nature in Japanese culture:

> Out of the rugged naturalness of the instrument itself and from the method of tone production which is basic to it, there comes a sense of kinship with the world of nature: the wind blowing through groves of bamboo and pine and the distant sea breaking on rocks, and always with that gnarled, unfinished quality. [598]

The predilection towards the sounds of nature through instrumental techniques in Japanese arts is regularly discussed; see Chapter Two for an in-depth summary. Scholars such as Zachary Wallmark highlight how the instrument's noise techniques are 'a form of nature mimesis'. [599] The *muraiki,* in particular, is recognized as capturing the sound of the wind. Wallmark expands upon this:

> These effects and others draw humans into an intimate dialogue with the environment; indeed, the concept presupposes the complete lack of distinction between the two … [T]he shakuhachi

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[595] Nick Bellando and Bruno Deschênes, 'The Role of Tone-colour in Japanese Shakuhachi Music', *Ethnomusicology Review* 22.1 (2020): 53.

[596] Flora Henderson, ''Contemporary composition for shakuhachi and western instruments', 159.

[597] Eliott Weisgarber, The Honkyoku of the Kinko-Ryū: Some Principles Of Its Organization', *Ethnomusicology* 12/3 (September 1968): 318.

[598] *Ibid*., 318.

[599] Zachary Wallmark, 'Sacred Abjection in Zen Shakuhachi', *Ethnomusicology Review* 17 (2012): 3.

plays at the borders of music and noise, and human intentionality and environmental sound, ultimately collapsing these binarisms. [600]

This lack of distinction between environments and collapsing boundaries between human and spiritual environments – clearly relatable to the allusion to the instrument's timbral pallete in the film – can also be discussed in the context of the *shakuhachi* spiritual background and its playing techniques. The *shakuhachi* was used as the spiritual tool of the Fuke sect of Zen Buddhism in the seventeenth century. It is primarily associated with the *komuso* or 'priests of nothingness', a group of mendicant monks who travelled around playing the instrument for alms and used the shakuhachi as a tool for meditation, *suizen*, or 'blowing meditation' as it was described. However, at the beginning of the Meiji Restoration in the late 1860s, the Fuke sect of Zen Buddhism was banned and 'the Meiji government actively redefined the shakuhachi as a "musical instrument" (*gakki*) instead of a "spiritual tool" (*houki*). The conceptual bifurcation between *gakki* and *houki*, music and non-music, is still an ambivalent yet active division today.' [601] However, Wallmark highlights in a footnote that '[t]he komuso and their houki-oriented approach to the instrument migrated at this point from Fuke to Meian temples.' [602] The spiritual alignment with the shakuhachi and its performance techniques demonstrate how this sound tradition in Japanese culture also works to bring the stain to life in the film, highlighting the movement between the human and the spiritual environment where the ghost resides.

Interestingly, when Yoshimi first sees the stain on the ceiling, Ikuko continues to look at her mother as if she does not see nor hear the stain. This sequence is very similar to the first scene when Ohta, the estate agent, notices the stain on the ceiling. In both sequences, the characters appear to notice the visual of the stain over its sound. Neither physically react to the high-pitched, harsh timbre of the audio that accompanies the visual focus on the stain each time. Furthermore, as Yoshimi and Ikuko lie on the bed, they both hear the diegetic sounds of footsteps running across the floor above them. Yoshimi comments directly on them, saying to Ikuko, 'that sound really carries, huh?' She does not comment on the sound heard when the dark stain on the ceiling appears. Likewise, the close-up on Ohta in the earlier scene focuses on his eye line: how he sees the stain and quickly tries to distract

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[600] Wallmark, 'Sacred Abjection in Zen Shakuhachi', 3.
[601] *Ibid*., 2.
[602] *Ibid*., 10.

Yoshimi from noticing it. This implies that the abrasive timbre associated with the ceiling can be interpreted as functioning as a leitmotivic timbre, as discussed earlier and as other examples in this chapter will highlight. At this point the sound can be interpreted as being non-diegetic as it is the visual of the stain that captures both Ohta and later, Yoshimi's attentions.

The next time the stain appears is when Yoshimi is getting ready to take Ikuko to kindergarten in a sequence following on immediately from the one above. Yoshimi sees a pool of water on the floor and notices the spreading stain on the ceiling. However, the only sounds heard are the ambient drips of the water. As she gets a bowl, another close-up shot of the floor shows the water bouncing off it. Yoshimi begins to wipe the floor before a cut to a medium close-up of Yoshimi as she looks up at the ceiling. She suddenly seems transfixed as she slows down her movement and then closes her eyes as if she feels something in her head. The camera slowly pans up as she blinks. Cued at this very moment is a sustained synthesized tone pitched around F♯5 that seems to fluctuate at a micro-level in pitch as it slowly moves to a higher sustained tone around A5. Yoshimi tries to blink away the pain in her head, and she looks up again before placing a finger on the side of her temple. The camera slowly pans up, tracking her movement as she gets up and walks towards the window. She pulls back the curtain to look out of the window, and the sustained synthesized tone shifts back to the F♯5 and again seems to swell in pitch as it plays out in a natural decay as Yoshimi picks up her bags and the shot cuts to her entering the kitchen. As she goes to turn the tap on, the sustained pitch shifts down to a D♯5, and she washes and dries her hands before the tone slowly transitions back to F♯5 as Yoshimi takes a pill out of her bag. She pours a glass of water, and the pitch bends up to an A5 again as she swallows the pill. As she looks down at the glass, the sustained synthesized tone suddenly warps and descends chromatically into a manipulated slow glissando as if mimicking the slow descent of the pill down Yoshimi's throat. The glissando continues as the shot cuts to an extreme close-up of the glass, revealing a long strand of black hair inside it, thus highlighting the proximity of Mitsuko's presence, mainly through water. The sonic content at this point is ambiguous. The timbre is different from the leitmotif of the ceiling stain and when a close-up visual of the stain is shown, only the ambient drips are heard.

Figure 26. *Yoshimi feels the sound of the stain.*

Here the fluctuating sustained sound of the ceiling stain connects Yoshimi and Mitsuko's shared trauma. Yoshimi takes medication, providing the audio-viewer with an insight into her well-being and the possible impact of her past. The visual cues of the sequence align Yoshimi's state of mind with the stain on the ceiling as the pain she feels in her head surfaces when she is cleaning up the drips on the floor from the stain. The sonic cue of the first synthesized tone enters as Yoshimi feels something in her head and closes her eyes in pain which suggests it is meta-diegetic as there is no visible sound source and its sync point with Yoshimi's visual reaction implies that she hears it. The sonic cue enters when she is cleaning up the water created by the stain's drips, suggesting that Mitsuko may be trying to communicate with Yoshimi through the water.

She tries to blink what she feels away. However, the shift to the next higher tone is heard. She then places her finger to her temple, creating a moment of ambiguity. Yoshimi may therefore hear the audio, crossing over into the meta-diegetic and triggering the pain she feels. This adds a further layer of meaning in connecting Mitsuko's haunted space directly with Yoshimi and the physical sensations she is experiencing and potentially hearing now as well as seeing.

While the dripping ceiling stain appears at several critical moments in the film, its final appearance immediately after Yoshimi's dream reveals the extent of its visual growth, coupled with the dominating sound of water that enters after the dream concludes with a fade to black. Yoshimi wakes up to find Ikuko has gone and what appears to be a rain shower falling from the ceiling (0:52:39). The shot adopts her point of view, first looking at the space where Ikuko should be then slowly looking up towards the ceiling. The shot adopts her point of view, panning across the ceiling to

show the massive spread of the yellow and brown stain. The dull thud of a metallic gong sound enters as Yoshimi's eyes avert upwards just before the panning shot. This sustained initial percussive entry breaks into a wave of a wind-like sound, almost sounding like moaning wordless voices. The initial thud's low rumble starts to crack and bubble as the camera pans across the ceiling. This rumble transitions into what sounds like the very brickwork of the ceiling crumbling, building in volume. High-pitched metallic scraping sounds enter intermittently after a wind-like sound, ringing out as if slivers of metal are being scraped against a cymbal. The electro-acoustic soundscape continues to build up into what sounds like a volcanic rupture of breaking stone and metallic creaks, as the shot pans closer to the ceiling with a tilted camera angle showing the ceiling appearing to warp. Before the camera cuts back to Yoshimi's face, a final metallic and raspy breath of sustained sound enters, in a effect strongly reminiscent of the *muraiki* bellowing technique of the shakuhachi discussed earlier. This climatic moment connects back to the timbre's first appearance when Ohta introduces Yoshimi to the apartment. It confirms its leitmotivic status as a long-range, culturally embedded scoring strategy.

The cacophony of sound represents the dramatic spread of the stain, and as the shot cuts back to Yoshimi's face, it fades out with just the sustained whispery drone lingering on. The camera pans down again as Yoshimi's gaze moves to the bed, and she realizes Ikuko is not there. The sounds begin to fade with just the wordless moan of the whispery sustained synthesized tone lingering. However, the audio immediately builds up again as the raw bow strokes of the cello enter with a rhythmic ostinato vigorously played. The upper strings pick up the rhythmic ostinato producing a flurry of sound. The synthesized tone continues underneath, also accompanied by a higher-pitched sustained wordless wind-like effect. Yoshimi's panic is underscored here, but also the build up to the film's potential rupturing between worlds. Yoshimi calls out her daughter's name, and as she begins to look around the apartment, there is a switch to a handheld camera shooting style. The low bass rhythmic ostinato continues as the upper strings rhythmic ostinato rhythmic rises and falls in dynamics coming to the fore of the mix then dropping back, swelling in waves intermittently. These musical layers are also joined by upper tremolo strings heightening the tension as Yoshimi's panic becomes more apparent as she frantically looks for Ikuko.

Figure 27. The spread of the stain.

3.3.1 Dark water, bright plastic: a trauma-stained Mimiko bag

The film's interrelating of image and sound continually draws attention to Mitsuko's trauma-stained spaces, including the terrible stain on her ceiling. The sounds heard when the stain appears onscreen form a ghostly sonic footprint and trigger questions about the sound sources throughout *Honogurai mizu*. Other physical objects – namely a little red vinyl Mimiko bag with a cartoon rabbit logo that reappears throughout the film – can also be described as trauma-stained. Seet Khiam Keong discusses the bag in line with the protagonist's investigatory gaze as she searches for the source of the water issues in her apartment. Seet notes how '[t]he camera closes in on her gaze at several pivotal moments in the text: her repeated encounters with the red schoolbag; her recognition of the drawing by Mitsuko; her arrowing in on the poster of Mitsuko declared missing.'[603] The red bag is the impetus for Mitsuko's death after she drowns trying to recover her bag from the water tower (she has dropped it in). However, it continually appears around the building, first when Yoshimi and Ikuko visit the apartment. Ikuko wanders off to explore the roof (0:13:57). A non-diegetic synthesized descending chromatic keyboard melody enters as soon as the shot cuts to Ikuko running up the stairs to the roof. The melody begins on F3 and shifts to E♭3 before descending chromatically. Each note pulses away eight times before shifting down a semitone. A sustained synthesized bass layer accompanies the

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[603] Seet, 'Mothers and Daughters: Abjection and the Monstrous-Feminine in Japan's Dark Water and South Korea's A Tale of Two Sisters', 151.

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melody as Ikuko skips around the rooftop, the camera panning across as it follows her skipping. The scoring at this point is ironic as Ikuko happily skips, the score knows this is a dangerous, indeed fatal, location for her. It is then that Ikuko stops after spotting something off-screen (the red bag). The shot adopts a static position, and a whispering wordless chorus enters over the synthesized melody, which no longer shifts down sequentially but remains on the finally repeating note of B♭2 like a broken record sticking in one place, creating a sinister effect. The voices crescendo, dominating the soundtrack as the shot cuts to a close-up profile of Ikuko. She smiles at something she sees offscreen and walks out of the shot, presumably towards what she has seen.

Yoshimi's apparent unease about the bag results in her handing it over to the building manager, who informs her that '[t]here aren't any kids living here now,' which implies something strange about the bag as it looks so new. Martin notes how the bag is 'a startlingly bright prop that contrasts sharply against the dismal setting of the concrete apartment building.' [604] This is apparent in the following sequence when Yoshimi and Ikuko help the movers. Ikuko carries a box towards the lift, the camera panning to the left and the right following her movement. However, as it pans back to the right, it does so further across. In the far right of the frame, the red bag is partly shown in a box on the reception counter. A cut to a close-up shows the front of the box with the characters 'Lost and Found' written on it. The shot then cuts to Yoshimi and Ikuko in their apartment. There are multiple meanings of lost and found here when we consider the lost nature of Mitsuko herself, we later find out that her body was never found and she remains lost as Yoshimi sees her missing person's poster. The reappearance of her Mimiko bag is a symbol that she wants to be found.

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[604] Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*': Para 8.

Figure 28. The lost and found Mimiko bag.

Interestingly, unlike the first time the audio-viewer is introduced to the red bag, only ambient sound and dialogue is heard in the short moving sequence. There are no electronic sound effects when the shot cuts to the extreme close-up of the red bag on the counter. Although it could be argued that the bright punch red colour of the bag is itself a dissonance to the film's general mise-en-scène and art design. This tension created by its visual presence, almost suggests a moment of *ma*: a seemingly silent space that is still so full of meaning, thanks to the symbolism of the bright red bag not entirely understood at this point in the film, but clearly marked for attention. This same silence is applied later in the film when Yoshimi discovers the bag in a bin outside the apartment. There are no underscoring or sound effects, even when she dramatically pauses as she removes the bin lid, only to see it on top of the rubbish. The audio-viewer might expect an audio effect here from Yoshimi's startled reaction, as in traditional Hollywood film scoring. However, there is no such audio effect – just the continued buzz of cicadas and the ambient sounds of the outdoor suburban setting. This adds, again, to the disconcerting nature of the bag.

The fifth appearance of the red Mimiko bag confirms that it belongs to Mitsuko but does so indirectly, through a drawing. After Ikuko collapses at kindergarten following the encounter with Mitsuko while playing hide and seek, Yoshimi speaks to the headteacher. As he comments about Ikuko's behaviour and Yoshimi's home situation whilst walking down the corridor, a piano is heard playing in the background with children happily singing, so this music can be described as diegetic. Yoshimi stops by a display board of drawings the kindergarten children have created. At this point, the

singing and piano become more prominent in the mix, reverberating and heard from the hall's acoustic distance. As Yoshimi stands in front of the board, an unusual ghostly metallic ripple is heard amidst the children's voices, and the camera cuts to a close-up of Yoshimi's face looking at the board. The metallic sound effect enters over the piano and the singing children, affecting the quality of their audio delivery from this point as the piano and voices become distorted then drowned with an echo effect and the gradual entry of a low drone sound. The shot adopts Yoshimi's viewpoint, panning across the display board as she looks at the pictures the children have drawn; the rumbling sound of the drone gets louder, drowning out the piano and the children's voices which then shift from singing to children calling out. As the shot cuts back to Yoshimi's face looking across the pictures, another drone enters, swelling in bursts of pulsating sound, alongside the children's calls mingled together in the soundtrack mix. Yoshimi glances at one specific picture, and the shot switches to a static focus. Another loud, low-pitched drone entry comes in high in the mix, swelling as if to create a cluster of voices moaning, but heavily manipulated to create this damp drone effect. The shot cuts back to Yoshimi's reaction and completely takes over as a rattle of metallic sound is heard and her eyes seem to widen, recognizing something about what she is looking at before the shot cuts back to a deeper close-up of the picture. The low pulsating drone and the sporadic cries of the children remain prominent in the heavy layer of sound that has now built up. As the static shot focuses on the drawing, still from Yoshimi's point of view, the hiragana reads 'Mitsuko-chan, come home soon.'

Figure 29. The drawing of Mitsuko-chan.

The moaning timbre of the drone clustered with other low metallic rumbling sounds continues to ring out as the camera cuts back to a close-up of Yoshimi's surprised face. Before cutting back to an insert close-up shot of the picture and then back to an extreme close-up of Yoshimi's face in shocked

silence, the low moaning body of sound effects continues to be heard across the shots. A wider shot then shows both Yoshimi and the headteacher as he says, '[a]s a matter of fact, she used to behave oddly too.' As he talks, the drone and additional layers of sound, which continued when he first spoke, slowly begin to fade out of the soundtrack, just before Yoshimi turns toward the headteacher as if breaking out of her trance as he says, 'You've never heard of her?' The headteacher continues talking about the little girl who went missing two years ago, Kawai Mitsuko. The shot then cuts to a position half behind the board with a blurry background as the focus remains on Yoshimi's face as she slowly turns back to look at the picture board. The shot then adopts her point of view again, cutting back to an extreme close-up of the little girl's face in the drawing. The shot-reverse shot suggesting a dialogue between the two characters, even an adoption by the audio-viewer's of Mitsuko's ghost/drawing's point-of-view. An abrasive metallic sound effect over a low gong-like sound enters, transitioning between other higher-pitched metallic shrieks as the camera pans down to the red bag in the drawing. Other metallic sound effects enter the soundtrack intermittently. A sustained gong sound rings out underneath the metallic scraping, now merging into a cluster of very low, male, wordless voices producing a prolonged 'aah' sound. This vocal sound lingers and then fades out as the camera cuts to a medium close-up of Yoshimi with the headteacher stood in the shot in the background as Yoshimi asks, 'Is she… still missing?' The maleness of these voices represents the pervading role of the patriarch, heard here in the school as a reminder of the patriarchal system that failed Mitsuko. The male voices in their wordlessness still dominate as they are sustained, left after the other sonic elements of this cue in the fade out. The wordless male voices here could be likened to the original role of the *benshi* discussed in Chapter One. The *setsumei* of the *benshi* would add an interpretative aural layer of meaning to the silent film's they narrated. The wordless vocals in *Honogurai mizu* also serve this function, but now in addition to the visuals and dialogue of the scene. Just as the *benshi* would meld their 'enunciative subjectivity with the narrative system of the film' [605], so too do the wordless male voices at this moment, through their aural and subjective representation of the patriarchal systems surrounding the films and the male-dominated social mechanisms that let down Mitsuko. Thus, this moment also reinforces the connection between sound-design and the socio-cultural contexts explored in the film. The *benshi* too would fulfil a social obligation, though quite

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[605] Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity*, 155.

differently, and they would later come to 'act as an adjunct censor in the theatre, ensuing that the spirit of censorship was being carried out at the point of reception.' [606]

The bag appears again for the seventh time towards the end of the film when Yoshimi talks to Ikuko about her return to kindergarten. It is then that Yoshimi finds the red bag inside her daughter's satchel. She suddenly freezes, and the camera cuts to an extreme close-up of the inside of Ikuko's bag, the red vinyl of the Mimiko bag visible. An audio cue also joins the visual—a percussive thud with the wisp of what sounds like a note blown on a wooden flute-like instrument. The percussive reverberation of the drum lingers underneath the flute entry before fading out as Yoshimi frantically asks her how it got in there. Ikuko responds, saying that she does not know and denies going to the roof again; Yoshimi accepts her daughter's reply, apologizes and calls her lawyer, Kishida. While Yoshimi is on the telephone, a wide shot is used from the front door area of the apartment so that Ikuko is out of the frame. After Yoshimi fails to contact the lawyer, she puts the phone down and turns towards Ikuko, freezing in alarm. The shot cuts to a medium close-up of Ikuko smiling down at the floor, holding the red bag and unzipping it. Layers of high and low tremolo strings suddenly enter after the cut to Ikuko, shifting down in pitch as another cut includes Yoshimi in the frame grabbing the bag off her daughter. The next shot cuts to a low close-up of Yoshimi clutching the bag before a cutaway shot to a vision. The screen fills wholly white, and then a whoosh of sound accompanies a cut to a blue screen – a body of water that fills the frame as if the shot is positioned below the surface of this water. A rush of descending wordless voices producing an 'ah' sound is heard as the red bag appears to fall from above into the frame, a heavy reverberated thud marking the moment it hits the water as if landing into the water above the audio-viewer's perspective below it.

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[606] Gerow, *Visions of Modernity*, 155.

Figure 30. Yoshimi's vision of the bag falling into the water tank.

There is a cut back to a startled looking Yoshimi clutching the bag, as she, like the audio-viewer, has experienced the force of sound at this moment. This moment signifies the trauma of Mitsuko's past erupting into the present, crossing the fantastical gap. The vision Yoshimi experiences comes from the touch of the bag. The audio cue of the bag hitting the water is part of this vision and it can be argued, therefore heard by Yoshimi, crossing into the meta-diegetic. However, the audio layers that book mark this moment are non-diegetic scoring the shock of the bag's sudden appearance and Yoshimi going up to the roof. After the reverberated thud, the sound fades out, bleeding over the cut back to Yoshimi. High-pitched wordless voices also enter, joined by lower voices and a heavy low reverberation. The now wordless chorus of mixed vocals, male and female, dominates the soundtrack. The harsh abrasive sounds, including the wind instrument and dominance of wordless voices calling out as Yoshimi discovers the bag, have parallels to a specific part of a noh interval performance. Before the ghost's return in their former appearance in the second part of the play, the interval performance, which includes 'harsh music and inarticulate cries from the musicians, suggest the distance of the world of the dead.' [607] Mitsuko's ghost is close: Yoshimi and the audience experience the counter-memory connecting the bag to the water tower and Mitsuko's death. The all-too well-known material bright red bag suddenly takes on a parallel metaphysical existence in this moment of rupture, crossing from diegesis to a realm in which past and future merge in audio-visual terror.

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[607] WM. Theodore De Bary, 'The Vocabulary of Japanese Aesthetics, I, II, III' in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, Nancy G. Hume (ed.), (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 52.

3.4 The world of the apartment: Sonic disconnections from time and space

In his article 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese *Kaidan* films and their Hollywood remakes', James Wierzbicki observes that

> the ghosts of *Ringu* and *Ju-on*, and also of *Chakusin ari* and to a lesser extent *Honogurai*
>
> *mizu*, eventually come to be associated with unique sounds that seem to relate to their modes
>
> of death. In *Ju-on* this is the guttural croaking that suggests the last vocalizations the wife
>
> made before she was strangled to death; in *Ringu* the characteristic sound is a slow, regular
>
> scratching that calls to mind the noise of the noise of the victim's fingernails against the stone
>
> walls of the tomblike well; in *Chakusin ari* it is a combination of desperate wheezing and
>
> bursts from an aspirator; and in *Honogurai mizu* it is a mélange of highly stylized bubbling
>
> and splashing. [608]

While Wierzbicki highlights how sound in the film examples above relates to the various spirits' modes of death, his *Honogurai mizu* example is quite general regarding the soundscape as a whole. The re-occurrence of stylized bubbling and splashing sounds are a sonic symbol of Mitsuko's death but are also explicitly related to the broader idea of counter-memory and the more long-term trauma she suffered in being neglected – and this also connects with Yoshimi. The continuous sounds of water, whether from the rainfall, continuous leaks and drips, puddles or the highly stylised bubbling and splashing that Wierzbicki references, all culminate in the final gushes of water at the very end of the film. However, the meaning of these watery sounds, while associated with death, is more complex: they also relate to birth.

The climax of water's sonic and symbolic trajectory in this film is a birth more traumatic than most. In *An Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, Colette Balmain describes Mitsuko as '[t]he vengeful foetus.' [609] This is because she represents an archetype from Japanese folklore and mythology: 'In Japanese folklore, a child is considered a foetus, as not having an identity separate from the mother, until it reaches the age of seven.' [610] Therefore, because Mitsuko was abandoned and

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[608] James Wierzbicki, 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese *Kaidan* films and their Hollywood remakes' *Horror Studies* 1/2 (2010): 197.
[609] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 137.
[610] *Ibid*., 137.

died before reaching the age of seven, she remains an eternal foetus, her behaviour bubbling up as vengeance for the trauma she suffered. Extending this, Balmain describes the film's final part as being about birthing moments and, in particular, images of the womb. She highlights the scene in which Yoshimi has her final vision of Mitsuko falling into the water tower and observes how 'the water tank can be interpreted as symbolic of the archaic mother's womb. A sound of banging can be heard, accompanied by bulges in the wall of the tank as if something inside is trying to get out.' [611]

This sequence occurs towards the end of the film. After discovering the Mimiko bag in Ikuko's school satchel, Yoshimi goes up to the roof to look at the water tower (1:11:38). As she touches the tank, she is transported back to what appears to be a re-construction of how Mitsuko died, presented with the same yellow grainy visual of the earlier dream sequence. It is presented as a reconstruction shown from the camera's perspective, almost like an onlooker, as if Yoshimi is watching Mitsuko climb the ladder. More significantly, sound establishes this connection, which becomes a counter-memory as the sequence plays out. As the flashback starts, the familiar chimes of the Thai gongs are heard. The first four gong chimes deliver the same tones as earlier, give or take some pitch bending and added reverberation depending on where the gong is struck with the fingers. These four pitches are B0, F♯2, A1 and D♯2. The shift between pitches occurs between the D♯2 here and the E2 heard as the last gong strike at the end of the first group of chimes heard during the film's opening. Despite these pitch inflections, the first gong strikes alert the audio-viewer to Mitsuko's presence, aurally, they can be interpreted as her leitmotif. The interchangeable nature of the pitches, reflects her changeable states of haunting and her otherness.

Mitsuko climbs the first ladder of the water tower from the moment the first chimes enter the soundtrack. Added ambient audio here includes the sound of her feet on the metal steps and the swish of her raincoat. The delivery of these sounds seems as if they are isolated from all other sounds and then placed back in the mix to feel detached from the layering of the electronically manipulated chorus and the damp-like chimes of the gongs. The first chime group is followed by the next group of four pitches: B0, F♯2, A1 and F♯0; the next group of chimes then consists of three strikes on the notes B0, F♯2 and A1 as Mitsuko continues to climb the ladder. The shifts in gong pitches compared to the

[611] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 137.

earlier cue from the film's opening and the temporal changes in the number of strikes heard here in comparison to the opening reflect Mitsuko's temporal otherness that connects her experience with Yoshimi at this point. From the beginning of this sequence, the wordless wails of high-pitched female voices are also heard. The shift from male to female voices signifies the maternal duty of Yoshimi as she seeks answers by going to the water tower, in order to find out the truth and protect Ikuko. Their voices deliver a crescendo, and then as Mitsuko reaches the top of the first ladder, the pitch shifts down and slowly slides into lower tones, delivering more of an electronically manipulated rumble as the third group of the three gong strikes ring out. This rumble transitions into a wail of wordless, lower male vocals. After the third set of gong chimes, the shot cuts back to a close-up of Yoshimi's face, breathing heavily as the next set of four gong chimes are heard: B0, F♯2, A1 and D♯2. The interval between the last two strikes producing a tritone.

Figure 31. Yoshimi discovers what happened to Mitsuko.

The unique timbre of the chimes becomes part of a more prominent audio cue that builds up as Yoshimi follows in Mitsuko's footsteps. After the fourth set of gong chimes, a fifth entry comes in, but this time the first beat of where listeners might by now be entrained to expect a chime is marked by an electroacoustic thud, followed by the three gong chimes (F♯2, A1 and D♯2; the first strike of B0 may be masked by the thud). The percussive thud points the visual cut to a very low-angle shot of Mitsuko looking up at the water tank; she then reaches for the ladder of the first set of steps. The wordless chorus and low-pitched rumbles continue alongside the ambient sounds of the amplified sounds of water gushing from the top of the tank and down the sides. The thud marks the entry of tremolo strings pitched around F4, dissonant to the gong entries, and the entry of the fifth set of gong strikes. Another electronic thud, and the strings chromatically shift down to E4 as Yoshimi gingerly

starts to climb the ladder. After this second thud, the sixth group of four gong strikes ring out on F♯2, A1, and then there is a pause before the D♯2 followed by F♯0. The transition in the gong harmonic set marks the transition of Yoshimi now following in Mitsuko's footsteps scored by the tense pitch shifting of the ghost's leitmotif.

The layer of sound begins to build up, making the gongs' sets that follow hard to distinguish within the mix. This highlights the importance of timbre, primarily as the sheer volume of sound washing over the audio-viewer represents the literal visual gushes of water from the tank. Again, the seventh group is introduced by a thud, followed by four distinct gong strikes of F♯2, A1, D♯2 and F♯0. The string tremolo shifts back to F4, and the sound layers continue to crescendo with the wordless vocals coming to the fore of the mix as Mitsuko continues to climb and reaches the top of the first ladder. The eighth set of gong strikes again are opened with a thud, and the tremolo strings shift up a minor third. The bass rumble now shrouds the gongs, but three apparent strikes on F♯2, A1, D♯2 are delivered as Yoshimi begins to ascend the second ladder to the top of the water tank. The camera at this point pans up from a low angle, looking up at Yoshimi as it zooms out and then pans up as another percussive thud enters, and the tremolo stings shift down a semitone to G (equally dissonant to the gong set), and the ninth set of three gong strikes are heard repeating F♯2, A1, D♯2. The final thud of the sequence is heard in quick succession, again repeating the three-note gong pattern F♯2, A1, D♯2. This produces a microrhythmic acceleration as Yoshimi gets closer to the top of the water tank and closer to learning what happened to Mitsuko.

Figure 32. Yoshimi follows in Mitsuko's footsteps.

Before the final gong cue, the camera pans up above the water tank to a high angle that reveals the water gushing out of the top. The audio has built up to the point that the sounds of the higher

registers of the wordless chorus deliver a crescendo, manipulated so that a distant, high-pitched wail is produced, bleeding over the cut to the next scene of Ikuko entering the bathroom. Following this cut (discussed later), the sequence returns to Yoshimi climbing the water tower. A low percussive thud and tremolo strings based around pitch E4 open the sequence. The shot then cuts to an extreme close-up, point of view shot of a water tank cleaning log as Yoshimi reads it. The cut is marked by what sounds like the slither of a string bow, producing a metallic pitch around D♯6 that shifts up chromatically to E6. A further cut to a much more extreme close-up of the log shows the blurry writing of the last date it was cleaned: - July 14 1999 – and the tremolo strings shift down to D♯4 again using a chromatic shift. The low bass rumble carried over from the previous shot continues. The music is ominous and the chromatic shifts underscore the tragic realisation that Yoshimi begins to piece together.

The shot cuts back to a close-up of Yoshimi's gasping face. A faint gong sound enters before the cut, followed by another during the close-up shot, pitched around D♯2 then G2. However, the second is particularly hard to distinguish amongst the other layers. A third, more distinct gong sound is heard on D♯3 before a much more breathy, woodwind-like sound enters on A4, moving to A♯4 as the shot cuts to another extreme close-up, this time of the missing poster that Yoshimi saw on the lamp post earlier in the film. The abrasive metallic sound is heard again on an A♯5, along with the tremolo strings shifting back to E4, as the shot focuses on the image of Mitsuko on the missing poster and then pans down to the characters that say, 'LAST SEEN JULY 14,1999'. The dissonant harmony here coupled with the contrast in register produces a moment of dread. Cinematically, the high-pitched metallic abrasive timbre in particular creates the effect of a shiver down the spine moment for the audio-viewer as we also realise that the date of Mitsuko's disappearance is the date the water tank was last cleaned. The strings shift back down to D♯4, and the shot cuts to a bird's-eye view of Mitsuko leaning over the mouth of the water tower, her Mimiko bag by her side.

Another metallic sound enters on D7, shifting into a shorter tonal delivery on D♯7. As Mitsuko looks into the water tank, the low rumble from the previous sequence becomes more prominent, and a very low gong sound merges with this, pitched around D2 and shifting to F2. However, with the entry of further bass rumbles the gong pitch blends into the multi-layered audio cue. The leitmotif of the

gong timbres associated with Mitsuko are drowned out by other audio at this point, just as Mitsuko herself will drown. The development of sonic content mirrors the situation onscreen as other timbres begin to dominant at this point. More wisps of metallic sound ring out, shifting to a pitchy delivery that resembles an overblowing technique, although a G♯5 enters before the tremolo strings rise to F♯4.

Figure 33. Mitsuko peering into the tank.

A pointedly constructed sequence of shots now ensues. The shot cuts to the interior of the tank and a very low angle showing the complete opening of the water tank as Mitsuko leans over and her red bag falls into the water. The shot is taken just below it in the water as the loud diegetic splash is amplified to highlight the bag landing in the water. The shot is still taken from the interior of the tank and shifts from inside the water to just above the rim, repositioning within the tank as the little girl's arm stretches out to reach for the bag. Again, the shot cuts to another position from under the water, as Mitsuko's arm still appears outreached. The shot quickly changes position just above the water as the tremolo strings shift down to F4. The shot finally cuts back to the tank's exterior from the bird's eye view as a whoosh of heavily amplified sound accompanies Mitsuko falling into the water. Another high-pitched metallic screech is heard around E7 and descends to a flutter of metallic sound around D7. The splash of Mitsuko's body hitting the water and the bass rumbles amplified underneath the tremolo shift back to F♯4, strings dominating the soundtrack over the metallic sounds. There is a shift upwards to G in the strings before the sequence cuts back to the shot of Yoshimi still on the water tower ladder.

In 'Womb Phantasies in International Horror and Extreme Cinema', Alice Haylett Bryan notes how the camera's placement both exterior to and inside the tank stresses its function as a container with a round opening and the use of the shots inside and out that 'encourages two possible perspectives in the unconscious, that of a phantasy of being in the womb and looking out, and therefore also a phantasy of birth, and repressed memories of the first conception of the female genitals as something that is interior as well as exterior.' [612] The pacing of the scoring is slow at this point, matched with the slow pace of the visuals and the cuts between different shots from inside the tank of Mitsuko's arm reaching out, followed by her actual descent into the tank in slow motion. As she makes contact with the body of water, the diegetic sound of the flashback is amplified and prolonged in its delivery as Mitsuko's head hits the water followed by her body. The high-pitched timbres of the metallic screeches that accompany Mitsuko's fall could be interpreted as a sonic equivalent of the girls cries as she falls into the water tank.

As the shot cuts back to Yoshimi in the present, a high angle is used just to the side of the water tower. Tremolo strings bleed over into the shot; the amplified water sounds are also carried over as the water tower back in the present is still leaking water. Suddenly, three dull thuds are heard, followed by three more, and the tremolo strings shift to G♯4 – pointing the drama. The next three bangs are more prominent and are coming from the inside of the water tank. As the shot cuts to an over-the-shoulder shot, the strings shift down back to G4, and the camera begins to pan to the left as five more thuds are heard. Another six thuds enter, and the strings shift back up to G♯4 as the camera continues to pan round to the profile of Yoshimi. Three more thuds enter swiftly followed by another four. The tremolo strings then shift up to B4 as the camera cuts back to an over-the-shoulder shot of Yoshimi. They continue as underscoring until the end of the sequence. It is then that five thunderous metallic thuds fill the soundtrack as five punch marks suddenly appear out the metal of the tank, as if Mitsuko is trying to break out. The shot immediately cuts to an extreme close-up of Yoshimi screaming before the shot cuts back to Ikuko in the apartment bathroom. The dramatic signification of this counterpoint of the string tremolos and thuds here creates an affective moment of tension that

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[612] Alice Haylett Bryan, 'Womb Phantasies in International Horror and Extreme Cinema' (Ph.D diss., London: King's College London, 2017): 255.

shapes the moment of horror. While the sustained chromatic shifts of the strings are slow paced producing a rhythmic counterpoint with the intermittent sudden bursts of sound, there is an unsuspecting moment of a pause after the fourth group of punches are heard. However, the shift up to the minor third in the tremolo strings imply that the music cue is building to some kind of a reveal. It is then that the five foregrounded punches, placed high in the mix burst on to the audio track. Additionally, the sound design of the sequence is the climax of a long-range strategy of prioritising water sounds. Could the explosive punches here be heard too as the climatic peroration linking back through all the gong sounds right to the opening of the film?

Figure 34. Mitsuko appears to punch through the water tank.

This interior/exterior representation of a birth phantasy has primarily been demonstrated through imagery and sounds of water throughout the film. When Suzuki Kōji, writer of the novel that *Honogurai mizu* is based on describes how 'walking along a body of water, you sense being born' [613], he draws on the connection between water and birth, specifically in Japanese life. In *Honogurai mizu,* the rainfall can be read as 'an external representation of a character's state' [614] , namely, Yoshimi, while also acting as a conduit for the internal rage of Mitsuko. The sound in the film's opening is dominated by the dripping water and precedes the murky visuals of the yellow and brown hues of the body of water. In fact, as Alice Haylett Bryan notes, 'the water is light brown and has a viscosity to it reminiscent of amniotic fluid.' [615] The consistent, imposing dampness that dominates the *mise-en-scène* of the film again alludes to the womb, as it is through the water that Mitsuko is re-birthed.

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[613] Suzuki, Kōji, 'J-Horror Weekender: Dark Water', https://bfidatadigipres.github.io/j-horror%20weekender/2021/10/29/dark-water/, 6 August 2021).
[614] Haylett Bryan, 'Womb Phantasies in International Horror and Extreme Cinema', 257.
[615] *Ibid*., 257.

Bodies of water feature in many Japanese myths and folklore tales. Moreover, as she/he continues, '[t]he significance of water in these myths, specifically the sea, would suggest that reading the use of water in *Ringu* and *Dark Water* as a symbol of the maternal is simply recalling a vast history of such symbolism in Japanese culture and art.'[616]

Nina K. Martin specifically links the consuming presence of water in *Honogurai mizu* to the strains of maternal responsibility:

> As the young mother struggles to care for her small daughter, her fragile mental state is revealed through the persistent deterioration of her apartment building — manifested through the omnipresence of leaking ceilings, broken lifts, cracking wallpaper, and faulty plumbing. The film's manipulation of mise-en-scène suggests that with the pressures placed on women as mothers, the home and its environs embody a dread that cannot be escaped. [617]

Therefore, it is not surprising that the build-up of water leaking from crevices in the apartment throughout the film becomes pervasive as Yoshimi becomes increasingly paranoid about the strange things happening. 'The metaphor of pregnancy and birth is further solidified by the gushing water coming through the ceiling and out of the taps in the apartment where Ikuko is alone.'[618] As Yoshimi examines the water tower, the scene intercuts back to the apartment where Ikuko remains. She is instructed to stay in the apartment while Yoshimi goes on to the roof. She goes into the bathroom to get a glass of water to drink. It is then that a clump of hair comes out of the tap. Ikuko jumps back in horror, and as the sink tap is left running, an added layer of spluttering and gurgling water enters the soundtrack. The camera pans to the left following Ikuko's eye line, cutting to a medium shot just behind her that shows the bath tap running on its own accord.

The shot cuts to a close-up of the bath tap as the water gushing out changes to a dirty brown colour. The shot then cuts back to Yoshimi on the roof, the sound design dominated by the thuds of the metal container as Mitsuko appears to birth out of the tank. Once again, there is a cut back to Ikuko in the bathroom trying to switch off the tap as she tries to stop the flow this can be interpreted as Ikuko trying to stop the (re)birth of Mitsuko. The murky water continues to rise, flowing over the top of the

[616] Haylett Bryan, 'Womb Phantasies in International Horror and Extreme Cinema', 262.
[617] Martin, 'Dread of mothering: plumbing the depths of *Dark Water*': Para. 2.
[618] Haylett Bryan, 'Womb Phantasies in International Horror and Extreme Cinema', 257.

bath rim, the sounds of running water dominating the soundtrack. The shot then cuts to a close-up of the water, which is bubbling, with a human-like gargling moan coming from the churning filthy bathwater. There is a close-up of Ikuko's face, followed by a cut back to the water and then to a medium close-up of Ikuko stood in front of the bath. An unusual camera angle from behind the taps of the bath is adopted in the next shot, before moving back to a close-up of Ikuko's widening eyes as the groaning sound heightens in volume and other distorted sound effects are added to the mix, sculpting a truly monstrous groan. Significantly, the muffled sounds of the thuds previously heard from the water tank are part of the mix here as Mitsuko seems now to be using the bath as a conduit of rebirth. Her appearance is confirmed by a cut to a close-up directly behind Ikuko's head and a surge of a high pitch vocal sound. Two decaying arms reach out, pulling Ikuko's head under the water, accompanied by a high-pitched metallic ring and a deep bass drone. Ikuko's moaning voice is heard crying out, her arms waving around above the water as she tries to free herself. Tremolo strings are also heard in the mix amongst the intermittent metallic rings, plus the shifting rumbling low bass of the drone, but the diegetic sounds of the bubbling and splashing water dominate the sound mix. The scoring and sound design truly darken the water in this climatic sequence, sculpting it into something utterly horrific.

Figure 35. Ikuko is unable to stop the gushing, contaminated dirty water.

Mitsuko's birthing imagery is tied with death: Mitsuko now tries to drown Ikuko. Balmain expands upon this in relation to Japanese cultural concepts, linking the association of water with death to the transitory nature of life and the fleeting and impermanent view of the world from the traditional Buddhist viewpoint. She draws attention to renowned contemporary theatre director Jūrō Kara, a co-founder of Jyokyo Gekiji, or Crimson Tent, one of the earliest underground theatres of the 1960s and

initiator of the *angura* theatre movement [619]. Balmain observes how Kara Jūrō 'emphasises the importance of the "lower place" in his plays as the site of Japanese collective memory that had become lost in the drive towards modernisation.' [620] The term that Kara gave for this 'lower place' was *kawara*, or riverbed. 'In short, *kawara* was the place of rebirth; as its topological deviation from the civilised place made *kawara* the "outside" of socio-economic rules, people could shake off their learned restraint to live with physical immediacy.' [621] Balmain observes explicitly how '[i]n Kara's mythological scheme *kawara* is also the place of both the violated maternal body (the soil) and the goddess, he argues that the construction of modern Japan, with its tall skyscrapers, conceals the water that lies underneath these phallic symbols of patriarchal power.' [622] As Matsui Midori highlights discussing Kara's work, 'the modernization of Japanese urban space is conducted through the burying of rivers and canals; soaring skyscrapers conceal water. Water is a regressive image symbolizing suicide and amniotic fluid, related to the memory of pre-modern Japanese existence.' [623] Therefore, it is interesting that the water Mitsuko appears to control through her haunting also symbolises the impermanence of life, just as the film's final scenes would suggest her rebirthing. However, as a mysterious entity, she negotiates 'the supposedly unbridgeable gulf between the world of the living and the realm of the dead.' [624] The broken-down nature of the apartment complex by the riverbank that Mitsuko haunts represents 'the manner in which society has been "contaminated by modernity." (Napier 1996 32)' [625] as communal city living for families becomes abandoned and forgotten about with the continuing modernisation.

Despite Mitsuko's destructive nature, her drive is essentially fuelled by the need for a mother's love, as highlighted through the symbols of rebirth throughout the film. Haylett Brown states how her 'theoretically-led filmic analysis enables the womb phantasy to be regarded not as a sexual

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[619] *Angura* is a Japanese abbreviation of 'underground' and is mainly attached to the artistic experiments of the 1960s that 'sought a palpable expression of contemporaneity in the reality of Japanese experience and reality (*nikutai*).' See Matsui Midori, 'Glossary of Japanese Terms' in *Consuming Bodies: Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art*, Fran Lloyd (ed.), (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 209.
[620] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror*, 140.
[621] Matsui Midori, 'The Place of Marginal Positionality: Legacies of Japanese Anti-Modernity', in *Consuming Bodies: Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art*, Fran Lloyd (ed.), (London: Reaktion, 2002), 160.
[622] *Ibid.*, 160.
[623] Matsui, 'The Place of Marginal Positionality: Legacies of Japanese Anti-Modernity', 160.
[624] Jay McRoy, 'Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takeshi's *Ju-on: The Grudge*,' *Japanese Horror Cinema*, Jay McRoy (ed.), (Honolulu: University of Hawaii press, 2005), 181.
[625] Balmain, *Introduction to the Japanese Horror Film*, 140.

desire directed towards the parents – as Freud argued – but as the wish to return to the symbiotic union between mother and child that exists in early childhood.' [626] She notes how 'little attention is paid to the organ that actually allows [the woman…] to reproduce' [627] when in fact, as she argues, 'the womb is a key symbolic motif across international horror and extreme cinema that is bound to both a fear of the maternal reproductive powers and a love for the mother.' [628] In *Honogurai mizu,* the symbolism of the womb is directly related to the female reproductive organ and birthing, or more specifically, re-birthing. This is clarified by the film's use of objects and settings interpreted as direct symbols of the maternal womb. The first example is evident in the bursting water tank, but in one of the film's final scenes, the lift presents a more overt reading of a womb, as discussed shortly below.

The space of the water tank and the lift is more in line with what Haylett Bryan describes as the 'mythical womb' [629]. She clarifies that her reference to the mythical womb is 'not the actual female reproductive organ, but a symbol of the symbiotic union of the mother-child dyad in earliest infancy. It is what is brought to mind when thinking of the womb as a safe and comforting space, acting as a point of origin that allows patriarchal society to unconsciously separate itself from the "abject" nature of the biological female reproductive organs.' [630] The 'mythical womb is represented on film as a portal to the liminal space between life and death, having both the positive connotations of allowing for contact with loved ones after their passing, as well as potentially dangerous interactions with the spirit world.' [631] The lift presents itself as such a portal as it transports the living characters of the film, but it is also Mitsuko's domain, a liminal audio-visual space that lies between the living and the dead, and the series of sounds heard when she is present in this space is a crucial part of the filmic narration, including its symbolism.

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[626] Balmain, *Introduction to the Japanese Horror Film*, 140.
[627] Haylett Bryan, 'Womb Phantasies in International Horror and Extreme Cinema', 9.
[628] *Ibid*., 9.
[629] *Ibid*., 10.
[630] *Ibid*., 10-11.
[631] *Ibid*., 10.

3.4.2 (re)birth in the lift

When Yoshimi and Ikuko first take the lift to the apartment, just the whirr of the lift mechanism is heard. Yoshimi looks up and sees a wet patch on the ceiling, and as the camera cuts back to a close-up of her face, a single water droplet falls. An extreme close-up shot follows what the audio-viewer believes to be Ikuko's hand taking her mother's. Two gong strikes are heard over the loud mechanical whirring of the lift's mechanisms, producing the pitches of G♯3, F4, a major sixth signifying the move towards the tragic. Little sound manipulation is applied to these gong sounds, which ring out cleanly and repeat when the shot cuts to an unusual angle behind the shoulder of Ikuko as she runs out of the elevator. As Yoshimi looks down at her hand holding nothing, a mangled sound of wordless low male voices is heard combined with a very low drone sound associated with similar wordless voices manipulated throughout the film whenever Mitsuko's presence is suggested. The voices fade out quickly before the same two gong strikes, G♯3 and F4, are heard for a third time, with the shot cutting to the perspective of the lift's security camera showing Yoshimi looking down, a pool of water at her feet. Once again, at this moment in the film the use of wordless manipulated male vocals is used to create another narrative layer alerting the audio-viewer to her ghostly presence and reminding us of the patriarchal society who let her down in their persistent manipulated moan. This use of sound-design aligns with the role of the *benshi*. As explained in Chapter One, the *benshi's* interpretative role can be paralleled with the positioning of the audio-viewer, as a consciously active reader of the film. As noted above, the *benshi*, like the audio-viewer, are aware of all elements of the audio-visual discourse and are not afraid to interpret or challenge narrative integration in order to recognise potential multivalence.

The low wordless voices and drone fade in again after the third entry of the gongs, and the shot cuts to Kamiya, the apartment manager, looking at the security camera footage before cutting back to his point of view, watching the stream as Yoshimi and Ohta exit the lift. The sound at this point is heightened in the mix with what also sounds like the addition of rainfall. The shot, still from the perspective of Kamiya as the doors close, shows an extreme close-up of the back of a little girl's head and shoulders as she steps into the frame. Her movement is accompanied by an immense wave of metallic scrapes which loudly interrupt the soundtrack, combined with distorted moans of a female

voice amongst the continuing drone and wordless voices. The shot then cuts back to Kamiya doing a double-take before cutting back to now-empty lift footage. The manipulated mix of distorted audio fades out over the next shot.

Figure 36. The CCTV lift footage.

Haylett Bryan observes how there is 'a secondary womb space that is distinct from the grave of Mitsuko; the lift to Yoshimi and Ikuko's apartment',[632]which is fully realised in the film's climax. I will be closely analysing the climatic lift scene in the film in order to highlight the central themes of maternal duty, abandonment and the (re)birth of the ghost-child related to wider cultural considerations through a unique treatment of sound design and music.

After Yoshimi discovers the entirety of Mitsuko's fate towards the end of the film, she rushes back to the apartment only to find Ikuko on the bathroom floor, murky water overflowing and bubbling uncontrollably over the bath. Upon discovering her daughter, string chords enter producing a middle ground descent with some elaboration which moves axially around the original Ab/Eb to G/D shift. The eery chromaticism and semitone descent creates a plangent sound that mixes with the pure sonority of the open fifths in an interesting way as in the midst of terror the open fifths signify hope and the purity of the maternal bond.

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[632] Haylett Bryan, 'Womb Phantasies in International Horror and Extreme Cinema', 264.
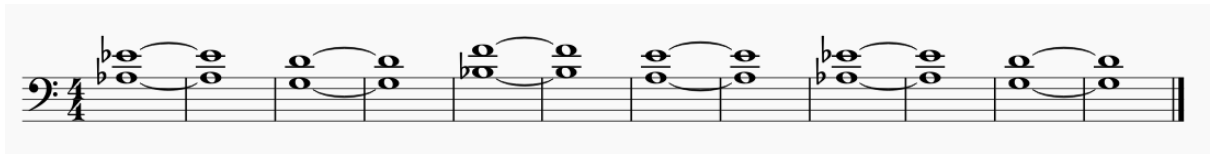
Figure 37. Strings cue as Yoshimi discovers Ikuko nearly drowned.

Yoshimi tells her daughter: 'I'll always be with you. It is going to be all right'. As the chords conclude, the water begins to bubble up aggressively. Yoshimi pulls herself up, lifting Ikuko, and a rush of what sounds like a high-pitched aircraft engine sound cueing affective discomfort that jars strongly with the string chords. The camera cuts to the apartment's exterior as Yoshimi rushes from it. The sound bleeds over into a high-pitched whistling wind sound. A cacophony of buzzing tremolo strings enters with a high-pitched chromatic melody starting on the B♭5 layered on top of the upper strings. A sustained low drone is heard, too, with synthesised glissandi low in the mix and pounding percussive thuds that, as discussed earlier, represent the banging on the inside of the tank. Piercing sporadic metallic scrapes are also heard. Once the pair reach the lift, other elements of the soundtrack dominate the diegetic sound of Yoshimi's panicked breathing. Dirty water starts to leak from the lift ceiling, and as Yoshimi looks up, the camera adopts her point of view as drops of brown water rapidly form on the ceiling. The shot cuts back to Yoshimi gasping and clutching her daughter as the water streams down the lift walls. The tremolo strings and loop of chromatic melody producing an ostinato-like effect still churn away on the soundtrack, beginning to sculpt the narrative drama by building tension toward the film's big climax. The lift's control panel explodes, and the mechanism clangs and rattles, amplified to heighten the tension in the sequence. Yoshimi drops to the lift floor, an extreme close-up used as she cowers in the corner cradling Ikuko. The lights flickering above as the lift transforms into a damp, dark space.

In this extreme close-up shot, Yoshimi begins to look down the corridor, and the apartment door slowly begins to open. The visual used when the camera adopts Yoshimi's point of view creates a blurry haze caused by the water dripping down in front of her, affecting her vision. The multi-layered soundtrack grinds away, the additional diegetic sounds of the dripping water, heightening the tension as the shot cuts back to Yoshimi's frightened face. The shot cuts back to the apartment door as it continues to open slowly, the grinding of its mechanism at the forefront of the soundtrack mix. The layer of high tremolo strings begins to slow as the tremolo is concentrated on individual notes for

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longer with a slowly building crescendo. The shot cuts to an extreme close-up of Yoshimi's face again and then back to the opening door as the bowing of the upper string tremolo becomes more frantic, shifting up chromatically and played closer to the bridge. The shot cuts back to a close-up of Yoshimi clutching on to Ikuko before cutting back to a medium shot of the half-opened door as a child's hand reaches out to push it open. The lower layers of sound build in a crescendo, with the lower layer of strings overshadowed by the synthesised low rumble. The shot again cuts back to Yoshimi reaching out to press the lift buttons, but it is then that the next shot cuts back to the opened door as Ikuko walks out, soaking wet.

At this point, a vast crescendo starts to build on the soundtrack, and the high-pitched chromatic string melody evolves into a more relentless flurry of high tremolo strings while pounding percussive thuds deliver a wall of sound that creates a consistent rumble. This wave of sound builds up even more as the tremolo strings ascend higher and higher in pitch. An additional scratching texture is heard from the bow being played uncomfortably close to the bridge. It is at this moment that Ikuko comes out of the apartment, not Mitsuko. As soon as the little girl steps fully out, the cacophony of sound builds to such a crescendo, the upper strings delivering such a high-pitched and frantic tremolo, that it breaks into a wave of high-pitched female voices producing an ethereal wordless sound accompanied by the dripping of water. The voices continue over into the next shot, descending and ascending in pitch as an atonal cluster. The film cuts back to a close-up of Yoshimi's confused facial expression.
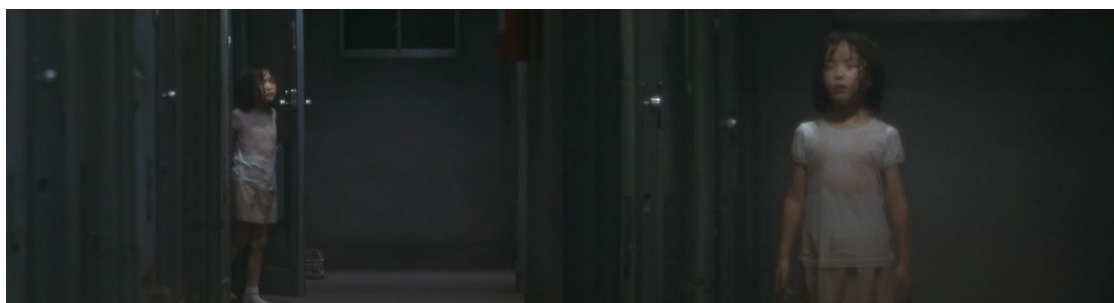
Figure 38. Ikuko steps out of the apartment, not Mitsuko.

The shot cuts back to Ikuko, who wanders into the corridor, struggling to see as she loiters, standing coughing, the apartment door loudly creaking shut behind her. The shot then cuts back to an extreme close-up of Yoshimi's face as she says her daughter's name in a questioning tone before

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cutting back to Ikuko stood in the corridor blindly calling for her mother and coughing intermittently. At this point on the soundtrack, low percussive bass thuds are heard alongside a low drone rumble. The shot cuts back to the close-up of Yoshimi's face as her eyes widen and flit around in a worried state. Ikuko's calls of 'mama' and her coughing continue to be heard over the cut back to Yoshimi. A rumble of percussive thuds and a bass drone slowly builds up in volume, entering the soundtrack and gaining momentum like the pulse of a heartbeat. [633] Spontaneous metallic shrieks of sound enter over the low rumbling drone, and the shot remains on Yoshimi. A further layer of manipulated sound is added over the lower percussive rumbles, producing a manipulated sound of merged wordless voices.

Further metallic shrieks cry out intermittently, and rapid tremolo strings fade in, as Yoshimi's eyes begin to direct attention to what is behind her, and the shot cuts to a close-up of her profile as she slowly turns to look over her left shoulder. The soundtrack continues to build in intensity and volume, the tremolo strings ascending in pitch as Yoshimi lays eyes on what is behind her. It is then that the next shot cuts to the first full visual of Mitsuko's rotting appearance, arms outstretched as she calls out 'Mama', her voice manipulated to sound unnatural yet retain a childlike cry. When Mitsuko finally speaks, all other sounds in the mix are cut, and her voice synchronises with her decaying form's sudden movement, unnaturally gliding towards the camera and Yoshimi. The camera remains static as Mitsuko glides closer towards the centre of the frame, ending in a zoomed close-up of her gaping mouth, filling the frame. Her gliding movement as she calls out 'Mama' is accompanied and accentuated by a whooshing sound of wind that results in a thud as the next shot quickly cuts to Mitsuko with her arms around Yoshimi's neck. The heavily dripping and flowing water effects continue with a rumbling drone and intermittent rings of metallic and other synthesised sounds as the shot cuts back to Ikuko. She calls out 'mama', and a sustained low drone enters the soundtrack, bending in pitch. The timbre sounds like submerged voices merging into the drone, joined by additional metallic rushes of sound, again highlighting the importance of *onshoku* in Japanese music. Introduced in Chapter Two, this aesthetic demonstrates a sensitivity towards timbre that conveys the sadness of the moment as Ikuko calls out for her mother. Ikuko opens her eyes and calls out 'mama'

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[633] See Ben Winters, 'Corporeality. Musical Heartbeats, and Cinematic Emotion' in *MSMI* 2/1 (Spring, 2008): 3-25. Winters presents a heartbeat hypothesis with implications for film music theory in which he places 'a greater emphasis on cognitive models of interpretation, and suggest[s] an embodied musical listening may play a large part in our emotional connection with film music.' Winters, 2008: 22.

more frantically, spotting her mother as the shot cuts to Yoshimi trying to fight off Mitsuko, who clings to her neck.
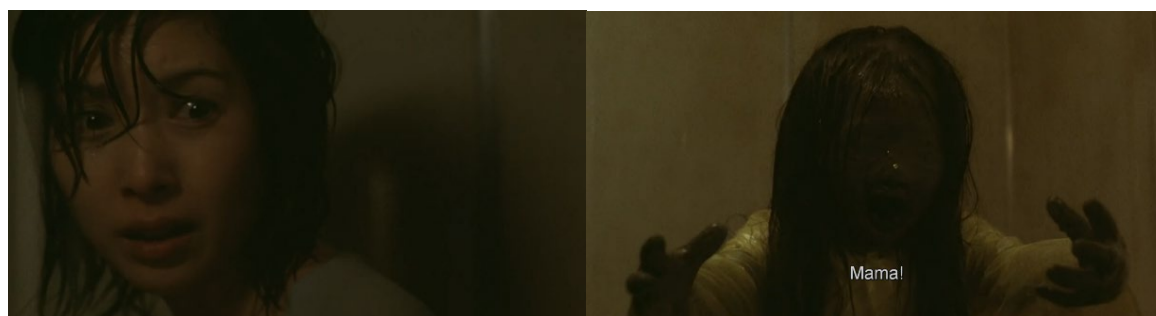
Figure 39. Mitsuko claims Yoshimi.

The cut to this shot is marked with subtle strikes of a bass gong sound on the pitch of D1. The low, wispy, and sustained voice-like sound is sustained across the cut, and as Yoshimi calls out to her daughter to stay where she is, a thunderous rumble is heard from the lift. As the shot cuts to a close-up of Mitsuko squeezing Yoshimi's neck, it is accompanied by squelching sounds. The sole gong pitch on D1 enters again but is quieter in the mix this time, along with the intermittent swelling synthesised sounds and the persisting diegetic drips of water. Yoshimi begs, 'Please stop, I am not your mother'. The shot cuts to Ikuko calling out 'mama' and running towards the lift as Yoshimi calls out 'No, Ikuko' and subtle single gong strike enters on D1. The whispering drone and intermittent metallic sounds are still heard as Ikuko runs towards her mother, who shouts 'stop'. The wall of water still falls in front of Yoshimi with the amplified diegetic sounds of water dripping all around, creating a curtain that engulfs Yoshimi in this liminal audio-visual space. This distinct sound highlights how the water creates a wall between Yoshimi and Ikuko: 'the curtain marks off the ghost world – the world inside the lift.' [634] The shot cuts to a close-up of Ikuko's face, and a sustained synthesized string tone slowly fades on to the audio-track pitched around D4. The manipulated wordless voices seem to merge into this string sound. A gong strike on D1 enters again and Yoshimi calls out her daughter's name again. The sustained string sound shifts to a B♭4 as the shot cuts to a close-up of Ikuko as she halts. The shot cuts back to Yoshimi as the string tone shifts down to A4. The sound of D1 heard on the low gong

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[634] Walker, *Modern Ghost Melodramas: What Lies Beneath*, 251.

enters again before the repeated B♭4-A4 synthesised tones enter again accompanying the shot-reverse-shot close-ups between Ikuko to Yoshimi and then back to Ikuko.

The subtle sonic entries of D in the soundtrack hint at a sense of resolution that previously is sonically teased by the timbres of the gong rotating around D♯/E with their microtonal inflections heard throughout the film as part of Mitsuko's leitmotif. Therefore, this chromatic unease that lingers is associated with Mitsuko's lingering abandonment and her need to find a maternal bond. As the audio continues to build at this climatic moment in the film, another gong strike is heard on D1, the sustained A4 string tone lingering with the added layer of a higher, lighter synthesized timbre pitched around F5, those its timbral quality seems to shift microtonally. The shot cuts back to Yoshimi holding Mitsuko, and another synthesized pitch enters on F4, joining the other sustained layers. The synthesized pitches of D3 moving to A♯3 then enter with a metallic slither of sound, before the wordless vocal effect produces a B♭2 pitch in unison with the synthesized B♭3. Yoshimi slowly turns towards Mitsuko and tells her, 'I'm your mother'.

Figure 40. Yoshimi embraces Ikuko and Mitsuko.

The music has attained a climatic B♭ as Yoshimi succumbs to her fate as Mitsuko's substitute maternal figure, sonically marked with the chromatic step down to the A4 and the start of a diatonic synthesised string melody with keyboard chordal accompaniment in D minor. Significantly, this melody is linked to an earlier moment shared between Yoshimi and Ikuko which will be described here and discussed in connection with this latter scene. After Yoshimi is late to pick up Ikuko, resulting in an argumentative confrontation with her ex-husband, the mother and daughter walk home together through a suburban neighbourhood. It is here that they see two children with their parents having fun together with some fireworks. Ikuko stops as she sees the sparkler, and it is here that the melodic theme heard later in the climax of the film is first heard, much slower, played by high

synthesized strings and accompanied by a dreamy, whispering, harmonised synthesiser and lingering broken chords played by the synthesized piano accompaniment. The key of the central theme is in B♭ major. On the film's soundtrack it is called 'Ideal' (憧れ). [635] While the theme heard at this point in the film could be interpreted as an ironic music cue, as Yoshimi and Ikuko observe the happy family, highlighting a happiness and unity their family unit does not possess, the narrative meaning shifts in the next shots of Yoshimi and Ikuko walking home with their fireworks. Ikuko tells her mother 'I don't need anyone but you' and the accompanying 'Ideal' cue swells and increases in volume at this point, repeating the central melody. After Yoshimi says, 'I can handle anything, just as long as you're with me', the shot cuts to an extreme close-up of Ikuko's smiling face. The melody then reaches a tonal resolution and its final synthesized piano tones fade out as the pair enter their apartment.

Figure 41. Ikuko sees a family lighting some kind of fireworks.

The centrality of the maternal bond is a theme cemented throughout the film, but never more so than at the film's climax. The variation of the 'Ideal' melody that is given the title 'Prisoner' (囚われし者は…) on the soundtrack album, aurally articulating the emotion of Yoshimi's predicament. Of course the B♭ major string-heavy diatonic melody produces a hopeful moment between Yoshimi and her daughter earlier in the film as the mother works to strengthen her maternal bond with her daughter, but even as the melody tonally resolves in this earlier scene, the central theme ends on a G, not the tonic B♭. The conclusion of this rousing melody suggests the presence of the relative minor of G,

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[635] The Japanese translation of 憧れ is closer to longing, yearning or admire.

hinting that this happy moment won't last, which it does not. The major key of the 'Ideal' theme is associated with the 'ideal' family unit while the final hint of the G minor key is associated with the shift to the 'Prisoner' cue in its later fully realised minor key. Sonically this suggests the tension between the pre-modern traditional family structure and the modern social pressures of the single mother and her strive to be a good maternal role model. By the end of the film the theme is fully realised, delivering a melodramatic tone as it has modulated from this hint of G minor to its dominant of D minor in the climatic maternal moment that Mitsuko now shares with her substitute mother. The lamentful minor key of the melody in the final climatic lift scene also suggests a resolution of the tension between the traditional and the modern, as while the melody is in the key of D minor it is still connected to the B♭ major sphere. The music's harmonic world parallels the film's climax of the mother's love for her daughter truly realised through the ultimate sacrifice to protect her child.

It is as Yoshimi reaches out and embraces Mitsuko in the lift scene that the rising string melody notes are interrupted by the diegetic sounds of the lift kicking into action and Yoshimi looks mournfully at Ikuko knowing she cannot be with her anymore (1:24:20). The number seven sign lights up before the lift doors harshly slam, and Ikuko calls out 'mama'. The keyboard and string melody resumes as the little girl peers in through the lift glass to her mother, looking back at her as shot-reverse-shot is used while Ikuko calls out for her mother again. The mother then turns away to embrace Mitsuko. The shot cuts to a medium shot of Ikuko standing outside the lift and then to a close-up of Ikuko's profile as the lift ascends, heard noisily under the melody as Ikuko calls out 'mama'. The shot cuts back to a close-up of a now crying Ikuko before cutting back to Mitsuko. She has released her grip from Yoshimi's neck as the mother holds her, cutting back to Ikuko's tearful reaction and then back to Yoshimi as she begins to look up at Ikuko. The string and keyboard melody that plays is in the distinctive style of Kawai Kenji, including movement to a chord that does not fit with the key signature creating a slight moment of tension in the harmony. In this melody, the chords shift between D minor and the fifth, A minor before progressing to the fourth chord of G minor and back to the fifth, A minor. However, after the central theme of the melody repeats, the lift doors close and, as Yoshimi looks through the lift doors at her daughter, instead of the E minor diminished chord, the harmony shifts to an E minor chord. Through a one-note alteration, a moment of harmonic shift adds to the melancholy of the melodic theme. The final two chords in this melody shift back to G

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minor and a return to the tonic of D minor, though the melody does not reach a tonal resolution as it concludes on the fifth note of A.

Figure 42. Yoshimi and Ikuko look at each other through the lift door window.

After this melodic pause, a low camera angle shows the rising lift with water streaming off it, accompanied by added metallic shrieks. Before the shot cuts back to Ikuko, a synthesized drumbeat enters underneath the return of the keyboard and string melody. It begins as Ikuko runs up the flights of stairs peering through the lift glass, waiting for it to arrive and falling to the floor in tears, gathering momentum as it underscores the onscreen action. Added keyboard flourishes are added to the melody. It is then that the underscoring reaches a climax, the strings holding on to a sustained A5 note as the shot cuts to a close-up of Ikuko's face crying heavily. The sustained tones of the strings resume as the next shot moves behind Ikuko, using a wide-angle long shot showing her sitting outside the lift. The lift doors suddenly open, and a torrent of water gushes over her, the sound of water overriding the strings. Ikuko is partly swept away, and as the water subsides, a gentle synthesised melody made up of synthesised wordless voices along with the strings and additional synthesised tones enters, still in the key of D minor. Ikuko looks up and calls out 'mama' twice as the camera pans outwards and up. The subsequent visual cuts to a static image of the water tower on the roof overflowing with water running down it, the musical cue bleeding over the shot as metallic sounds ring out. The shot cuts to a close-up from the bottom of the water tower as the synthesised sounds, strings and metallic sounds build up with a low whispery vocal effect. The shot fades to black with a whispery resonating drone, and final string notes are heard fading out. The final melodic note appears to offer no tonal resolution again as it seems to conclude on A4. However, as the shot fades to black, the tonic resolution of a D4 enters before fading out.

Figure 43. The lift bursts with water.

The sound in this sequence heightens the mounting tension of the film's climax but, more

significantly, draws attention to the lift representing a womb space, the waters gushing from it like

amniotic fluid. Yoshimi chooses to protect her daughter, who helplessly watches yet remains

unharmed in the world of the living, *konoyo*, appeasing the vengeful foetus and sacrificing her present

familial duty for the obligation to the wider social system by becoming Mitsuko's mother in the

spiritual world. 'In doing so, Yoshimi sacrifices *ninjo*, her personal desire to stay with her daughter,

and chooses *giri* – paying the debt that society owes Mitsuko for the child's neglect and death.' [636]

This narrative resolution reflects the outlook of many Japanese legends, which 'richly illustrate a

worldview in which the realms of the living and the dead interpenetrate in a system of mutual

responsibility.' [637] Yoshimi accepts that she must give up what she loves the most, her biological

daughter, to carry out her responsibility as a maternal figure. Throughout the film, the criticism of

Yoshimi's parenting abilities, fighting for custody against a patriarchal system, is proved utterly unjust

through the ultimate sacrifice of leaving her daughter for the ghostly being who separated them. This

reflects the aesthetics of *yūgen* in which 'physical and existential darkness connote the absence of

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[636] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture,* 111.
[637] Iwasaka Michiko and Barre Toelken, *Ghosts and the Japanese: Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends* (Utah: Utah University Press, 1994), 8.

intrinsic forms and essences at the heart of things and this negation of apparent meanings enables a much greater beauty.' [638] Therefore as Colette Balmain observes, 'Yoshimi can be interpreted as the archetypal self-sacrificing woman, as commonly found in Japanese horror films of the 1950s and 1960s', [639] highlighting how '*Dark Water* draws on traditional folklore in order to comment and perhaps critique contemporary Japanese society.' [640] The extremity of the mythical sacrifice here highlights the reactionary politics of everyday patriarchy, linking myth and modern to form a powerful symbolic duo. This blending of modern and ancient Japanese myth and cultural convention through audio-visuals, narration and music create mutually reinforced resonances. Furthermore, this chapter's analysis highlights what has been missing from a detailed assessment of sound design in *Honogurai mizu*, in relation to social context, and how sound and music draw attention to the porous boundaries between the living and the dead, and the importance of theatrical origins and their manifestations in the film.

3.5 Coda: Ten Years Later

After the cut to the water tower on the roof described above and the whisper of a musical resolution accompanying the fade to black, the audio-viewer is presented with a coda. For Lindsay Nelson, '[t]he film's coda provides us with a final juxtaposition of seemingly disparate elements: there are the womb-like spaces that embody a mixture of death and birth, decay and renewal, the merging of monster and child that brings together that which must be protected and that which it must be protected from, and finally a disconnected world that, while inhabited by ghosts and vengeful spirits, exists as an idyllic vision of a peaceful, unchanging past.' [641] The coda is introduced with a title card of 'TEN YEARS LATER', alerting the audio-viewer to this passage of time. Ikuko is sixteen and appears in this sequence, getting off a school bus with her friends. We learn later that Ikuko is visiting a friend who lives near the kindergarten, which she then recognises as being the one she attended, and she sees a little girl waiting for her mother. Her voiceover informs us that she does not remember much from when she was in kindergarten and only recalls that she lived with her mother for a brief

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[638] Cho, 'The Play of Shadows in Japanese Cinema': 524.
[639] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 142.
[640] *Ibid*., 142.
[641] Lindsay Nelson, 'Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future: Monsters, Children and Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema' *Cinemascope* V/13 (July-December 2009): 12.

period. It is as if seeing the little girl waiting triggers this memory. After a momentary lapse, the mother of the little girl appears. Up to this point in the coda's flashforward, only diegetic ambient sound is used. However, after the little girl is collected, a close-up of Ikuko's smiling face turns into a different expression – a realisation – and a sequential synthesised melody fades into the soundtrack.

Figure 44. Melody accompanying Ikuko's journey 'home'.

The figure above does not include its additional sustained synthesised effects nor the whispery vocal sample. The upper part of the melody also has a delayed fade-in effect when most of the sustained upper tones enter. However, the final entry is slightly more delayed that a rest best represents this long delay.

The cue demonstrates a musical momentum thorough the shifting ostinato of the lower synth line, accompanying Ikuko as if she is compelled to follow the path along the river to the old apartment block. The shot composition mirrors the journey she took with her mother, including the menacing high angle shot from the top of the apartment building. However, this non-diegetic scoring with its looped pattern creates more of a sense of intrigue than foreboding. The placement of the synthesised sounds produces a sense of *ma* in the spacing between each changing note of the upper synth line, as if in anticipation of what Ikuko might find waiting for her. While the melodic sequence rotates around the key of E♭ minor and concludes with the tonic note in the lower layer of melody, paired with a perfect fifth in the upper layer. This music's harmonic world relates back to the B♭ major sphere of the climax of the film. However, it fades away as Ikuko enters the apartment building, offering no solid tonal resolution. This mirrors Ikuko's inability to gain any answers at this point.

Figure 45. The mirrored shot composition of teenage Ikuko's journey to the apartment block.

For Ikuko, visiting the apartment ten years after her mother's disappearance is an ambivalent experience. As Ikuko enters the building, only the distant diegetic environmental sounds of the cicadas are heard alongside the echo of her feet on the concrete. Nature has infiltrated the building as she walks along the corridor towards the apartment; tree branches can be seen creeping into the apartment space reclaiming this urban solitude and suggesting a sign of life. As Ikuko enters the apartment, nothing has changed and the thin layer of sound is again only provided by ambient sounds, heightening through absence the solitude Ikuko feels without her mother in her life. After Ikuko studies the room, looking at a photograph by her mother's bedside, she turns to leave, and a high-pitched slither of metallic sound causes her to pause. It is a lighter sound than the multi-layered audio that has previously signalled a ghostly presence, but Ikuko hears it and responds. It is then that she sees her mother. Ikuko tells her mother that her father has remarried and she has two sisters, and explains that she had no idea her mother was still living in the apartment. For Ikuko, '[t]his world of the apartment, a world seemingly disconnected from both the time and space of the derelict building and the changing world outside, is a sort of idyllic, idealized space where Ikuko can momentarily take refuge.' [642] This refuge is Ikuko's desire to live and be with her mother finally, but she too adopts a role predicated on a notion of sacrifice. She cannot live with her. She must accept this, just as Yoshimi surrendered to Mitsuko's vengeful foetus, an outcome 'structured by Confucian and Buddhist notions of duality and balance. The film's various depictions of maternal failure – both Mitsuko and Yoshimi suffered maternal neglect and disregard – are ultimately redeemed and "balanced" by Yoshimi's own

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[642] Nelson, 'Ghosts of the Past, Ghosts of the Future: Monsters, Children and Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 11.

maternal sacrifice.' [643] This balance is particularly noticeable in the apartment's final appearance, shown as a clean and – crucially – dry space. Even when Mitsuko makes a final appearance, the sound design loses its previous heavy damp resonances, and there is no sound of rain. Instead, a low bass rumbling drone sound with a breathy quality is maintained throughout the sequence when Ikuko sees her mother again.

Figure 46. Yoshimi explains to Ikuko that they cannot be together.

Only when Ikuko talks to her mother is the sound of a single drop of water heard. The voice-like quality of the low rumbling drone crescendos slightly, and Ikuko begins to turn her head in response, but is addressed by her mother again, who tells her she is sorry that they cannot be together. Following these words, there is a cut to a medium shot of Ikuko's face and shoulders on the right-hand side of the frame. A blurred water image of Mitsuko stands behind Ikuko in the background to the left of the frame. An abrupt metallic shriek enters accompanied by a thud and wordless voices delivering a prolonged 'Aah' sound. A second thud is accompanied by distant rumbles and manipulated voice-like sound effects, but with a dry audio quality. The shot cuts to a profile of Ikuko before she turns, and the frame now shows her looking behind at nothing. All sound is abruptly cut, cleanly. Yoshimi has also vanished when she turns back, and a synthesised melodic opening enters as Ikuko calls out 'mama' twice. On the second chord of this melody, there is a cut to a static long shot of the exterior of the apartment complex adopting the same previous very low angle seen throughout the film. Within this sequence there are two sonic moments shared between mother and daughter. The abrasive timbres of

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[643] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 113-114.

the 'sound effect' cue related to the mother-daughter relationship between Mitsuko and Yoshimi and the diatonic synthesized cue that connects Ikuko with her mother. This can be interpreted as part of the film's scoring strategy across the film as contrast is created between the more diatonic mother-daughter cues of Ikuko and Yoshimi and the horrific sound cues producing unusual timbral transformations that are make up the mother-daughter cue of Mitsuko and Yoshimi. The contrast here provides a social commentary concerning the tension between the traditional pre-modern family structure of which the obedience to the old values Mitsuko represents and the modern family dynamic that Ikuko is aligned with as he daughter in a single-parent family. Mitsuko's connection with Yoshimi and the pre-modern is scored in a harsher light, with dissonance and contrasting sounds that are delivered from opposite registers that convey something bad and all consuming, while Ikuko's connection to her mother and the modern family is in a much more positive light conveyed through diatonic, harmonically connected synthesized melodies.

Figure 47. Mitsuko is making her presence known.

Significantly, Mitsuko's anger-driven maternal need, which drives her ghostly actions throughout the film, 'is balanced by Ikuko's forgiveness and acceptance of her mother's sacrifice.' [644] This understanding is reflected in Ikuko's final reflection. Her words conclude the film as she states, 'my mother was here all that time, protecting me.' [645] Delivered as a voice over, this moment, along with Ikuko's earlier voice over as she observes the little girl stood waiting in the playground for her

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[644] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 114.
[645] Dialogue. *Dark Water* (*Honogurai mizu no soko kara*).

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mother, can more directly be aligned with the role of the *benshi*. It informs the audio-viewer of Ikuko's internal voice and, happily, of her mother's sacrifice to protect her. It provides the poetic commentary that a *benshi* would once have offered, guiding our interpretation of the visuals and, in this case, Ikuko's non-verbal thoughts. It is an example of how at this point in the film, just like with the role of the *benshi*, having 'a narrator system born only by images was not trusted to produce a unified meaning effect on the audience.' [646] This can be related back to the history of the *benshi* and the distrust for the visual medium to 'enforce the transmission of approved meanings, and thus to control aberrant readings and other forms of subjectivity.' Scholar Kitada Akihiro writes on the role of the *benshi* voice in Taishō Japan (1912–1926) and the institutionalisation by the Tokyo Police Department. While having to adapt their role to be functional narrators as detailed in Chapter One, this raised important questions around the voice and the exercising of power and potential for resistance. As previously mentioned in that chapter, censorship was also enforced. This was particularly the case during the interwar period when state authorities did not trust the image, turning to the voice as the authoritative speaker and, as Gerow notes, this was one of the reasons 'why wartime authorities revived the institution of the *benshi* when dealing with non-Japanese spectators during World War II, and why the regulative force of the *benshi*-like voice continued in movie voice-overs as the *benshi* was absorbed into sound cinema.' In modern Japanese cinema, as in the 'ghost' film example here, this regulative function of the voice-over is reinterpreted and evolved, as in the case of *Honogurai mizu* it acts as means of externalising the internal and, in this case, Ikuko's subjectivity.

Jay McRoy describes how well the visual closure matches the film's almost happy ending: 'In the film's closing shot, we see a very long shot of Ikuko walking away from the decaying apartment building that looms huge and menacing around her. The sky above, however, is blue and free of clouds for the first time in the entire film.' [647] A well-matched tonal resolution accompanies her dialogue in the soundtrack: a delicate diatonic synthesised melody with a gentle synthesised drumbeat. The key signature is in E♭ major and, despite concluding on a D, it is part of the final tonic major seventh chord that concludes the story – a perfectly poised harmony for this moment, stable, yet with the leading note yearning to resolve. The musical underscoring encapsulates both the melancholic tone of

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[646] Gerow, *Visions of Modernity*, 154.
[647] Jay McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (Rodopi: New York, 2008), 89.

Ikuko's final moment with her mother and the resolution of understanding why it must be that way. This non-diegetic cue and Ikuko's final acceptance of her mother's sacrifice, which she explicitly vocalizes at the end of *Honogurai mizu,* demonstrates an 'affirmative insight that is classically Buddhist in nature and inflected with the physical and narrative shadows characteristic of yūgen.' [648]

Figure 48. Ikuko realises her mother's sacrifice.

The film's final musical resolution is delivered through Shikao Suga's themed pop song 'Aozora' (Blue Sky/Cloudy), played over the end credits. It is common for a pop song that has not featured in the film and stands in complete contrast tonally, lyrically and musically to play over credits. Kawai Kenji noted how it is all to do with the sponsors and ' the record companies, and their will is really strongly reflected there. It is nothing that the director, Nakata-sensei or I want or desire or ask for. It is solely commercial.' [649] Despite this commodification of the end theme song in Japanese 'ghost' films, though, Suga's track accentuates the melodramatic sensibility of *Honogurai mizu* through his compositional approach. Talking about the song as part of Arrow's blu-ray DVD release of the film, Suga notes that 'it would be pointless if the song followed the story of the film', and he contemplates the message of love between parent and child in the song's message, stating '[y]ou can't be grieving when you lose someone. You should find a way to move forward. That could be a sort of message.' [650] This is achieved through the song's straightforward strophic form, written in 4/4 time in the key of C major. Shikao performs vocals joined by a keyboard and guitar-driven melody, with bass guitar and electric drums completing a conventional pop-rock line-up. The lyrics talk of remembering someone from the past, treasuring them and what they taught you, that memories are more distinct than sadness or recollections, and moving forward and wondering what tomorrow will be like. As with

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[648] Cho, 'The Play of Shadows in Japanese Cinema', 524.
[649] Kawai Kenji, 26 February 2015.
[650] Kawai Kenji, 26 February 2015.

the final melodic cue when Ikuko leaves the apartment and delivers her closing dialogue, Suga's end track also delivers forms of musical (and lyrical) resolution.

Throughout *Honogurai mizu*, Mitsuko's haunting demonstrates how 'ghostly children trap characters and viewers within the cyclical replay of their traumatic deaths – or, more precisely, within the feelings of pain, terror and powerlessness that underwrote their experience of dying.' [651] This is achieved through several visual motifs that have previously being discussed. However, as noted at the start of this chapter, there is no detailed study on the role of audio or sound 'motifs' in the film and, as this chapter argues, audio also and importantly focuses attention on the film's play on Japanese cultural understandings of the close connection between the world of the living and the domain of the 'ghost'. This is achieved by examining the importance of timbre in the film's soundtrack and how the concept of *ma* is identified. It also assesses how the joint concept of *wabi sabi* is achieved through the playing technique of the shakuhachi and its connection to the use of sound in the film. This chapter has also highlighted a connection with traditional Japanese theatre through the influence of *mugen noh* and the aesthetic of *yūgen* that pervades the film. A culturally-orientated use of music and sound is present in the portrayal of Mitsuko and her connection with Yoshimi and Ikuko, emphasizing how 'death brings into focus a number of very important elements in the Japanese worldview: obligation, duty, debt, honor, and personal responsibility.' [652] Mitsuko not only represents the abandoned child but the abandonment of pre-modern Japanese life where the role of the mother existed in the domestic realm, looking after the child.

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[651] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 187-188.
[652] Iwasaka and Toelken, *Ghosts and the Japanese: Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends*, 6.

Chapter Four: An audio-visual case study of Shimizu Takashi's *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002)

4.1 Introduction: *Ju-on: The Grudge* and the Analytical Gap

The convergence of traditional Japanese ghost stories within a contemporary supernatural horror setting has become a tried and tested formula for success, as the earlier examples in this thesis demonstrate. As Wada-Marciano Mitsuyo argues, '[t]he attraction of Asian horror films is their well-received original stories and culturally inflected images.' [653] However, to follow Valerie Wee's argument, these films should not be judged as completely formulaic audio-visual representations, as this chapter will further examine:

> Whilst the films share numerous narrative and thematic similarities, there remain significant divergences in each version's treatment, execution, depiction, and resolution of key textual elements, differences that can be traced to distinct historical narrative and aesthetic conventions, and specific contemporary ideologies and attitudes. [654]

Wee's statement presents a general understanding of what contemporary Japanese 'ghost' films offer audio-viewers. She goes on to explain that these films, which are commonly treated as 'consumer-oriented, late-capitalist, and post-industrial, with their emphasis on crisis, anxiety, heightening despair, and apocalypticism, are also representative of cultural texts created in a clearly postmodern milieu.' [655] Shimizu Takashi's 2002 film *Ju-on: The Grudge* (hereafter referenced as *Ju-on*) is one such representative. The film envisions traditional supernatural narrative themes through the figure of the *onryō* (grudge spirit/vengeful ghost).

Ju-on is just one example in a set of films that Wee examines in her collection *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes*. The publication focuses on how each Japanese film and subsequent American remake, including *Ju-on* and its 2004 American remake *The Grudge* employ different visual aesthetics and images. Wee's intent is to 'highlight how each set of visual images provides insight into each tradition's view of aesthetic expression, art's function within that culture

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[653] Wada-Marciano Mitsuyo, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*, Choi Jinhee and Wada-Marciano Mitsuyo (eds.), (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 20.
[654] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 1.
[655] *Ibid.*,14.

and more specifically, each culture's perception of the supernatural, while also exploring the degree to which each of these culturally unique perspectives has influenced and shaped each other.' [656] However, despite small undeveloped references to sound in Wee's publication, no substantial discussion is given to cultural perception of spiritual representation through sound. Wee follows in the footsteps of other scholars focusing on the visuals in their discussions on the transnational nature of Japanese horror cinema. For example, Iwabuchi Koichi draws attention to transnationalism 'in a more locally contextualized manner to the interconnections and asymmetries that are promoted by the multinational flow of information and images'. [657] What is even more surprising is that even in examples of writing that specifically address audio-visual media within a specific Japanese 'ghost' film, again, sound is given only a passing mention. This is the case with Wada-Marciano's chapter 'New Media's Impact on Horror Cinema' in which, on referring to the early examples of J-horror being distributed on VCR, she notes the 'ordinary looking video images' in reference to the film *Ringu* and its use of the videotape as a conduit for a spirit, solely referring to the visuals: 'the image of a dead person appearing in one's home videotape, was the charm of the contemporary Japanese horror films.' [658]

In examining this body of pre-existing literature on 'J-horror' it is therefore apparent that the general focus remains on how the visuals work to enhance traditional Japanese concepts, whether through digital production enhancements or by using the rhetoric of new media within the films' narratives. As Jay McRoy observes:

> [T]he distinctive tension and visceral thrills contemporary Japanese horror cinema offers is to view the films as their directors intended, experiencing the increasingly wide variety of inventive narratives and striking images with, at the very least, an introductory understanding of the genre's major aesthetic and thematic trends as they relate to Japanese culture and its various cinematic traditions. [659]

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[656] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 25.
[657] Iwabuchi Koichi, *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 17.
[658] Wada-Marciano, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 28.
[659] Jay McRoy, 'Case Study: Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's Ju-on: The Grudge', *Japanese Horror Cinema*, ed. Jay McRoy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 182-183.

McRoy's observation calls for a visual and narrative understanding of the Japanese horror cinema tradition. His definition, like many others, does not preclude attention to sound and music, but it does not encourage it either. However, as this thesis argues, for this understanding to be more fully achieved, a primary focus on image must at least be augmented with a substantive analysis of how sound works in relation to visuals in cultural perceptions of the supernatural in these Japanese 'ghost' films. [660]

This chapter will analyze the use of sound and music in *Ju-on* (Takashi Shimizu, 2000) to examine how some of the Japanese aesthetics presented in Chapter Two are used to highlight unique representations of the Japanese ghost through audio treatment. While Wee's focus is on transnational horror adaptation from Japan to Hollywood, it would be out of the scope of this thesis's primary analytical territory to address the use of sound in both the Japanese 'ghost' films and their remakes, although Chapter Five does engage with these issues. Therefore, this chapter solely focuses on the Japanese *Ju-on* film, although where appropriate, it will highlight evidence of cross-cultural sound and musical influences in relation to the American remake and wider Hollywood film industry.

Another dominant approach to Japanese 'ghost' films in the existing literature, which as Chapter One documents this thesis both challenges and extends, has been to draw comparisons with Hollywood film production methods as well as earlier Japanese horror films, mainly from the 1960s/70s, which are often referred to as adopting a classical approach:

> Their methods of producing horror films were distinctly different from Hollywood's more expensive and "cinematic" film productions and from pre-1970s Japanese classical horror films, which relied on elaborate studio sets and classical narratives, such as *The Yotsuya Ghost Story* (*Yotsuya Kaidan*, 1959, Nakagawa Nobuo) and *Kwaidan*, (*Kaidan*, 1964, Kobayashi Masaki). [661]

The information in Wada-Marciano's quotation came from an interview she conducted with director Kurosawa Kiyoshi in Tokyo in July 2006. The main argument informs the reader that Japanese film production should be viewed as 'distinctly different' from the mainstream American film industry.

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[660] This wider issue – the 'deafness' of film studies – has been commented on elsewhere. See *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, David Neumeyer (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2013] 2015).
[661] Wada-Marciano, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 28.

However, while a director of Japanese horror cinema provides this statement, it can be challenged due to the primacy of the author's focus on film visuals, as argued above, which is reinforced by the other literature highlighted. Therefore, this chapter, drawing on the non-Hollywood theoretical approaches to music and sound discussed in Chapter One, will argue that traditional Japanese artistic aesthetics can be identified across both 'classical' and 'contemporary' Japanese 'ghost' films through their treatment of music and sound. *Ju-on* has been a prominent film example in the writing of those authors who adopt a strong film visual focus in their analysis, which provides further impetus for this chapter.

As highlighted in the first two chapters, James Wierzbicki and William Whittington have addressed the use of sound and music in *Ju-on* in relation to the aesthetics of traditional Japanese theatre. However, these contributions are from standalone articles and a short book chapter, and they do not consider broader, influential developments in the culturally determined contexts and functions of musical and artistic performance in Japan. This chapter will present an audio-visual analysis of *Ju-on* that takes into account a number of performing art influences by drawing specifically on the Japanese cultural concepts examined in Chapter Two, including *ma, sawari* and *yūgen*.

4.2 Suburban Fear: Introducing *Ju-on: The Grudge's* central themes

> In the current post-studio climate, the conditions of low-budget and studioless production are imprinted on new filmmakers' work, especially with reference to location shooting that frequently captures a sense of Tokyo urbanity. J-horror has often effectively used this tense topography to represent a uniquely urban sense of fear attached to the possibility of the megalopolis and its mythos. The images of Tokyo and the surrounding locales tied with the city dwellers' lives have been significant motifs in J-horror. [662]

As in US horror, with some comparative references provided in this chapter, a haunted suburban environment has come to provide a key backdrop in the development of Japanese supernatural horror. As the quotation above highlights, budget restrictions have been used to filmmakers' advantage in creating an element of horror that uses Japan's heavily populated urban settings to bring the

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[662] Wada-Marciano, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 32.

supernatural into a real environment that is local and known to those residing in current-day Japan. *Ju-on* exemplifies this approach. [663]

Ju-on is a story told in vignettes. Each one reveals the individual stories of the disappearances and deaths of several inter-connected victims at the hands of ghostly beings who still inhabit their previous residence, inflicting the curse that, referenced by the film's title, is recognized in Japanese culture as 怨 *urami,* meaning grudge or ill will. The ghost is the spirit of Saeki Kayako, a wife and mother who was brutally murdered by her husband Saeki, Takeo, following his accusations of adultery, which is never actually confirmed in the film. Kayako is accompanied by the ghost of her son Toshio and his pet cat, both of whom were also murdered by Takeo, though how Toshio met his fate is never revealed in the film's narrative; it is only confirmed that he 'disappeared'. While each segment of *Ju-on* jumps around on a timeline between past, present and future, with each segment named after a different character (i.e. 'Rika', Katsuya', or 'Hitomi'), Rika can be considered to be the central protagonist. All the characters are linked by the one consistent factor they all have in common: a house in the Tokyo suburbs. [664] Before addressing how sound and music are applied to these interconnected storylines, which will be defined as sitting within a Japanese haunted house narrative, it is crucial to discuss the film's influences and socio-cultural contexts, which, as later demonstrated in this chapter, are significantly connected to *Ju-on's* sound design treatment.

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[663] *Ju-on: The Grudge* is part of a Japanese franchise consisting of several films, based on the original novel *Ju-on* by Kei Ohishi. *Ju-on: The Grudge* is actually a sequel to the first two straight-to-video productions titled *Ju-on: The Curse* (2000) and *Ju-on: The Curse 2* (2000), it was the first film to be released in the cinema. However, prior to the straight-to-video films Shimizu directed two short films that featured the two main characters of the franchise for a made for television anthology called *Gakkō no kaidan G* (1998). The three-minute shorts were called *Katasumi* and *4444444444*. In 2003 the film franchise continued with *Ju-on The Grudge 2*, followed by *Ju-on: Shiroi rōjo* (*Ju-on: White Ghost*) directed by Ryûta Miyake and *Ju-on: Kuroi shōjo* (*Ju-on: Black Ghost*) directed by Asato Mari both in 2009, with Shimizu co-writing the stories and supervising their production. In 2014 Masayuki Ochiai directed both *Ju-on: The Beginning of the End* and the 2015 film *Ju-on: The Final Curse*.
[664] Due to the film's low budget, as highlighted in this introduction, Shimizu Takashi used an actual house in a Tokyo suburb.

4.3 Influences and socio-cultural contexts in *Ju-on: The Grudge*: 'American and Japanese Style'

Existing literature often uses descriptions such as 'trans-cultural hybridity' [665] to explain the inspiration behind *Ju-on*. This refers to the 'collision of "an American and Japanese style" [… that] creates a cinematic hybrid that appeals to viewers familiar with the visual iconography and cinematography of both Japanese and US horror cinema.' [666] Throughout this chapter, references and relevant explanations will be provided to examine visual iconography in relation to music and sound design. Jay McRoy describes the film as a 'hybrid of the US slasher film and the Japanese *kaidan*.' [667] This stems from the violence of the action onscreen and American cinematic influences on the director. In a 2004 interview, Shimizu Takashi discussed the arrival of the splatter horror movie during his junior high school years in the 1980s. Shimizu noted that he saw the 'then-popular films, such as those in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series and *Friday the 13th series*,' [668] adding that he watched these films repeatedly because they were popular, despite not particularly liking them. As a result of this trend of watching the popular splatter movies of the time, Shimizu adds, 'Of course, they influenced me.' [669]

Scholarship on *Ju-on* refers to the influence of the 'stalker cycle' [670] and the slasher film [671] in the film's 'occasional appropriation of visual tropes'. [672] This is demonstrated 'most obviously via the occasional alignment of the viewer's gaze with not only the central protagonist's perspective, but that of Kayako and Toshio as well. Such compositions and camera movement allow us, by turns, to "stalk" and "be stalked".' [673] Films classed as 'stalker' or 'slasher' are often also discussed in relation to political and ideological agendas. McRoy briefly draws on these in his writing, noting the punish-reward system of character behaviour. For example, characters who are sexually promiscuous or take

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[665] Jay McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (New York: Rodopi: 2008), 96.
[666] *Ibid*., 97.
[667] McRoy, 'Case Study: Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's Ju-on: The Grudge', *Japanese Horror Cinema*, 176.
[668] Wheeler Winston Dixon, 'An Interview with Takashi Shimizu', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 22/1 (2005): 2.
[669] *Ibid*., 2,
[670] See Vera Dika, *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th and the films of the Stalker Cycle* (New Jersey: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990).
[671] See Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[672] McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema*, 95.
[673] *Ibid*., 97.

drugs are punished, while those who are chaste and will only resort to violence when necessary are rewarded. However, as Tonia Modleski agrees, in the case of *Ju-on,* the ideology that is attacked is 'all that Bourgeois culture is supposed to cherish – like ideological apparatuses of the family and the school.' [674] Consequently, its most obvious connection with the US slasher/stalker films of the late 1970s and early 1980s is the embodiment of figures seeking vengeance.

The killers of these films are given a monstrous visual veneer in the forms of such characters as Freddy Kruger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Wes Craven, 1984) and Jason Voorhees in *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), and they carry out their murders often with signature attacks or murder weapons. Freddy uses his bladed glove; Jason, his machete, and joined with their distinguishable appearances, they have become icons of monstrosity. Kayako and Toshio are portrayed similarly in *Ju-on*. While they provide examples of the visual iconography associated with Japanese vengeful spirits, as will be discussed later in this chapter, they are '[n]ot quite ghosts in the strictest sense of the *onryou* or *kaidan* tradition, but not quite conventional biological monsters either.' [675] Instead, Shimizu adopts the violence synonymous with the undead monsters of the slasher/stalker films and 'merges a dangerous corporeality (they can physically attack and manipulate their victim's bodies) with an eerie spectral quality without adhering absolutely to one convention or the other.' [676] Most traditional Japanese spirits do not physically attack their victims, but mentally torture them until they become delusional or mad. US slasher films influence the monstrous corporeality of the spirits in Shimizu's films. However, there is a Japanese-specific component too that will be examined later in the chapter.

Colette Balmain observes that the more specific connection many contemporary Japanese horror films share is that of the break-up of the nuclear family, caused by an internal threat, not one that has come from outside. This aligns with several US horror films, including *The Amityville Horror* (Stuart Rosenberg, 1979), *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper, 1982), and *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980). Balmain specifically refers to *Ju-on* bearing similarities to *The Amityville Horror* and *The Shining*, 'in

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[674] Tania Modleski, 'The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory', *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, Tania Modleski (ed.), (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 158.
[675] McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema*, 96-97.
[676] *Ibid*., 97.

which male violence and aggression provide the foundations for the horrific events that take place within the narrative.' [677] This male violence, often against women, also ties in with the aforementioned slasher and stalker film examples like *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978). Balmain argues that it is *The Shining* that is referenced most specifically in *Ju-on* both thematically and visually: 'The sepia tones of the opening sequence, the panning down deserted streets, the high-angled disorientating shot of the outside of the house, and inside the agitated actions of Takeo, can all be seen as indirect references to *The Shining*.' [678] There is also a link to the subject of male aggression in both films committed by the father: Takeo murders his wife and son, unleashing otherworldly forces in the form of a curse on the living world, just as 'Jack Torrence's mental breakdown allows dark forces to gain a foothold in the material world'. [679]

During a 2004 interview, Shimizu directly referenced the influence of *The Shining*: 'I got bored with watching splatter or shock-based horror films, so I sought out Japanese and other horror films that worked in a more subtle way. The first works that captivated me were Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* [1980] and the remake of *Nosferatu* [1979] directed by Werner Herzog.' [680] While Shimizu highlights the subtlety that he was looking for in horror films, referencing *The Shining* concerning this, his references to the influences of US slasher/stalker films are all explicitly discussed in relation to their influence through visual tropes. However, while interviewing Ashiya Gary, who composed the music for Shimizu's 2000 V-Cinema and first full feature of the *Ju-on* franchise, *Ju-on: The Curse*, he specifically referenced the music from *The Shining* and its influence on the score of the 2000 *Ju-on: The Curse* film, Ashiya Gary recalls:

> [T]he original kind of sound I used was towards the middle of the movie, when a girl, a student, appears without her jaw – the sound there is something like Ligeti's music, a repetitive, minimal kind of sound. Repeating the "Whah" sound many times, just repeated. I may have tried this type of style using sounds effects here in this movie, or another movie

[677] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 143.
[678] *Ibid*., 144.
[679] Jeremy Dyson, *Bright Darkness: Lost Art of the Supernatural Horror Film* (London: Continuum, 1997), 252.
[680] Shimizu Takashi, in Wheeler Winston Dixon, 'An Interview with Takashi Shimizu', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 22/1 (2005): 4.

called *Cure* by Kurosawa, Kiyoshi. I also used this technique there, but I don't remember

which order. I used the sound as a way to express horror, but it was my original invention. [681]

Ashiya Gary also mentioned his interest and the influence of the work of Krzysztof Penderecki, stating,

'[m]y work for *Ju-on*, basically is being influenced by Penderecki's sound, I have been influenced by

that composer.' [682] Ashiya then went on to discuss the relation of his scoring to 2002's *Ju-on*, also

referencing the influence of the music from *The Shining*:

> [B]oth the original and the remake seem to actually go back or be influenced by Kubrick's *The*
>
> *Shining*, so, maybe unintentionally even, they must have been influenced by *The Shining*, so
>
> both seem to come from the same influence, from the same line of music, so they seem to
>
> have a connection there. But I believe there is no direct connection between the two [films of
>
> *Ju-on: The Curse* and *Ju-on: The Grudge*].

While this provides an interesting point of comparison between musical links, it is what Ashiya Gary

says about the music in *The Shining* in terms of conveying horror that is particularly interesting:

> It's true to any music that I have composed in the realm of horror there are two main pillars
>
> that I have in composing this music. One is a very normal expression of horror, very
>
> sophisticated, but a very straightforward, normal kind of expression. And the other is
>
> something very peculiar, very strange, that nobody has ever heard of. So, these two are always
>
> in the centre of my horror music composition. The first pillar, this normal but sophisticated
>
> music is in short, contemporary music. Some film music examples would be Stanley
>
> Kubrick's *The Shining*, also *The Exorcist*. Both […] use pre-existing music and use faster
>
> sounds, and I love writing those sounds with the orchestra and that is how they use the
>
> contemporary music. I have a lot of interest in Penderecki and Ligeti, and [… they] are a base

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[681] Interview with Ashiya Gary, 25 March 2015. The Gyorgy Ligeti example he refers to is the excerpt of *Lontano*, for orchestra (1967) used in *The Shining*. Different parts of the excerpt from 2'50-4'44 are used in the film. Kurosawa's film *Cure* was released in 1997 preceeding Shimizu's *Ju-on: The Curse*, so it is highly likely the musical cue Ashiya Gary composed and references above was first used in *Cure*.

[682] Interview with Ashiya Gary, 25 March 2015. Ashiya did not specifically say what specific musical influence came from his interest in Penderecki's music, but I believe as it was discussed in the context of *The* Shining that Ashiya Gary was talking about the composer's music for that film. Penderecki's works used in *The Shining* include *Polymorphia for 48 strings* (1961), *Kanon for 52 strings and magnetic tape* (1962), *De natura sonoris no.1* (1966), *Jutrznia* (1969-1971) sometimes indicated as *Utrenja* or *Utrenya*, *De natura sonoris no.2* (1971) and *The awakening of Jacob* (1974).

for my music, this is a very normal style of my music. So, using these kinds of music in a very very horrifying scene, like in *The Shining*, brings out the real horror in the movie, but it's not a very uncommon thing, many people do that, and that's the kind of effect that is caught and drawn out by the music. So, using this first basic type of sound is of course something that I chose to do and it is a very good thing to do, but I didn't want that to be the only thing I did, but I wanted to add something to it which is very original, something that is different from the others so when I set out to work on *Ju-on: The Curse*, I wanted to incorporate this plus alpha something, as the original thing to the basic effect of contemporary music. [683]

By 'basic effect' Ashiya Gary uses this expression to highlight the main goal of composing for any horror/supernatural film, creating a sense of fear or dread through music. However, it is his reference to adding something original that is particularly interesting, as later, he goes on to say, '*ma* that was something I could really relate to, the usage of that.' [684] He also discusses Takemitsu's score for *Kwaidan* noting how Takemitsu, 'made some noises where there's no legitimate reason why the sound, the noise should exist there. The noise that is irritating, and it really is irrelevant, but that I think is now the base of the Japanese-type horror.' [685] As I will argue in this chapter, the something 'original' is tied to a deeper distinct cultural meaning in *Ju-on*, especially as Ashiya Gary informed me while discussing the influence of traditional Japanese music scoring approaches: 'maybe it is already imprinted in my sub-consciousness and maybe I am using them without even thinking or being in touch with them.' [686]

Ashiya's reference to the film scores in the two US horror films, *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Shining* (1980), presents conventionality that he notes is 'straightforward' for the horror genre. This also ties to Kevin Donnelly's observation that the music in *The Shining* is 'high-art music, but it is [also] functional film music.' [687] By examining the Japanese 'ghost' films and the influence of Japanese artistic and musical aesthetics in this study, a clearer

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[683] Interview with Ashiya Gary, 25 March 2015.
[684] *Ibid*.
[685] *Ibid.*
[686] *Ibid.*
[687] Kevin Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), 42.

understanding of alternative film scoring approaches beyond the non-conventional uses of music from the European and Western scoring tradition can be assessed. While Jay McRoy suggests that *Ju-on* is a hybrid text through both its acknowledgement of American and Japanese horror influences, Sarah Arnold notes McRoy's assertion that the film's central premise is to offer 'a critical insight into a larger socio-cultural economy of fear predicated upon anxieties over the illusory integrity of the Japanese social body.' [688] Therefore, it is necessary to examine the Japanese socio-cultural contexts represented in the film first, as they provide fruitful territory in highlighting how sound and music work in conjunction with these Japanese cultural contexts.

4.3.1 Conflicts between the pre-modern and the modern

In the opening sequence of *Ju-on*, Balmain observes how 'traditional concepts of male activity in its most extreme form are juxtaposed with the ultimate in female passivity – the dead woman.' [689] This indicates critical contexts central to the film's narrative, primarily the dominant Japanese concern with leaving behind a pre-modern era dominated by traditional values and embracing the modern. This fear is played out in the film through violence erupting in what is viewed as the safest familial space, the home. In essence, this disruption of the norm is an expression of 'the changing roles of masculinity and patriarchy within Japan.' [690] Through an engagement with Japanese culture that not only considers ancient concepts but a detailed consideration of more contemporary issues I will highlight how tension between the pre-modern and the modern can be seen playing out in the audio-visual dynamics of *Ju-on*.

In the early 1990s the economic bubble burst in Japan. This rapid change in the socio-cultural landscape of Japan, which followed on from the country's thriving post-War export economy and resulted in an economic recession in the late 1990s, provided a tremendous strain on the country's workforce, especially for the salary men at the heart of it. [691] Tensions seeped into home life, and cases

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[688] McRoy, '13. Case Study: Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's *Ju-on: The Grudge*', 177.
[689] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 144.
[690] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 123.
[691] The term salary man came into use during the rise of the new social order which emerged alongside a 'middle new class', the white-collar employees of large businesses and government bureaucracies that overtook the small independent business men and landowners. The term originated from this new middle-class citizen having the

of domestic violence escalated in response to this economic emergency. Hayao Kawai observes this transformation in gender roles, describing this time as producing the collapse of the 'Japanese-style extended family'. [692] The difference between the nuclear family and the Japanese-style extended family is generational. While the nuclear family consists of parents and children, the extended family would often be made up of three generations living under the same roof, with the additional recognition of past ancestors acknowledged with the presence of Buddhist and/or Shinto alters in the household. This extended family practice is also tied to the Japanese household system of *ie*. Referenced in relation to the previous case study of *Honogurai*, this is a premodern term which epitomizes the importance of the family household and emphasizes social responsibility over personal gain: '[I]f a family member commits an offense, the entire family shares the responsibility and suffers with that person.' [693] This system is historically understood as an anchor of social and political order and stability in the family.

The collapse of this extended family tradition is acknowledged in *Ju-on* when the narrative introduces the audio-viewer to the elderly mother of the deceased residents, shown as a neglected character, who is left to sit in her own faeces in a passive state. In a traditional extended-family context, the grandparents or grandmother (in the case of *Ju-on*) reside with the parents and the children. Typically, they are often the parents of the husband, as the mother-in-law traditionally is expected to train the daughter-in-law how to be a proper homemaker, using a scolding method should the daughter-in-law be perceived to be doing anything wrong. However, in *Ju-on*, the younger woman figure of Kayako torments the elderly lady, supposedly leading to her death. The abandonment and vengeance seemingly unleashed on the grandmother can be read as 'an irrepressible hostility towards an abusive and antiquated "official culture", specifically… the norms and values of patriarchy.' [694]

guarantee of a regular salary and therefore became known as the 'sarariman' (salary man). However, the roots date back much earlier after 1600 when Japan achieved internal stability and many samurai became, in effect, administrators working for the clan government. With the role of the salary man they are part of a large organisation with little independent movement and long hours due to a reliance on the regular salary.

[692] Kawai Hayao, 'Violence in the Home: Conflict between Two Principles: Maternal and Paternal', *Japanese Culture and Behavior: Selected Readings*, Sugiyama Lebra Takie and William P. Lebra (eds.), (Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 303.

[693] Barre Toelken and Michiko Iwasaka, *Ghosts and the Japanese: Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends* (Utah: Utah State University Press, 1994), 114.

[694] McRoy, '13. Case Study: Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's *Ju-on: The Grudge*', 180.

As stated earlier, this hostility towards a premodern authoritarian society is also recognized as a fear of the modern channelled through 'anxieties that permeate Japan's increasingly hybrid, transnational culture.' [695] This anxiety is especially tied to the influences of Western culture, following the occupation of Japan post-World War II, and the changing roles of women. This includes the picture traditional Japanese society presents of the father at work and the mother at home, trained by the watchful eye of her in-laws, also looking after children, though again maintaining a student role as the grandparents would instruct in this area too. Amongst this traditional social framework (*ie*), transcultural hybridity threatens to invade.

The position of women in Japan impacts the dynamics of male-female relationships, and the concept of Japanese-extended family relationships has changed in light of the influence of societies outside of Japan. For example, Jay McRoy provides an overview of Japan's contemporary gender transformations addressing fundamental political changes. This includes the highly contested Japanese constitution of 1946, which has impacted gender roles in contemporary Japan, 'reconfiguring the multiple ways in which the nation's populace imagines the sex- and gender-based apportioning and emerging conceptions of masculinity and femininity.' [696] Makino Catherine draws particular attention to the stipulation around marriage reform: 'marriage would be solely based on agreement of husband and wife, who had equal rights. Before then women were not guaranteed civil rights or legal rights. They were not allowed to vote or own property. Although husbands could file for divorce, wives could not'.' [697] McRoy also refers to the changing economic situation in Japan over the last half-century, referring to an approach to family life that echoes the nation's shifting concerns towards its financial recovery:

> Today in Japan even the family has become a micro-corporation. Fathers have been known to sacrifice their families to their business and a recent trend is that mothers spend a great deal of time in the office or at night school and children do so with their classmates in private "after-schools" (*juku*). [698]

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695 McRoy, '13. Case Study: Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's *Ju-on: The Grudge*', 177.
696 McRoy, *Nightmare Japan*, 79.
697 Makino Catherine, 'In Japan, Women's Constitutional Rights in Peril' (https://womensenews.org/2005/05/in-japan-womens-constitutional-rights-in-peril/, 10 December 2018).
698 Kogawa Tetsuo, 'Japan as a Manipulated Society', *TELOS* 49 (Autumn, 1981):140.

This reversion towards what Kogawa refers to as 'an American ideal whereby the logic of capital becomes predominant in everyday activities' [699] is also challenged within Japanese society, as McRoy highlights by citing a report written by Morioka Masahiro, which voices concern that Japan has lost a perception of value lying in social institutions like the family, and even the 'nation'. McRoy notes that the report,

> reveals the extent to which concerns over recuperating a lost sense of 'Japaneseness' inform the larger population imagination. As well, it exposes the recurrent allure of ideological configurations that link conceptualizations of the family as a cohesive social unit with the re-establishment of a nationalist fervor that was once perceived as vanishing amidst unrelenting social change. [700]

This struggle between a pre-modern establishment of familial ties and understanding Western influence over the broader social-cultural economy meets itself head-on in cinematic forms such as *Ju-on*, which, as will be argued in this chapter, is closely tied to sound design choices. In her publication *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, Marilyn Ivy explores the theme of the vanishing, a suspension between presence and absence, with '[p]ractices and discourses now situated on the edge of presence (yet continually repositioned at the core of the national-cultural imaginary)… [living] out partial destinies of spectacular recovery.' [701] Ivy draws attention to the struggle of the Japanese social body to accept the processes that constitute its social hybridity. As she summarises:

> The hybrid realities of Japan today – of multiple border crossings and transnational interchanges in the worlds of trade, aesthetics, and sciences – are contained within dominant discourses on cultural purity and nondifference, and in nostalgic appeals to premodernity: what makes the Japanese so different from everybody else makes them identical to each other; what threatens the self-sameness is often marked temporally as the intrusively modern, spacially as foreign. Although those discourses are being altered by the effects of advanced

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[699] Kogawa, 'Japan as a Manipulated Society', 140.
[700] McRoy, *Nightmare Japan*, 81.
[701] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 20.

capitalism they have proved remarkably resilient as they haunt the possibility of a postnationalist consciousness in contemporary Japan. [702]

This haunted consciousness then lends itself to representations of the repressed through media, including film, and 'horror cinema marks the ideal forum for the metaphoric expression of concerns over an indiscrete (or hybrid) national, social, or corporeal body.' [703]

In *Ju-on*, these concerns are represented by ambiguity in the narrative. The distinct audio-visual representations of its ghosts are based on much more traditional, early pre-modern depictions from *kaidan* (tales of the weird, strange or mysterious). These strange tales appealed to Japanese audiences because of their historic connections with reality. During the Edo period they often provided 'explanations for the inexplicable events in daily life, exoticism, and/or mild criticism of social and political institutions.' [704] The early ties to social commentary that *kaidan* were associated with meant that these tales were adaptable into a range of media formats across the centuries and could be applied to the changing social, cultural and political contexts that were under critique.

The fear associated with the loss of tradition, or the familiar norms that have long ensured familial and social stability and control, is expressed narratively by evoking known, traditional elements of the *kaidan*, only to overtly undermine and revise these established conventions, thereby injecting a heightened sense unfamiliarity, insecurity, and paranoia that is further reinforced by a range of narrative styles, and aesthetic choices that intensify the sense of chaos and disorder. [705]

This tension between the pre-modern and the modern can be seen playing out in the audio-visual dynamics of *Ju-on*, and is significant to this study in terms of how it heightens different socio-cultural contexts. As discussed in light of American horror film influence, Shimizu Takashi is not just presenting audiences with the expected popular *onryō* 'avenging ghost' motif – a motif that often relates to tales of wronged women who return from the dead to seek vengeance on those who had harmed them, a popular theme of contemporary Japanese horror films in the late 90s/early 00s. *Ju-on's*

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[702] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*, 9.
[703] McRoy, *Nightmare Japan*, 93.
[704] Reider Noriko T., 'The Appeals of *Kaidan*: Tales of the Strange', *Asian Folklore Studies* 59/2 (2000): 281.
[705] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 128.

spirits do not adhere to any particular convention; instead they act out their vengeance by physically attacking in a violent manner. Furthermore, as referenced above, vengeful Japanese ghosts are often female. Male ghosts are often portrayed as nostalgic figures, passive in their hauntings and seeking familial comforts. They are dissimilar to the murderous, vengeful and angry portrayal of Takeo.

> Where the classic [*kaidan*] narratives clearly reflect Confucian values and premodern ideologies, specifically in the emphasis on social responsibilities and the patriarchal male's duties to lead by serving and protecting, *Ju-on* updates the conventions by introducing a more contemporary ambiguity and anxiety to the figure of the supernatural ghost, which, in this film, is not restricted to Kayako and, in fact, includes Toshio and Takeo. [706]

Both mother and son in *Ju-on* are victims of Takeo's violence, and their depictions as spirits are problematized as a result. Their portrayals mirror the anxiety of broader society in Japan at a time when economic insecurity had entered the safe 'inside' space of the familial home, which should exist in opposition to the unknown 'threatening' outside. The reversal of the external threat being internal through masculine, patriarchal violence is noted by McRoy, who interprets it as 'a cultural response to the crisis of masculinity that is a result of socio-economic factors.' [707] This is confirmed with research such as that conducted by Nakamura Tadashi, in which violence towards women in modern Japan is discussed as a gender norm:

> Expectations of control are higher for men than they are for women [...] Painfully pent-up emotions then become directed toward intimate others in the private arena of the home, men's only 'fort' for safely reconfirming their masculine identity and 'men's pride' (*otoko no koken*). Unfortunately, some men express 'unmanly' emotions in 'manly' fashion, using various (including verbal) forms of violence. [708]

Takeo's actions portray such expressions in an exaggerated form, as his 'betrayal of his traditional responsibilities and patriarchal position mutates into a curse.' [709]

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[706] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 130.
[707] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 143.
[708] Nakamura Tadashi, 'Regendering Batterers: Domestic Violence and Men's Movements', in *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, James E. Roberson and Suzuki Nobue. (eds.), (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 168.
[709] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 134.

Balmain also discusses the context of domestic violence in *Ju-on* in relation to how the 'dominant motifs of emptiness and alienation which lead into the eruption of male violence' [710] play out visually within the mise-en-scène in the opening sequence of the film:

> Establishing shots of deserted streets, caught in grainy black and white footage, present us with an apocalyptic vision of the present, or perhaps the future; they are connected visually with the scene of masculine aggression, as the camera, within the domestic space, pans in on a pair of nervously tapping feet, surrounded by the debris of torn family photographs on the floor. The subsequent montage of shots, which cuts between Takeo's barely concealed aggression – signified by his blood-splattered shirt, face and hands, and captured through close-ups and part shots – and the lifeless face of his female victim, Kayako, creates a visual imagistic system at the heart of which is the destruction of the family unit through male violence. [711]

What Balmain establishes by bringing together the underlying socio-cultural contexts with the mise-en-scène in this part of the film is an interpretation that is solely based on the visual. However, one of the most striking aspects of the film's opening is the use of sound, which is a scene that has previously not been written about extensively and will be analysed here.

4.3.2 The violence of Ju-on: The Grudge's opening:

Before providing an audio-visual analysis of *Ju-on's* opening montage I would like to draw on leading scholarship that analyses the role of music and sound in the film: James Wierzbicki's 2009 book chapter 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications', his 2010 article 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese *Kaidan* films and their Hollywood remakes' and his 2015 publication 'Subtle differences: Sonic content in "translation" remakes'. In these three publications Wierzbicki focuses on sonic content through one particular scene from *Ju-on* described as the 'attic scene', examining the ghostly sounds of the film, the ways in which they sustain a Japanese

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[710] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 143.
[711] *Ibid*., 143.

aesthetic/theatrical tradition and how they are part of the narrative world. [712] While the example of the 'attic scene' is presented further along in this chapter, my audio-visual analysis of the film's opening montage that follows, demonstrates that to provide a fuller understanding of how Japanese aesthetics influence music and sound design in *Ju-on*, a broader range of examples provide a more detailed survey and toolkit for analyzing other Japanese 'ghost' film examples, that has previously not been provided.

The introductory credits begin with a diatonic piano melody in the style of a waltz and played on the piano setting of a digital keyboard in the key of F minor. [713] An additional countermelody that produces a chromatic continuum is performed on the piano. The melodies are accompanied by sustained high-pitch strings that descend chromatically before ascending to conclude on the fifth scale degree: C6, B6, B♭6, A6, A♭6, B6, C6. [714] The music cue enters as the film's opening captions appear with the following text: 'Ju-on: A curse born of a grudge held by someone who dies in the grip of anger. It gathers in the places frequented by that person in life, working its spell on those who come into contact with it and thus creating itself anew.' [715] (0:00:12-0:00:25). The music continues as the establishing shots Balmain describes above open the film. What is immediately striking about this cue is not only the contrast in timbre between each musical layer but the harmonic contrast. As transcribed below, the central piano melody (see Figure 49) is a slow, lamenting diatonic waltz melody with an upper string layer. The upper string layer is initially consonant with this piano layer and harmonically concludes on the fifth of the cue's key signature on the pitch of C6, though no tonic resolution is reached. The second piano melody produces a chromatic complement to the tonal pitch classes of the main piano theme and creates a totally different musical world. This contrast harmonically symbolizes

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[712] It should be noted that Wierzbicki's analysis is of a comparative nature in the 2009 book chapter 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications' in which he also presents another comparative example of *Ringu* and its 2002 Hollywood remake.
[713] The main theme on *Ju-on: The Grudge* OST is in E minor.
[714] This cue on *Ju-on: The Grudge* OST is B6, A#6, A6, G#6, G6, A#6, B6.
[715] Captions from *Ju-on: The Grudge*. Directed by Takashi Shimizu, 2002. Amazon Prime Video. (https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B00FAIO4EA/ref=atv_dl_rdr?autoplay=1). This is the version accessed throughout this thesis.

the natural/unnatural and the ordered/chaotic.

Figure 49. The opening and central melodic piano theme.

As well as the harmonic contrast, there is temporal contrast, with the slow waltz of the main melody joined by the unmetered chromatic continuum. Temporal stability also appears to be present in the string line, which initially is consonant with the diatonic piano layer. However, the strings then slip chromatically 'out of sync' (harmonically speaking) with the tonality of the central piano melody. The first pitch of the string line on C6 enters at the start of the cue, sustained until the first shift down to B6 just after the A♭5 is heard in the central piano melody, which begins to suggest the chromatic tensions in the string line. The next pitch movement in the string line down to B♭6 enters during a slight gap in the central melody line, and as the rest of the pitches enter, the chromatic tension is not resolved. Crucially, the shift away from consonance in the string line is synced to the film's first shot – a black and white, grainy, static shot of a residential street. This dissonant shift in the string line paired with the washed-out, grainy imagery immediately suggests a disruption - a move away from consonance in the strings and the colour film with a clean grain that dominates film imagery. However, the musical tension is composed out over the course of the cue too. This is because, first, the waltz loses its way

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temporally and hypermetrically, with unusual gaps opening up in the formal phrase pattern of the central melody as it unravels. The second chromatic piano melody, while heard in its initial entry, becomes more prominent as the central melody loses its way.

The melodic struggle between the two piano lines is matched to the visual violence onscreen. As McRoy notes, '[o]ne can read the fragmented, impressionistic opening montage as illustrative of a profound social disorientation, but one can also comprehend the sequence's implied violence as emblematic of a larger compulsion to re-establish and/or maintain a regime of masculine dominance.' [716] We can hear the two piano lines as representing the struggle of femininity, of the mother and the wife, linked to the domestic space of the home. This home is introduced to the audio-viewer from an unusual tilted camera angle showing only the top part of the house in the film's second shot. This presentation of a liminal space will be discussed further in regard to audio-visual construction. The slow, lamenting waltz can be linked to the 19th-century Western parlour piano performances within the domestic space, which were tied to 'perceptions of ideal femininity.' [717] The detached dissonant pitches of the chromatic continuum are at first harder to discern amongst the central melodic theme, but then as this line builds in prominence, it comes to represent an assertion of masculinity. As the central melodic line begins to shift temporally, there is a pause on an F#5, which after the pitch is heard cuts to a black screen in the visual (0:00:55-0:00:57); however, the chromatic piano pitches continue across this pause, in its continued violence with no clear harmonic centre. The string line is continuous throughout and is also heard over the visual cut to black, concluding at the end of this opening montage once the film title credit appears onscreen. This upper string line represents the central domestic space where the masculine violence is carried out. Its musical continuum can be associated with the socio-cultural normality in family life, a home in its continuous sustained delivery across the opening sequence. However, just as familial domesticity in the film's opening is pulled apart, the string line is also pulled out of shape, and its initial consonance is broken.

Despite referencing a 19th-century Western musical concept latterly absorbed into screen music tradition through the style topics of classical Hollywood scoring, by linking domestic parlour

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[716] McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Cinema*, 95.
[717] Phillis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900: Representations of music, science and gender in the leisured home* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000), 1.

piano music to the idea of femininity in this opening cue, the musical struggle highlighted above when considering all layers of audio in the film's opening cue also demonstrates a uniquely Japanese approach to the violence portrayed. In parallel with the violence done to the convention of the central melodic piano line, representing the violence done to the female, parallel to this violence is that of the sound effects and diegetic sounds that essentially commit 'violence' to the non-diegetic score described above. This draws attention to the relationship between sound design and the socio-cultural context of the Japanese home.

The first additional audio is almost immediately after the central piano melody enters, a low electro-acoustic rumble that breaks up into what sounds like a manipulated breath sound with a much lighter timbre of delivery that contrasts against the last rumble. This is followed by a second rumble, this time with a clearer fade away to a more sustained manipulated breath sound. The lighter whisp-like timbre of delivery is more prolonged. Connotation can be applied to these breath sounds after the opening montage when they are associated with the dying breaths of Kayako. With the cut to the film's first visual, the distinct meow of a cat enters the audio track. The sound could be categorized as diegetic, and despite no visual confirmation of the cat, it is realistic that a cat would reside around the domestic space of a residential area and the shot of the upper exterior of the house that follows as a second meow is heard. These meows are foregrounded in the mix of music and sound effects. At 0:00:28, the same low rumble that accompanied the credits is heard again, breaking away into the faint sound of the breath. What then follows with the cut to the house's interior is several diegetic sounds placed in the mix to emphasize the violence that is being carried out visually and aurally as these diegetic sounds dominate over the pianos and strings. The first visual insides the house of what appears to be a blood-soaked tarp is accompanied by shuffling as another cat meow enters, followed by a thud sound. Just before the first visual enters, an additional sound effect is heard that produces the timbre of a manipulated metallic scrape. There is a steady crescendo as it enters and then fades away across the sequence. (0:00:32~0:00:43).

The diegetic sounds become more layered in the sequence, blending into the delivery of the music that shifts its rhythmic pattern, building the tension of what is happening onscreen. Takeo is shown and heard biting his nails. In contrast, a different off-screen cat meow is heard immediately followed by the pulling and ripping of tape and a cut to a shot of Takeo cellotaping a photograph back

together. As the successive shot cuts to Takeo's possessed looking eyes close-up, a further meow enters the soundtrack. The next shot cuts to a close-up of Kayako's still bloody hand, and the cut is joined by another meow and a thicker timbre of breath-like sound as the camera pans up to reveal more of Kayako's bloody arm. The next shot cuts to a close-up of a black cat, the source of the meowing, but it is at this point as Takeo grabs the cat that the shift in volume in the mix increases in volume to match the point of audition. Takeo's strained breath as he grabs the cat is also high in the mix.
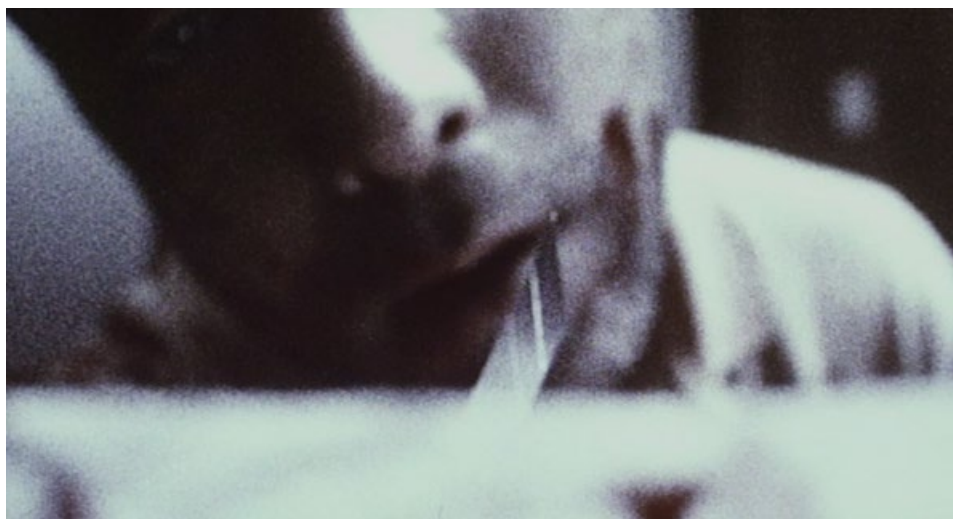
Figure 50. Still of the murderous Takeo in the opening sequence from *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002).

The next set of sound effects are all that are used to inform the audio-viewer of the cat's fate as the visual cuts to a little boy, Toshio, who stops colouring and gets up to hide in the nearby closet. The whisper of breathy sounds are heard in the background again across the shot. The final screech of the cat is interrupted by the sounds of flesh being repeatedly stabbed. The cat's meows are halted, and the clicks of a box cutter blade being adjusted are then heard; as another close-up of Kayako is shown focused on her lifeless lips, the low, breathy sound continuing and overridden by a low rumble. A synch point confirms the audio of the box cutter as the next shows the blade prepared in Takeo's bloodied hands. The next shot then cuts to a medium shot of Takeo turning, releasing a loud audible breath sound, with the rumble continuing into the cut to the black screen. In the next shot presented above in the still of Figure 50, the rumble merges into the breath sound again joined by dripping sounds, which we can deduce as being the drips of blood. The following two shots show an extreme

close-up of Kayako's open right eye and then cuts to a shot of her left eye, both wide and lifeless. The final diegetic sounds are of Takeo breathing deeply, inhaling through his nose as he leans over the dead blood-stained body of a female victim, who we later learn is his wife. Added reverberation extends the uncomfortable sound of Takeo's inhaling, which merges into the metallic scrape of sound heard at the start of the sequence as the shot cuts to the title caption that fades onto the screen. The title appears as if the characters have been soaked into the parchment, bloody and revealing the title characters of 'Ju-on' as the metallic scrape builds into a loud crescendo and then at its peak breaks off into a lighter metallic slither of sound lingering on into the cut of the next shot which reveals the characters for 'Rika' and the story chapter that follows.

Figure 51. Final still of Kayako in the opening sequence of *Ju-on* from Takeo's distorted perspective.

What is most significant about these sonic moments in the opening sequence, as revealed by this careful close audio-viewing, is that they are all heavily amplified, dominating in the mix and imposing a stark aural violence. Takeo's final intake of breath is so distinct that it does not just give the correct point of audition as the audio-viewer adopts Takeo's viewpoint leaning in towards his wife's face, but also emphasizes the sheer aggression of his actions.

Kevin J. Donnelly discusses the relationship between the non-diegetic music and diegetic sounds in the film, noting how the latter functions closer to the traditional role of non-diegetic scoring:

> *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2003) includes extraordinary sequences in which sound could be interpreted as either music or sound effects. In both cases the ambiguity is doubtless part of the general effect of the film. *Ju-on* contains deep ambiguous rumbles that might be

constructed as diegetic supernatural sounds. The status of many of the sounds remains unclear: they might be diegetic, or they might be part of the scary musical furnishings of the film. Indeed, deep sub-bass rumbles and metallic sounds with a wide frequency range have exploited the dramatic and psychological possibilities of an extended range of bass and treble tones available to 5.1 Dolby sound and Chion's multi-speaker superfield. [718]

While Donnelly references technological capabilities here with the example of Dolby sound advancement when the film was produced, he does so to highlight how technological capabilities open up the possibilities of aesthetic capabilities. *Ju-on* demonstrates this through the relationship highlighted above between the layers of non-diegetic scoring and the additional sound design. While I have argued that sound afflicts 'violence' on the non-diegetic score, they are part of the same audio track. The bass rumbles, breath like sounds and metallic scrapes described above all work as a contrapuntal line within the cocktail of music and sound that spills across the opening credits and montage. It does so in a unique way that challenges the conventional functions of non-diegetic scoring as unobtrusively scoring the emotion onscreen, where sound effects were predominantly used as a means of heightening reality and to draw the audio-viewer into the film world. As the example of *Ju-on* demonstrates, sound has a more significant and unique role in the film, whose challenging function is well summarised by Donnelly:

> In recent years an increasingly aesthetic rather than representational conception of sound in the cinema has emerged. Traditionally cinema sound was conceived and constructed in a basic compositional template. At its heart were clarity and intelligibility of dialogue, alongside uncluttered but functional composition of diegetic sound elements. Nondiegetic music occupied an unobtrusive position in volume and pitch, except at privileged moments. James Lastra notes that new sound pioneers such as Walter Murch, "discovered that the founding gesture of sound design, as it were, is both the complete severing of sensory experience from representation, and a compulsive linking of the two in an indissoluble unity that appeared to efface representation." Sounds may almost lose their representational attributes as they serve

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[718] Kevin J. Donnelly, 'Extending Film Aesthetics: Audio Beyond Visuals', in T*he Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics*, John Richardson, Claudia Gorbman and Carol Vernallis (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 360.

emotional and psychological functions, the traditional domain of nondiegetic music in films. [719]

Donnelly's discussion is framed by the theory of Michel Chion and the sonic space of the 'superfield' created by multitrack sound and multitrack speaker placement, opening up the perception of space around the visual field. As Chion notes, '[b]y virtue of its acoustical precision and relative stability this ensemble of sounds has taken on a quasi-autonomous existence with relation to the visual field, in that it does not depend moment by moment on what we see on screen.' [720] The audio of *Ju-on's* opening sequence aligns with this aesthetic conception of sound facilitated by technology, particularly when examining the reverberating bass rumbles and electro-acoustic metallic bursts of sound intermingled with the non-diegetic score of *Ju-on's* opening, which suggests a kind of diegetic supernatural presence. Here the unique relationship of non-diegetic and diegetic sound highlights the permeable boundaries between the living and the dead, as discussed in the example of *Honogurai mizu* in Chapter Three.

The open interpretation of sound effects interpreted as either music or sound effects is also connected to the Japanese cultural conception of sound that prioritizes tone colour – *onshoku*. For example, in the noh theatre music ensemble, the only melody instrument is the *nohkan*. It provides melody in the entrance-music and dance music. It plays a contrapuntal line in certain passages consisting of set patterns of melodic cells against the singer. They are performed in free rhythm and have no specific tonal connection to the vocal line. The unique sounds of the *nohkan* in these passages come from the instrument's sliding sounds and microtones. While the *nohkan'*s accompaniment in these passages often intensifies the emotional affect of a song, it also has an ethereal quality of sound, adding colour to the text of the vocal chanters, which aligns more with the ambiguous musical/sound effect nature of the supernatural diegetic sounds described in *Ju-on's* opening, providing an example of how timbre challenges the boundaries between music and sound design. The *nohkan's* unique sound and 'blurring' of the pitch creates its own supernatural quality, because as Antares Boyle explains, '[t]he construction of the *nohkan* is fascinating and not completely understood. Unlike the

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[719] Donnelly, 'Extending Film Aesthetics: Audio Beyond Visuals', 359.
[720] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, Claudia Gorbman (ed. and trans.), (New York: Columbia University Press [1990] 2019), 150.

ryuteki, a similar small flute used in *gagaku*, it is not created at a fixed pitch […] In addition, the normal overtone structure is disrupted by a small tube (called the *nodo*, or "throat") inserted inside the tube between the blowhole and the first finger-hole.' [721] The thin bamboo tube disrupts the instrument's natural acoustics and adds to the mystery of the instrument. It cannot play a diatonic scale nor reach an octave but produces a distinct shrill sound, as Tamba Akira notes: 'In the music of Nō where harmony does not exist, a special role devolved from the dramatic intensity and the fabrication of the flute is conditioned above all by this objective of special force.' [722] Boyle goes on to highlight how 'Akira Tamba reminds us that Noh was traditionally performed outdoors, and suggests that the intensification of the first partial created by this tube is what causes the *nohkan's* piercing sound quality.' [723] The high piercing pitches of the *nohkan* are called *hishigi* and, as Richard Emmert describes, are 'eerie and otherworldly.' [724] The *nohkan* is also described as producing 'noise-based effects' [725] often described under the term *sō-on*, meaning 'noisy sound' or 'noise.' This term is used by Japanese musicologists because, as Britten notes when discussing the aesthetic dimension of 'noise', '[t]here is in fact no word in the traditional Japanese musical lexicon for this general phenomenon; there are only technical words for this or that particular sonic effect.' [726] However, there is also ambiguity surrounding this term; as Dean Britten notes, 'William Malm, calls the phenomenon "unpitched sound", […] Japanese performing musicians themselves, of course, do not view the phenomenon as noise; to them it is simply part of the music.' [727] This is how the diegetic, non-diegetic and ambiguous sounds work together in the audio track of the opening montage, I suggest, influenced by this unique concept of sound, as detailed earlier in Chapter Two. This comparison with the music and electronically manipulated sounds of *Ju-on's* opening montage can be likened to the aural instability of the nohkan's *hishigiri*. Pitched to the edge, this instrument unleashes a cultural display of

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[721] Antares Boyle, '"The Pattern and the Fabric": Complexity and ambiguity in the solo flute works of Toshio Hosokawa' (MA diss., Sydney: Sydney Conservatorium of Music, University of Sydney, 2007), 6.
[722] Tamba Akira, *The Musical Structure of Nō*, Patricia Matore (trans.), (Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1981), 150.
[723] Boyle, '"The Pattern and the Fabric": Complexity and ambiguity in the solo flute works of Toshio Hosokawa', 6.
[724] Richard Emmert, 'Expanding No's Horizons: Considerations for a New No Perspective' in *Nō and Kyōgen in the Contemporary World*, James R. Brandon (ed.), (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 29.
[725] James Wierzbicki, "Lost in translation? 'Ghost music' in recent Japanese Kaidan films and their Hollywood Remakes, *Horror Studies* 1/2 (2010): 198.
[726] Dean Britten, 'That "Howling Music": Japanese *Hōgaku* in Contrast to Western Art Music' Monumenta Nipponica 40/2 (Summer, 1985): 153.
[727]*Ibid*., 153.

sound that is richly alternative in conveying the unexplainable, just as the manipulated timbres of the opening sound effects in *Ju-on* score contribute to a representation of violence paralleling the visuals, but also aurally hint at the haunting to come.

4.4 Exploring Sound in *Ju-on: The Grudge* as a Japanese Haunted House Narrative

Scholarship on *Ju-on* has also examined the film in relation to its portrayal of the haunted house. This is from a visual perspective. McRoy, discussing the haunted house of *Ju-on* in relation to the societal guilt highlighted earlier in the chapter, notes that Kayako and her son 'haunt both the house in which they died – a location that can be understood as a microcosm of a Japanese culture in transformation – and the lives of those mortals unlucky enough to enter their abode.' [728] The transformative nature of the house is best exemplified in its role as a site of male domestic violence, presented in the film's opening scene as the 'epicentre of the *onryou's* unquenchable rage.' [729]

Before examining the unique role of music and sound in this Japanese haunted house narrative, it is essential to discuss the visual spatiality presented in the sound design. When examining the sound design, I will address the work of James Wierzbicki. He writes on the ghostly atmosphere created by the music and sound in *Ju-on* from a comparative analytical perspective, also considering the American remake, *The Grudge* (2004). Wee refers to the house's role in subverting the sanctity of the home and the traditionally-held Japanese beliefs tied to the notion of the familial, comforting space it should represent. Just as Wee explores the meaning of what the home represents as a place of familiarity, Wada-Marciano also addresses the importance of tradition and nostalgia in contemporary Japanese 'ghost' films by linking film settings to feelings of familiarity and repulsion. These feelings are explored by drawing attention to the relevance of urban topography and the specific focus on certain locales in these films. Discussing the locales of Tokyo, Oshima Island and Izu Penisula, all settings in Nakata's *Ringu*, Wada-Marciano notes how 'the remoteness of these areas gives the film a sense of spatial and temporal reality as well as a mythical undercurrent related to the remnants of premodern culture lurking in rural locales.' [730] She specifically relates feelings of familiarity and repulsion towards spaces in Tokyo that are derelict to Julia Kristeva's sense of 'abjection': a human

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[728] McRoy, '13. Case Study: Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's *Ju-on: The Grudge*', 176.
[729] *Ibid*. The *onryou* or *onryō* is a vengeful ghost or grudge spirit.
[730] Wada-Marciano, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 32-33.

reaction to a threatened breakdown in meaning. The loss of nostalgia for pre-modern cultural remnants is presented through the locales of the Japanese 'ghost' films as dysfunctional relics of history and tradition disappearing. [731] Applying her discussion to film examples, Wada-Marciano notes how *Ju-on* exemplifies these '"abject" space[s]' [732] within the contemporary Japanese ghost film catalogue:

> In the case of the *Ju-on* series, the film uses an abandoned and haunted house that conjures J-horror's dual sensibility of space that is both ordinary and familiar and yet isolated, neglected, and dreadful. A sense of claustrophobia is created by the use of an actual house, with the camera work directed by the tight dimensions of a typical Japanese residence. [733]

Here, the camera work is described as the primary cinematic element used to draw attention to the haunted residences' dual spatiality. Wada-Marciano notes the 'spatial banality and the feeling of claustrophobia' [734] created visually by the compartments and alcoves of the house and the camera angles that heighten this. The differences that Wada-Marciano discusses in her work can be tied to the duality that is so intrinsic to Japanese culture. Contradictions such as the logical and illogical, supernatural and the natural are viewed as accepted aspects of a whole experience, with no need for a reconciliation between the two. As Donald Richie explains in the context of Japanese art: '[The] Asian scene (scroll, screen, movie frame) is divided into two areas of space: positive, which is filled, and negative, which is not…it is the combination of the empty and the full which creates the [Japanese] aesthetic experience.' [735] As we will see, this duality also functions sonically through the manifestation of the Japanese aesthetic of *ma,* which is examined in Wierzbicki's analysis. Drawing on Wierzbicki's observations, my audio-visual analysis expands on this by examining the aesthetic conception of sound and the content of the sound effects in terms of the importance of tone colour in traditional Japanese music, particularly in emphasising liminal audio-visual spaces in the film.

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[731] See Julia Kristeva, *Power of Horror: An Essay of Abjection*, Leon S. Roudiez (trans.), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[732] Wada-Marciano, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 33.

[733] Wada-Marcianao, *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*, 19.

[734] *Ibid.*, 19.

[735] Donald Richie, 'Viewing Japanese Films: Some Considerations', *Cinema and cultural identity: reflections on films from Japan, India, and China*, Wimal Dissanayake (ed.), (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 19-20.

Figure 52. A long shot that emphasizes the small compartments and alcoves of the haunted house.

In his paper on sonic content in 'translation' remakes, James Wierzbicki also draws attention to movement in the house that is emphasized by the mise-en-scène and play of action. Wierzbicki's article, however, focuses on the film's music and sound design. It combines an examination of the visual-spatial play, primarily from the perspective of an audio-spatial emphasis on how the ghosts are represented, with an examination of what is so unique about *Ju-on* as a Japanese haunted house narrative.

Wierzbicki's discussion on *Ju-on* is framed as a comparative analysis with Shimizu Takashi's 2004 American remake *The Grudge*, addressing one particular scene and its equivalent remake version and focusing on the effect/affect of horror that is created. The 'attic room' scene Wierzbicki examines, as referenced earlier in this chapter, occurs in the first film chapter, 'Rika', following on from the violent opening montage (0:01:13). Rika, a volunteer for social services, arrives at the house undertaking her new job of helping with the care of an elderly resident who happens to live in the film's haunted house. She hears a noise and goes to investigate.

In his 2015 article, Wierzbicki refers back to his 2009 book chapter 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications', noting a detailed comparison of the 'attic room' scene through the sonic content and timings of these scenes. This scene essentially begins when Rika arrives at the house. She finds it in complete disarray. Sachie, the elderly resident, appears to have been abandoned. There are few sonic events in this scene, and any that are heard emanate from the diegesis as either dialogue or natural sound sources – such as flies buzzing in the abandoned space of the house. Even

when audio-viewers schooled in Japanese or American horror traditions would expect a sonic interruption, Sato Shiro's scoring, and Kitada Masaya and Shibasaki Kenji's sound design, subvert expectations; musical sounds the audio-viewer would not expect to interrupt the action, in turn, have the opposite effect, challenging the dominant classical film score model.

One particular example of this approach is the ability of the characters to hear what would usually be described as non-diegetic audio. In the early scene, Rika is shown carrying the vacuum cleaner into the hall. We hear her make a loud, forced sigh, and then, as she ascends the stairs, a sub-bass soundscape is cued. Rika appears to pause, looking around as if searching for the source of the sound. This pause is then broken as she spies the mess on the landing floor and continues her ascent. However, the sub-bass sound continues to rumble in the background, creating a sense of unease during its elongated decay. A scratching sound above the sub-bass then interrupts her progress further. A similar effect of ostensibly ambiguous sound crossing into the diegesis is heard again as Rika follows the source of the scratching into a bedroom. At this point, the soundtrack's layering is developed further, with a higher-pitched, distorted, electro-acoustic sonority which Wierzbicki identifies as being 'the prolonged stroke of a violin bow across the edge of a large cymbal' [736], cued as Rika's point of view is drawn to the darkness of the window in the bedroom. The sound is allowed to decay before another sharp entry of the manipulated bow stroke described above, as further point of view shots are established. As she turns to leave the room, the scratching is heard again, with the sub-bass coming in over the prolonged, ambient fluctuations of a higher drone. High-pitched sustained string harmonies then enter, layered with other electro-acoustic sounds. A single loud cat meow is heard, followed by a cue of plucked repetitive harp notes. At this point, Rika covers her ears as if hearing the build-up of sounds coming from the non-diegetic score while the seemingly diegetic sounds of the scratching inside the cupboard remain in the foreground of the soundtrack.

Describing the difference between this scene and its equivalent in the remake, Wierzbicki draws attention to the fact that 'the differences have to do not so much with the content of the sound effects or the nature of the accompanying music but, rather, with the amount of time between the onset

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[736] Wierzbicki, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications', 259.

of one sonic 'event' and another.' [737] However, as my audio-visual analysis across this chapter will demonstrate, more significant consideration needs to be given to the aesthetic conception of sound and the content of the sound effects in terms of the importance of tone colour. Not only does this include an application of aesthetics introduced in Chapter Two, but it includes the ambiguity that Donnelly highlights in regard to sounds taking on the function of a non-diegetic score, highlighting an alternative approach to Hollywood scoring practice. The treatment of sound effects in the film blurs the boundaries between the diegetic and the non-diegetic, as later examples in this chapter will highlight, and in the case of the diegetic sound in the opening committing an aural violence against the film score that parallels the visual violence onscreen.

Within the scope of the article, Wierzbicki refers to a temporal difference between *Ju-on* and its remake, noting both the placement of sounds within the visuals and the scene length. The scene described above is compressed in the American remake, *The Grudge* (Shimizu Takashi, 2004)*,* being one minute and twenty-five seconds shorter than the equivalent sequence in *Ju-on.* This is a common trend when comparing equivalent scenes throughout both films in Wierzbicki's publications. [738] The preface to the sudden revelation of what is in the closet heightens the length of this particular scene in *Ju-on*, as Rika's ascent to the upstairs room and then to the taped-up closet are played out at a slow and steady pace. Wierzbicki specifically relates these pace delays to cultural aesthetic differences:

> In *Ju-on*, which fairly revels in framing its sparse sounds with 'substantial silence' that in
> Japanese aesthetic theory is known simply as 'ma' (Yuasa 1989: 183), the primary
> effect/affect – something that intensifies over the course of the entire film – is one of
> suspense. [739]

Here, a Japanese cultural concept is identified and used to highlight how this uniquely Japanese ghost is explicitly represented or at least primarily through audio treatment. The limitations of the article format mean that Wierzbicki's discussion of *ma* does not explain the multi-faceted detail with the

[737] Wierzbicki, 'Subtle differences: Sonic content in 'translation' remakes', *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* 8/2 (June 2015): 161.

[738] See Wierzbicki, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications' (2009), 'Lost in translation? "Ghost music" in recent Japanese *Kaidan* films and their Hollywood remakes' (2010) and 'Subtle differences: Sonic content in 'translation' remakes' (2015).

[739] Wierzbicki, 'Subtle differences: Sonic content in 'translation' remakes', 161.

nuance required. My research seeks to explain the aesthetic of *ma* and its multi-faceted nature more carefully. As discussed in Chapter Two, *ma* is a concept central to how Japanese society perceives space and time. In the case of this example, it highlights the importance of the quality of a transition, where the human and the spiritual worlds cross paths. *Ma* manifests itself in this scene through the aural spacing of sonic events. This is an aspect of the aesthetics of subtraction, in which beauty can be found in the act of repression, a concept stemming from the traditional roots of Japanese culture. Translated as many things, including 'space,' 'interval,' 'pause', or 'opening' [740], *ma* is directly related to music as it provides a rhythmic elasticity in which silence becomes as powerful as sound. *Ma* is present in the interval of space between sound events, even before Rika ascends the stairs. As Wierzbicki asserts:

> Once articulated, the various sounds in the *Ju-on* score are given much more opportunity to shift their timbres before they decay, and often they are surrounded by silences that have the effect not of pauses but simply of 'breathing spaces'. Significantly, most of the *ma* moments in the *Ju-on* score happen in the tension-filled portion of the scene that leads up to the opening of the closet door. [741]

Musical timing and rhythmic space are utilized here to repress sound, preserving calmness and maintaining a quietness that works to create more terrifying moments when that quiet is broken with the deliberate use of sound. This affects the scoring and one's perceptions of the acting in the sequence. For example, Rika's overt pause at the top of the stairs as she hears the sub-bass crossing into the film's diegetic sound world can be described as an example of the kabuki scoring technique of *ma-ai o hakaru*, which translates as 'to gauge the distance or time between two objects or events' [742]: her attempt here to ascertain where a sound should be placed creates the desired audience response. Interestingly, while the audio-viewer may identify the entrance of the sub-bass as beginning to create the mounting tension in this scene, another example of *ma-ai o hakaru* is the diegetic marker created by Rika's actual sigh as she pauses in the hall. The sigh marks a structural division, concluding the

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[740] See Chapter Two's discussion on the meaning of *ma* and its cultural emphasis.
[741] Wierzbicki, 'The Ghostly Noise of J-Horror: Roots and Ramifications', 260.
[742] Komparu, *Noh Theatre Principles and Perspectives*, 70-71.

quieter, naturalistic sound space of the previous shots of her cleaning, and beginning her ascent to the sub-bass sounds and horror that awaits in the upstairs closet.

Figure 53. Rika's sigh before ascending the stairs.

The use of *ma* in *Ju-on* has other functions too. Articulations of *ma* stand in a dualistic relationship to the spatial navigation of the house in *Ju-on*, revealing how this unique cultural concept offers a culturally unique representation of a *Japanese* haunted house, not just through the film's 'culturally inflected images' [743] but also audio-visually. This forms, in turn, another example of the tensions central to the film's story and discourse, and representative of its fuller range of cultural meanings in Japan.

The use of camera angles in *Ju-on* creates a sense of visual claustrophobia. This is primarily achieved by Shimizu's use of an actual old Japanese house rather than a set for the scenes shot inside and around the residence. [744] Japan is well known for its small housing. Publications such as Azby Brown's *The Very Small Home: Japanese Ideas for Living Well in Limited Space* document the boom in Japan's small housing as 'a type of home different in every aspect from the marble-covered

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[743] Wada-Marciano, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 34.
[744] See Takashi Shimizu, in Wheeler Winston Dixon, 'An Interview with Takashi Shimizu', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 22/1 (2005): 15.

mansions of the "bubble economy" of the 1980s', [745] noting how '[a]n unassuming elegance has replaced grand showmanship. The lot size and the floor space are surprisingly small; materials are modest yet pleasing and economical.' [746] Serendipitously, the Japanese house also provides the perfect setting to heighten the claustrophobia a person may feel when confronted by a hostile spiritual presence, as in the case of *Ju-on*. The film presents a number of liminal audio-visual spaces in order to highlight the thin vein between the living and the dead. In discussing the terms of *konoyo* ('this world here') and *anoyo* ('that world way over yonder'), it is logical that there would also be a term in Japanese grammar that represented an interstitial zone: *sonoyo* ('that place nearby') could be used. However, as Bill Ellis observes:

> [N]one of Japan's dominant religions – Shinto, Buddhism, or Christianity – give believers a reason for believing in an intermediary stop for spirits on their way to their final destination. Nevertheless, supernatural legends abound in that country that suggest the world of the dead, especially the recently dead, is in fact very near to the everyday land of the living (1994, 14-15). [747]

Ellis's observation therefore suggests that those who have died are likely to be closer to the human world, and this pervading presence in the living world is heightened through an emphasis of the liminal spaces in which the 'ghosts' continue to remain. The physical setting of *Ju-on* is coupled with camera angles that work to heighten the haunting experience of the house's interior. For example, when Rika first visits the house, giving the audio-viewer their first encounter with its whole outer exterior, point of view shots are used from her perspective, giving the impression of a small, confined space, 'the camera work dictated by the tight dimensions of a typical Japanese residence.' [748] This is emphasized even more, as Rika's viewpoint is often shown focusing on one small area, such as when she hears the grandmother's hand grabbing at the glass door panel after entering the house. Continuing with this focus on narrowed visuals, mid to close range close-ups are used throughout the duration of Rika's time in the house. Static shots are used as Rika moves through the house, panning across to

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[745] Azby Brown, *The Very Small Home: Japanese Ideas for Living Well* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 2005), 7.
[746] Ibid., 7.
[747] Bill Ellis, 'The Haunted Landscapes of Lafcadio Hearn: Old Japan', in *Putting the Supernatural in Its Place: Folklore, the Hypermodern, and the Ethereal*, Jeannie Banks (ed.), (Utah: University of Utah Press, 2015), 199.
[748] Wada-Marciano, 'J-horror: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 33.

follow her actions, and these shots also create a sense of claustrophobia as they only reveal part of the room at a time. Close-up shots are also used for some of the more startling moments, such as when Rika opens the glass panel door after hearing the grandmother reaching out for the glass, the elderly lady's hand slamming down on the floor as Rika opens the door and is startled. The camera occasionally adopts high crane shots to reveal the small space of the house, just as when Rika is shown standing in the hallway of the house, calling out to residents that are not home after she finds the front door to be unlocked.

Figure 54. An example of the high crane shots used to highlight the small space of the house.

The use of sound and music, on the contrary, utilizes *ma* to create a realm of space that is at odds with the claustrophobia presented visually, and this heightens the unease that the characters feel when they enter the house, as in the example highlighted above when Rika first visits the property. This audio-visual opposition is a further example of the duality referenced earlier that, as Richie notes, combines the supposedly empty and the full to produce a uniquely Japanese experience. Wee asserts that '[a] commitment to duality is so intrinsic to the culture that it consistently finds aesthetic and visual expression in a conscious blending of opposites.' [749] The duality in *Ju-on* brings together the natural and the supernatural within a spatial audio-visual exploration that blurs the boundaries between the human and the ghost. This is not uncommon in Japanese film narratives, as, in Japanese culture in general, 'contradictions, including the logical and illogical, the rational and irrational, and the supernatural and natural are necessary and accepted aspects of a complete and holistic experience, and

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[749] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 58.

attempts to reconcile these contradictions are redundant.' [750] The house is at the centre of the spatial tension between the film's visuals and audio, a space that produces the complete experience Wee describes above.

4.5 The sounds of the house(?)

While the opening sequence of *Ju-on* is set inside the house, the audio-viewer is officially introduced to the Saeki residence when Rika first visits the property. This scene occurs before the example of the 'attic scene' discussed previously. It was important to discuss a scene that comes later first because it relates to existing scholarship on the sonic content of the film in connection to Japanese aesthetics in the arts, and to how these aesthetics are used to suggest the blurring of diegetic and non-diegetic audio, thereby challenging dominant film scoring conventions. This scholarship informs my analysis of the scene I will discuss now when Rika first sees the exterior of the Saeki house.

On her first visit to the property Rika is shown walking along, the diegetic naturalistic sounds of birds and insects providing an ambient soundtrack. The audio-viewer adopts her point-of-view as she looks up at the buildings trying to find the right address – the camera pans along in the real-time pace of her walk before cutting back to a front shot of Rika, panning up to gauge her facial reactions. However, when she reaches the house, she suddenly stops in her tracks. Gasping in fright, her reaction is synced with the sonic marker of a fluctuating electro-acoustic sound abruptly interrupting the previously ambient soundtrack. The camera zooms out in order to capture the full extent of her surprise. The sound is sustained as the camera moves behind Rika, panning upwards and across to the left as if trying to follow the audio source. However, there is no visible source in the diegesis for the sound heard at this point. Instead, it is an unidentifiable sonic marker that calls for attention. The sound, which lies in '[t]he trajectory between diegetic and non-diegetic [and] highlights a gap in our understanding, a place of destabilization and ambiguity' [751], is an example of Stilwell's 'fantastical gap', discussed further in Chapter One. It is 'fantastical because it changes the state, not only of the filmic moment, but also of the observer's relationship to it.' [752] This is the ambiguity of the sound

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[750] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 59.
[751] Robynn J. Stilwell, 'The fantastical gap between diegetic and non-diegetic', *Beyond the Soundtrack*, Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (eds.), (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007): 186.
[752] *Ibid*., 200.

source, an audible contrast to the previous natural ambient sounds of the sequence, a sonic eruption that is unnerving and unnatural, but encourages 'great narrative and experiential import.' [753]

Figure 55. Rika, arriving at the house is startled by her sudden ability to hear something she possibly should not.

After the camera pans towards the top of the house, it suddenly cuts to a much higher angle, accompanied by the loud, sustained, electro-acoustic drone fluctuating in tone, delivering a pulse-like fluctuation in sound, mixed with the naturalistic sounds heard previously. The camera then cuts to an extreme close-up shot of the residence's house name sign; the shot cut is marked by a second attack of electro-acoustic drone, overlapping the decay of the former drone's first entry. The camera cuts to the same crane shot as before as Rika is shown entering the gateway at the front of the house, walking off-screen as the decay of the amplified drone is heard. This is then interrupted by the realistic sound of the house's doorbell being rung. The camera adopts a static contextual shot of Rika standing at the door, having pressed the bell. While the sound of the doorbell seemingly restores normality at this point, the coupling of the unusual camera angles in this shot, with the aural colouration used to represent Rika's reaction to the house, are thematic constructs directly related to the domestic space. The ambiguous nature of the electro-acoustic sounds represent a presence Rika senses that, while ambiguous in terms of the sound source, can be interpreted as coming from the house itself. This is implied by the reverberating drone entry synced with Rika's first sighting of the front of the house

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[753] Stilwell, 'The fantastical gap between diegetic and non-diegetic', 200.

from the gateway, and the voyeuristic high-angle shot that is accompanied by the sustained electronic pulsing sound effect.

Figure 56. The house 'watching' Rika's arrival.

John Petty argues that the house itself in *Ju-on* takes the lead role within the film in relation to the spirits. Discussing the traditional visual representation of the *yūrei*, Petty notes that, 'according to legend, *yūrei* are often accompanied by *hitodama* ...considered to be the spirit of a newly dead person released from the body, and seeing a *hitodama* was considered a premonition of one's impending demise.' [754] More importantly, *hitodama* were never considered as individual spirits, as such, but as parts of the spirit itself. This is how the house holding the *urami* is viewed by Petty, with Kayako, Toshio and Takeo taking on the roles of the *hitodama* associated with the house. As Petty explains, 'the two formerly-human ghosts lose their centrality and assume a secondary role that purges the film's antagonist – the house/ *yūrei* – of even the slightest shred of humanity. Kayoko and Toshio, therefore, act as agents of the house, enabling the spread of the curse from one person to another.' [755]

Petty also connects the house's role as an antagonist to the non-linearity of the film's storyline and the lack of determination of exactly how many years the storyline runs over. He explains this by noting how 'Shimizu's technique is an extreme form of dialectical montage (what Eisenstein did with images, Shimizu does with entire scenes) but one that might be interpreted as the point of view of the

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[754] John E. Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic' (MSc diss., University of North Texas, 2011), 163-164.
[755] *Ibid*., 164.

house – who can say how an animate object might perceive time and the progression of events?' [756] As Petty concludes: 'Seen from that point of view, the non-linear narrative actually acts as a means of defining and explicating character for a presence in the film that is largely overlooked.' [757] I argue that the use of sound in the film supports this theory that the house is, in fact, the primary character of the film. When the audio-viewer is first introduced to the house, it is recognised as the central platform upon which the fragility of the family unit has been revealed. This is heightened by the use of sound in the scene where Rika arrives, when we are first introduced to the house through unidentifiable low-frequency rumbles and fluctuating jolts of electro-acoustic drones that all link the spiritual wrath of the murdered wife to the instability of the very foundations of the home. Furthermore, as I will argue later in this chapter, the house has its own leitmotif.

Explaining ghost narratives, Katarzyna Marak argues (citing Lim) that 'space remembers, and the haunted place is in fact "a space of recollection charged with affect: alternately fearsome, thrilling, or tragic" (Lim 2009: 206).' [758] This quotation emphasises Petty's recognition of the house as being something more, as actually having a persona, as a space that is alive and can even recall, as suggested in the final scene of the film in which Rika literally takes the place of Kayako and suffers the same death at the hands of Takeo. This concept of the house being the antagonist is connected to the audio-spatial play that is expressed through the example of *ma*. The framing of sonic events through the use of *ma* from when Rika first sees the house's exterior to when she is inside the house and finds Toshio in the closet, invite the audio-viewer to seek meaning from these pregnant pauses, meaning that is directly tied to a sense of presence that comes from the house itself.

Like *Ju-on*, traditional American horror stories reinforce the idea that the house has 'an individuality of its own'. [759] In *The Haunting* (1963), Marak suggests, 'Hill House does not simply provide a field for the ghosts or supernatural phenomena that occur inside it, but encompasses those ghosts and phenomena, bringing them together and governing them into one united organism. In a

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[756] Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic', 165.
[757] *Ibid*., 165.
[758] Bliss Lim cited in Katarzyna Marak, *Japanese and American Horror: A Comparative Study of Film, Fiction, Graphic Novels and Video Games* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.), 50.
[759] Marak, *Japanese and American Horror: A Comparative Study of Film, Fiction, Graphic Novels and Video Games*, 26.

way, it is not that Hill House is haunted, but it is Hill House that haunts its guests.' [760] *Ju-on* brings its mysterious forces together under the roof of the Saeki residence, which is very much part of a united organism similar to that of Hill House.

The 'affect' of the house is presented in the film through a sound cue that challenges the boundaries of non-diegetic and diegetic definitions, and breaks with the classical Hollywood scoring convention that music and sound should be 'inaudible' and subordinate to the other narrative vehicles, primarily the visuals. However, in *Ju-on,* there are three instances when the same unidentified sound effect is 'heard' by three different characters in the same spot of the house. In the second film vignette, titled 'Katsuya', Hitomi, the sister of Katsuya, visits her brother and his wife, Kazumi, who are also the son and daughter-in-law of the abandoned elderly lady Sachie introduced at the beginning of the film. Unknown to Hitomi, Kazumi is dead, and Katsuya is sitting upstairs with her. While Hitomi unpacks the food shopping, the diegetic sounds of rustling bags and her movement is foregrounded on the soundtrack. In addition, a sub-bass frequency is sustained throughout the sequence. A static shot is used at this point, the camera positioned down the hallway, showing Hitomi's profile in the kitchen. (0:24:59) After a few seconds, the camera shot almost shakes, slowly rising upwards, keeping the same focal point. As it does, the bass frequencies become more prominent and merge into a sustained warm synthesized sound pitched at C4. The diegetic ambient sounds remain high in the mix until the shot begins to move up to reveal the upstairs floor through the stair bars, and a sub-bass rumble enters. The shot moves higher still to show Katsuya carrying Kazumi's body along the landing, accompanied by the sustained synthesized pitch of C4 and the fading volume decay of the first rumble. The shot then remains fairly static, focused on a door as Katsuya opens it and the sustained synthesized pitch descends to a B3. Another rumble enters as Katsuya enters another room, the shot filled with the back of the door. It then closes loudly behind him. The shot cuts back downstairs again, resuming a point of view from the hallway as Hitomi reacts and calls out Kazumi's name with the sustained synth pitch-shifting back up to C4 and another rumble entering over the decay of its previous entry. As she walks towards the stairs, looking up, it is then that a very high-pitched electronic ringing frequency enters the

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[760] Marak, *Japanese and American Horror: A Comparative Study of Film, Fiction, Graphic Novels and Video Games*, 26.

audio track, the sustained pitch of C4 heard underneath and another sub-bass rumble cue entering with the buzzing.

Figure 57. Hitomi hears the high-pitched buzzing sound.

This much higher sound is heard not only by the audio-viewer but apparently by Hitomi herself. She puts her fingers to her temple, squinting her eyes as if repulsed by what she is hearing. As she opens her eyes, the synthesizer shifts up in pitch chromatically to a C#4. Hitomi then looks at and touches the staircase wall as if identifying this as the sound source, feeling for it in the physicality of the house, and again implying that the audio may be coming from the house itself. Her gaze at first goes to the wall, but then she averts her attention up the stairs as she follows her hand up the staircase.

Not much later in the same vignette, Katsuya also hears the same high-pitched frequency. After forcing his sister to leave the house, the camera cuts to a static position mid-staircase level. Katsuya walks into the shot as he does so, standing in the same position as his sister, the high-pitched electronic ringing frequency entering again. Prior to this sound's entry, the sub-bass frequency that remains drone-like across the scene is still present. Its presence is starker in this shot as the previous shot featured the harsh diegetic sound of rain as Hitomi stands outside the house after her exit. The ambient sound of rain in the background is still heard when the shot cuts to Katsuya, joining the sub-bass frequency. Katsuya shakes his head uncontrollably upon hearing the high-pitched ringing, pressing his temple as he also hears the ambiguous sound effect.

Another repeated low electronic rumble follows on immediately from this ringing, joined by the layered sound of multiple detuned bells placed lower in the mix with the rumble, the ambient sound of the rain also still present. Katsuya's mannerisms then change as he slowly opens his eyes, showing visual signs of being possessed by the spirit of Takeo – and his facial expression darkening. As his heavy breathing becomes foregrounded on the audio track, so too does the bass rumble, which increases in volume. Katsuya then cracks his neck, mimicking Takeo's movements in the film's opening scene.

Figure 58. Katsuya hears the buzzing/ringing sound.

The high-pitched ringing sound both Hitomi and Katsuya hear and feel can be described as a sound design leitmotif of the house. Synced to the same visual both times it is heard, the status of this buzzing/ringing sound is confirmed in the final vignette titled 'Kayako', when Rika returns to the house, looking for her friend, Mariko, who is Toshio's teacher and is paying a home visit. The timbral quality of the high-pitched ringing is slightly different each time it is heard, but once again, it is heard from the same visual synch spot. Rika starts to run up the stairs in search of her friend but is physically halted by the leitmotif that now has more of a metallic buzzing quality layered over the ringing and two additional, heavily distorted gong-like sound cues. The first of these sounds produces two pitches together, C4 and C6, followed by the pitch of G4 delivered with a breath-like overlay effect. The house leitmotif, as demonstrated in the three examples above, arguably belongs in the same world as the characters but also the world of the 'ghosts' that reside there too. This is linked to the fact that in

Japanese culture, the borders between the world of the living (*konoyo*) and the world of the dead (*anoyo*) are close together and, therefore, there exists a certain permeability of marked entry points where the world of the dead and the living meet. The house in *Ju-on* is such a place; through it, Kayako and her son enter the world of the living. The fact that this distinct buzzing/ringing sound bridges the diegetic and non-diegetic sound worlds is a sonic reflection of this.

Figure 59. Rika hears the buzzing sound before she meets her fate.

The use of this leitmotivic ringing sound has a fluctuating timbre each time it is heard, particularly with the buzzing nature of the final cue when Rika hears it. Each of its entries marks the character's encounters with the spiritual world, effectively the curse that has attached itself to Rika, Katsuya and Hitomi. Opening considerations of sound and visuals here to representations of Japanese cultural concepts, unsurprisingly, opens a range of further, relevant connotations. For example, the fluctuating timbre of the audio cue Rika hears could suggest the onomatopoeic *dorodoro* flute-and-drum gesture used in kabuki theatre as an aural signifier of a spirit's presence. However, the sound colour of a noise-like electronic buzzing is closer to the Japanese aesthetic example of *sawari*, especially when exploring the performance technique as an example of how 'one sound is an act that could have many meanings and implications, but in Japanese music, the point is that a single sound has *sawari*. In short, it is noise-like. Compared to Western musical sound, it is extremely complex, as

it contains many component sounds that are active within it.' [761] As explained in Chapter Two, *sawari* is just one example of a Japanese sensitivity to sound colour. The sound produced by *sawari*, while creating pleasing natural buzzing sonorities, presents multiple meanings in its noise-like production. This means that the *sawari* can therefore be interpreted as mirroring the desired effect of the electronic high-pitched buzzing/ringing sounds that the characters hear in the film's distinct sound colours – colours whose complexity lies partly in the ambiguity of their point of origin in the film's sound world and their blurring of the boundaries between sound-design and music, beyond being directly connected to the house in *Ju-on* by the fact that the characters only hear this sound inside the house.

The lack of containment helps to distinguish *Ju-on's* narrative from the majority of American haunted house motifs. Unlike traditional Euro-American haunted house narratives where ghostly activity is emitted from a sole site that people encounter, in Japanese narratives, spirits are 'rarely bound to particular places – instead, they follow people or objects, since their sentiment at the moment of their death is more important than the place of their death.' [762] The house in the film is the central antagonist: regardless of the fact that those who are affected by the curse may die in various locations, they have come into some kind of contact or have somehow been affected by the influence of the house in *Ju-on*. This is demonstrated further by the fourth film vignette, 'Tōyoma', in which the titular retired policeman and an original officer who investigated the initial Saeki deaths returns to the house to burn it down after being contacted by police over incidents and deaths tied to the house. He is disrupted from setting it alight once in the house when he seemingly opens a door into the future, in which it is inferred that he sees his own daughter, Izumi, as a teenager fleeing from the house. In the previous scene, the audio-viewer is introduced to her as a prepubescent child. This cross-time dimensional ability of the house reveals moments from the future that are also entangled with the past and the present. As Bliss Cua Lim observes, '[b]oth doomed but still alive in nonidentical times, Toyama and his daughter, Izumi, do not inhabit the same calendrical now, but in this terrible place, homogeneous time shatters as those shrouded in the house's fatal residue meet in an immiscible,

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[761] Takemitsu Tōru, 'Tōru Takemitsu, on Sawari', Hugh De Ferranti and Yayoi Uno Everett (annotated and trans.) in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music*, Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (eds.), (Connecticut: Wesleyan Univesity Press, 2004), 202.
[762] Marak, *Japanese and American Horror: A Comparative Study of Film, Fiction, Graphic Novels and Video Games*, 41.

momentarily dovetailing meanwhile.' [763] As in the example of the nonsynchronous encounter between Tōyama and his daughter, *Ju-on* reworks a conventional haunted house tale's traumatic space through what Lim describes as the 'temporal and spatial reach of the terrible place' [764]. Considering that 'the curse of *Ju-on* is place-rooted but peripatetic,' [765] it can be argued that this unmooring of the house – that it can 'move' like a ghost or person – parallels the ambiguity of diegetic/non-diegetic sounds in the film, like the buzzing/ringing sound that haunts the characters.

4.6 Audio Challenges and the concept of *yūgen* in the sound design of *Ju-on: The Grudge*

McRoy notes how *Ju-on* is a film 'that disallows its characters and, by extension, its audience, access to those conventional "safe spaces" to which people most commonly retreat when the tension escalates or becomes too much to take… [P]ulling the covers up over one's head does not provide a buffer zone but, instead, reveals that the monster you most fear has been in the bed with you the whole time.' [766] This is a direct reference to Hitomi's fate once she returns to her high-rise apartment building. After thinking that her brother-in-law is standing outside her apartment after he calls her and she seemingly sees him through the door peephole, Hitomi answers the door to find no one there, but the sound of macabre vocal croaking coming out of the phone. Throwing it to the ground, she runs back into her apartment, unplugs the landline and climbs into bed. McRoy's quotation refers to what happens to Hitomi next: she literally disappears under the covers of her own bed after Kayako appears beneath the same covers and drags her into nothingness, the duvet on the bed flattening as if no one was ever under it, and Hitomi's scream disappearing with her.

However, the 'safe space' aspect that McRoy draws upon does not solely relate to the visual recognition that the audio-viewer may traditionally associate with hiding under the bed covers. This case also relates to how sound is relevant in a safe environment and how *Ju-on* uses sound to subvert expectation. This is firstly demonstrated through the example of Katsuya's voice on the phone, heard clearly in a sound close-up. What Michel Chion describes as 'characteristic filtering' [767] adopts

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[763] Lim Bliss Cua, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique (*Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 210.
[764] *Ibid*., 207.
[765] Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*, 207.
[766] McRoy, 'Case Study: Cinematic Hybridity in Shimizu Takashi's Ju-on: The Grudge', 181-182.
[767] Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 92.

Hitomi's subjective point of audition. Hitomi, recognising her brother's voice, responds to him with relief by repeating his name in a panicked mode and collapsing onto the kitchen chair, confirming the comfort she finds in a sound she identifies with. However, in this scene, more specifically, the example of the television also works to bring reassurance to Hitomi. After she hides under the covers, she looks around and reaches for the television remote. However, the familiar sound of the reporter presenting a local news story suddenly distorts as the image flickers. The visual becomes stretched with an additional distorted vocal sound heard over the reporter's dialogue. Eventually, the image freezes with the face of the presenter fully distorted and the same throat croaking heard until the television cuts off, following Hitomi's efforts to turn the power off. A media device that uses audio-visual technology to bring comfort to a quiet, empty home thus threatens the safe space, unleashing the throaty crackle of sound that highlights the threat that is now in the room: Kayako. William Whittington comments on the horrific effect of an unknown sound source:

> [S]ound designers understand that to reveal the truth about a sound source is to unmask its mystery and allure and consequently compromise its intention of establishing a link to the uncanny. On this point, they *must* remain silent. Part of the effectiveness of a horror sound effect resides in its naming as well as its evocation of dark emotion. In general, the depth and shocking nature of any hidden horror depends on the conspiracy of silence that surrounds its origin. [768]

Whittington's statement applies to his "universal" discussion on horror sound design. However, I argue that a previous revelation of one of the spirits' signature sounds used throughout *Ju-on* is an exception to this statement. Early in the film, the audio-viewer is directly introduced to the two spirits that dominate *Ju-on's* haunting narrative: Kayako and Toshio. After discovering Toshio's spirit, Rika, the support worker who is caring for the new owners' resident mother, is confronted by Kayako as she visibly appears when she attacks Sachi. It is later confirmed that the grandmother dies following Kayako's attack. Rika's meeting with Kayako occurs just over thirteen minutes into the film, as the spirit revealed as a black shadow with long hair descends over Sachi's body. At this point, the underscoring is filled with electro-acoustic tones that produce a gong-like timbre that pulsates and

[768] William Whittington, 'Horror Sound Design', *A Companion to the Horror Film,* Harry M. Benshoff (ed.), (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc., [2014], 2017), 169.

throbs, joined by a wordless female chorus repeating the vowel sound 'oh'. Slithers of electronic metallic sounds intermittently enter, building tension. As the full visual representation of Kayako is revealed in the frame, in a long shot, her appearance is sonically cued by a swell of rising and falling pitches overlaid by a loud percussive thud that sounds like a piano being dropped to the ground. This cues a wordless chorus of lower male voices delivering an ascending and descending scalic passage, with a female choral entry fading into the background momentarily upon the male chorus' first entry point. A final cacophony of sound is created by all these musical elements coming together, building to an electro-acoustic percussion crash synced with an extreme close-up of Kayako's eyes locking on Rika. The cue maintains the same dynamic level and cuts off as the final visual frame reveals Toshio standing in the doorway and looking down on Rika, who has fainted.

Figure 60. Hitomi's safe space in front of the screen is invaded.

Overlapping with this sustained underscoring is the onscreen sound directly tied to Kayako. Hers is not a silent haunting. Before the cut to the long shot of the room, revealing Kayako's full visual presentation, what the audio-viewer can infer to be vocal sounds produced by Kayako are unleashed in the form of gargling, rattling throat sounds. The camera, at this point, is focused on Rika's face in a close-up. Upon hearing the sound, Rika's eyes move from looking down at Sachie up to something positioned behind the camera, informing the audio-viewer that this is the source of the strange sound because of Rika's immediate reaction to it. The camera then confirms this by reversing the shot to show precisely what Rika has seen and what is producing this sound: Kayako. This moment is partly

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in conflict with Whittington's observation above, as it reveals the sound source in the film's first half. This is because the sound is to be associated with Kayako throughout as her leitmotif. As Joseph Christopher Schaub observes, 'Kayako's appearance is usually accompanied by her signature sound, a guttural staccato utterance, which is, of course, terrifying as a sound effect, but it also serves a narrative purpose. It tells us that Kayako is making a stuttering attempt to communicate something.' [769] What exactly she is trying to communicate is never fully revealed; why she cannot reveal it is communicated. This small resolution remains loyal to Whittington's observation, as it is only in the final chapter of the film when Rika returns to the house that the full understanding of why, when Toshio can exchange dialogue, the spirit of his mother can only produce this one sound. This falls in line with Whittington's additional comment that '[w]hat the sound effects do not offer is enough information to make an intellectual evaluation of the situation.' [770] This is true in the case of Kayako's gargling as it is only fully clarified when Rika suffers the death Kayako experienced at the hands of Takeo, and the audio-viewer is invited to recognise that this sound is all that can be produced once Kayako's neck has been broken by the hands of her husband.

In summary, Kayako's macabre leitmotif produces an acoustic reveal. Initially, the revelation of this gurgling sound produced by Kayako heard early on in *Ju-on* seems primarily used to create a response of terror from the audio-viewer. [771] The realisation at the end of the film that this throaty croak is actually the sound of a woman's life choked out by the hands of patriarchal violence adds a tragic tone to its use in the film, connected to contemporary socio-cultural issues in contemporary Japan. Yet this dual meaning can also be read to represent a duality directly related to the darker, occult sense of beauty known as the older, Japanese concept of *yūgen,* introduced in Chapter Two. Komparu Kunio describes how the otherworldly nature that comes from the concept 'expresses profundity and evanescence detached from reality and indicates a mystical state in which beauty is but a premise, something of an unknowable nature. Thus, yūgen is not something that can be apprehended

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[769] Joseph Christopher Schaub, 'When Cute Becomes Scary: The Young Female in Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', in *The Oxford Handbook of Film and Media Studies*, Robert P. Kolker (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2008] 2018), 13.
[770] Whittington, 'Horror Sound Design', 177.
[771] During the interview held on 25th March 2015, composer Ashiya Gary commented on Shimizu using his own voice for the croaking vocal effect: 'The music does not have much to do with that actually, but that sound happened to be produced by Shimizu-san and that was the kind of his, to make that noise was something he had done since childhood and he wanted to use it so many times, even before *Ju-on* when he did the short movie he used that voice already.'

intellectually; rather, it exists subjectively for the audience, beyond the mere visual level.' [772] The final part of this quotation aligns itself with other cinematic elements, including mise-en-scene in the example of *Gojira* (Honda, 1954) that Petty presents in his study – and, as I argue here, also through sound.

The Japanese aesthetic idea can be paired with the sound of Kayoko via the playwright Zeami's infusion of *yūgen* with Noh and his recognition that all characters should be imbued with *yūgen*, even demons. As Petty notes, 'the supernatural creatures […] – *onryo*, *yūrei*, *kami*, and *yokai*, for example – are often seen as possessing darkly terrible beauty, demonstrating *yūgen* even in their ability to terrify.' [773] John Petty likens Kayako's visual appearance to the concept. He describes how her black and white image embodies the concept of *yūgen* as 'a dark, mysterious, sometimes disturbing beauty' [774] and also notes that 'the long, unkempt hair flowing over her face is a cultural symbol of madness, but there is nothing inherently horrific in the character.' [775] However, *yūgen*, like the concepts of *wabi sabi* and *aware*, is derived from an appreciation of, and a sensitivity to, that which lies beneath a thing's outer appearance. In this example, it is the sound beyond the outer recognition of Kayako and the melancholia behind the rattling croak that is produced from her ghostly throat. The *yūgen* is in the sadness and the suffering she faced as a victim, her voice, agency and life taken away from her, so all she can do is reap her revenge on the society that deprives her of this voice. She possesses *yūgen* in her very ability to use this sound to terrify. At the same time this sound sends chills down the audio-viewer's spine, appearance and reality are obscured, attracting the audio-viewer through the dark beauty of *yūgen* and that which exists beyond the seen.

During the sequence in which the visual and audio of Kayako are brought together, another aural connection is made to Japanese aesthetics within the sound design. While it is not directly related to the concept of *yūgen* in the same way that Kayako's missing voice is, it works to challenge the audio-viewer's perception of the soundtrack. It creates a sense of ambiguity that is resonant with the rest of the film. After Rika encounters Kayako for the first time and faints, Toshio also appears at this

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[772] Komparu, *The Noh Theater: principles and perspectives*, 14.
[773] Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic', 32.
[774] *Ibid*., 32.
[775] *Ibid*., 34.

point in his more human form. The entry of a heavily manipulated cat's meow accompanies a panning shot from Rika on the floor up to the sequence's final visual frame, revealing Toshio standing in the doorway looking down at Rika before cutting to a black screen. Throughout the film, this distorted, high-pitched cat meow is linked continuously with Toshio and his association with his deceased pet. It is a subtle sonic reminder of the earlier scene in which Rika finds a black cat in the cupboard only to discover Toshio, who suddenly appears sat on the closet shelf after the cat meows and walks to him. It also foreshadows Toshio's own aural signature and the fact that 'the soundtrack design cannot be trusted in a horror film', [776] as the next time the meow is heard is from an off-screen source as Kazumi enters her bedroom, making the audio-viewer assume that it is the sound of Toshio's pet cat. However, as Kazumi's husband returns home later in the sequence to find her barely responding, he discovers Toshio hiding at the side of the bed, hissing at the husband like a defensive cat, and literally issuing the meow of the cat that has been heard all along from his own mouth. This moment creates a level of ambiguity, an audio shift that challenges the audio-viewer as the previous meows heard throughout the film may not necessarily have been the cat: it could have been Toshio all along. This dramatic shift may, in turn, cause the audio-viewer to question the meaning of other sound sources in the film and the boundaries between the human and spirit world.

Figure 61. Toshio's aural calling card.

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[776] William Whittington, 'Horror Sound Design', 177.

Toshio's death is never confirmed; he is only known to be missing. Jessica Balanzategui suggests that the cat's drowning could function as a signifier for the boy's unrepresented death and that he 'emits a cat's squeal, further reinforcing the way the cat's death comes to stand in for Toshio's own, unwitnessed trauma.' [777] The ghostly appearance of Toshio and his ability to appear and disappear in unusual places in the film implies the boy's death. Therefore, replacing dialogue with a cat's meow may represent an aspect of stolen youth – that Toshio has died young and clings to the one thing from his childhood that is close to him and subsequently also murdered (his pet). Like his mother's leitmotif, Toshio's meowing, reinterpreted as an aural symbol of lost youth can also be said to possess *yūgen*. As Balanzategui adds, 'Toshio's cat sounds metonymize the trauma inflicted upon him by his father, while indicating how the child draws his spectral force from this trauma to impose it back upon the adult society that failed him.' [778] Therefore, it is unsurprising that this animistic sound alludes to the darker side of Toshio's role in the film. He haunts alongside his mother and bears responsibility for the deaths of some of the film's victims. As a result of his ghostly representation in the film, his voice separates him from the more human characteristics the audio-viewer might expect of a little boy.

4.7 *Ju-on: The Grudge* as a representation of butoh and *wabi sabi*

While Toshio may be paired with a more animistic representation of a spirit through the black cat, his mother, Kayako, is portrayed using a visual representation tied directly to dance and sound, delivering a rawer humanism within her outwardly terrifying portrayal. This portrayal, I argue, relates to butoh, the Japanese contemporary performance art form presented in Chapter Two and its associations with the aesthetic concept of *wabi sabi*. Butoh's 'basic material is the body itself in changing conditions,' [779] also described as 'the morphing body,' [780] as to morph is to change. One of the biggest changes that the body goes through is obviously the change from life to death, and Kayako represents a figure of morphology through her journey between these states, with those changes tied to circumstances of brutality inflicted on her body. It is therefore fitting that she should not only be presented as a visually striking, otherworldly presence in the living world but can also be interpreted to be delivering movement and interactions that are components of a dance form that works to 'turn

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[777] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema,* 207-208.
[778] *Ibid*., 208.
[779] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 11.
[780] *Ibid*., 44.

back time and investigate… in basic terms […the] human body, and, even more broadly, the human.' [781]

As already explained earlier in this chapter, Kayako's damaged voice ties her to human fragility. She is in a state of flux between human and ghostly existences, an imperfect entity that is articulated by the belief in Japanese society 'that anyone who died in a state of heightened emotional stress would be doomed to return to the world to plague the living.' [782] However, Kayako cannot be laid to rest. Her grudge is unending. She is an imperfection that defies understanding, but there is a beauty to her broken humanity that aligns itself with the concepts of *yūgen* as well as *wabi sabi*, which is 'related to finding beauty in what is apparently flawed or incomplete and certainly perishable and fleeting.' [783] Physical beauty is accented by the fact that Kayako's face, while white to represent a disquieting corpse, like Toshio, also implying he is not a spirit, is not inherently grotesque, as when she appears in Hitomi's apartment underneath the bedcovers: she is not repulsive but 'terrifying without being horrible, as befits Shimizu's overall aesthetic'. [784]

Wabi sabi can be read into the temporality of Kayako's seemingly projected beauty – in the glimmer of humanity she fleetingly projects before her monstrosity surfaces via her relentlessly vengeful desire to kill innocent people. More directly, the connection with the concept of *wabi sabi* is cultivated through butoh in its ability to embody 'the awkward, the painful, and the messy' [785], as 'its metaphysical structure does not require the dancer to seek perfection.' [786] The dance form resonates with the weakness of the body, unlike Western dance which resonates with the strength and, in some traditions (ballet for example), idealized forms of the human body. A connection is also established as Sondra Fraliegh observes how '[w]abi simplicity in the tendency to value the creatively odd and human movement over the norms of institutionalized morality pervades butoh and Zen.' [787] These values can be argued to manifest through Kayako's unusual movement and physicality.

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[781] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 4.
[782] Sumpter, 'From Scrolls to Prints to Moving Pictures: Iconographic Ghost Imagery from Pre-Modern Japan to The Contemporary Horror Film', 9
[783] Călin Lupiţu, 'The Night Parade': Experiencing the folklore-based Japanese imaginary between Wabisabi and the uncanny', *CAESURA* 1/2 (2014), 38.
[784] Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic', 159.
[785] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 76.
[786] *Ibid.*, 76.
[787] *Ibid.*, 169.

Figure 62. Kayako's butoh-like movements.

There are several sequences in the film in which Kayako is shown approaching her victims from the top of the flight of stairs in the house. She lies on her stomach and moves down the stairs, creating contortions that are spider-like and disjointed, her body placed in unusual and uncomfortable-looking positions. One of the most prominent examples occurs during the film's conclusion, when Rika returns to the house to rescue her friend, Mariko. After Mariko falls victim to Kayako, Rika finds herself face-to-face with Kayako in the attic. Rika, underscored by a gong entry, dashes down the stairs only to run past the hallway mirror and momentarily see someone else's reflection instead of her own. After realising that during every recent moment she or someone else has made some kind of contact with the ghost have done so peering through splayed fingers, she half-shields her face with her fingers: she sees Kayako in her reflection as she once again peeks through splayed fingers. Through an effective cinematic rhyme, the audio-viewer is invited to recognise Kayako's human nature as she too hid from the violence inflicted on her, peeking through her fingers in fear, just as Rika does. Kayako's affiliation with human nature is shown in the reflection not as a blood stained corpse, but more along the lines of a *yūrei*, her long dark hair flowing and her simple white attire reflecting an image of innocence: 'traditional families will bury a white kimono with their loved one for use in the afterlife, as white is considered the color of purity, a color usually reserved for priests and the dead.' [788] These

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[788] Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic', 162-163.

visual characteristics remind the audio-viewer of the tragic way in which she died, and can be interpreted to suggest a sense of *yūgen*, as Kayako's human beauty is briefly captured. In this sequence, Shimizu manipulates identification by deploying the cinematic techniques of flashbacks and a view in the mirror 'to create the conditions under which audience members can take on prosthetic memories.' [789] Similarly Landsberg notes that 'cinematic identification can enable viewers to acquire prosthetic memories.' [790] For example at this moment in the film, it positions us to see the world through Rika's eyes. As Lim summarises, 'Rika's vision of doubleness as Kayako at the threshold of the former's demise, allows one to speculate that all the other women Takeo haunted and killed are placeholders for the wife he first murdered on suspicion of adultery.' [791]

After experiencing another vision of Kayako, Rika stands gasping in the hallway at the bottom of the stairs. A high-pitched metallic resonance enters the soundtrack. Rika recoils, placing her hand on her temple. This is the leitmotif of the house, returning motivically. However, this time Kayako's full audio-visual reveal answers the leitmotif as the thud of a body is heard upstairs. The image track cuts to an over-the-shoulder shot accompanied by the diegetic sounds of what appears to be a plastic tarp being dragged along. The upstairs door creaks open loudly as the audio-viewer anticipates Kayako's descent.

The descent at this point in the film presents Kayako's full bodily form in a number of contorted and abstract movements that can be straightforwardly related to the premise of butoh as a form that expresses content over formal structure. 'Butoh's movements can be characterized as an uncomfortable and deeply unsettling array of painful bodily contortions, which, in its multi-layered avant-garde style, is a literal embodiment for trauma that rallies against Japan's postwar progressive time consciousness' [792], as will be expanded on below. As Kayako starts to move down the stairs, she does so by moving on her stomach. Before this is confirmed by a visual, a squelching sound effect is heard, sounding as if a wet, decaying mass is being dragged across the floor. The sounds of dripping water are also layered over the squelching audio effects. Kayako's descent down the stairs on her

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[789] Alison Landsberg, 'Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture', in Memory and popular film, Paul Grainge (ed.), (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 154.
[790] Ibid., 154.
[791] Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique,* 212-213.
[792] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema*, 199.

stomach is a nod to the basic butoh walk of *hokotai*, in which the weight of the torso drops down after the knees have given in:

> The body grounds so the head can float or hang, and the entire body seems light – as the deep roots of a tree allow sway in the limbs. The small steps skirt the ground slowly and continuously without inflection. The feet don't lift from the floor but slide along, remaining flat and in light contact, skimming eternally along. [793]

Kayako's movement is more of a hybrid version of *hokotai* and butoh, hence its description being a nod to the basic walk. This is because her movements offer a heaviness and reveal a body broken and in pain that is unique, while still capturing the essence of butoh's walking principle.

This development of the form in Kayako's movement can also be linked to the butoh technique of shedding, in which the social body is discarded. Fraleigh defines this social body as connoting 'the body of cultural manners and customs – social habits, obligations, and expectations.' [794] While shedding is viewed as an active ingredient of the floating nature as described above, it 'can counter such antigravity intentions with heaviness, suddenly "cutting the floating power."' [795] Kayako moves her arms and head in a deliberate, carefully placed manner, contorting at odd angles to heighten her unnatural presence. What is alarming about these movements are the amplified diegetic crackling noises of Kayako's bones as she contorts and rotates her neck and places her hand on each step. Her eyes remain fixed on Rika, whose perspective the audio-viewer has adopted.

The revolting squelching and crackling sounds of Kayako's body emphasise the violence inflicted on her body. The pain inflicted on the body is further emphasised by extreme registers of sound design accompanying them. A high-pitched string sound sustains a ringing quality, similar in acoustic to the metallic chime-like ringing of the house's leitmotif that Rika and the other cursed victims hear previously. However, the audio cue here is more piercing, and there is a crescendo as the camera cuts to Rika's face looking up at the stairs and wondering what will appear. This ringing is also coupled with a bass line of sustained, synthesized string tones pitched around F2. The sounds of Kayako's bodily movement puncture this sustained sound, which are also joined by bursts of heavily

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[793] Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 48.
[794] *Ibid.*, 52.
[795] *Ibid.*, 52.

manipulated drum rolls bathed in reverberation, and a synthesised sound wash low in the mix. The drum roll consists of sounds that match the onomatopoeic quality: vocalizing the gesture's name is almost like the sound of bones being played, in a striking connection to the *dorodoro* drum technique used in the kabuki theatre to mark the presence of something supernatural. [796]

As well as these additional contrasting sounds, which highlight the brutality of Kayako's demise, her rattling throat sound leitmotif, a distinct bodily sound that relates directly to butoh, is also part of the soundtrack. At this point, it is even more distinct, as the sound is prolonged, and the guttural sounds she produces appear to descend in tones as she approaches the staircase, the camera panning across to the stairs in anticipation of her appearance. There is a moment of *ma*, as the rattle slows down gradually, and the shot cuts back to Rika's confused face as she, like the audio-viewer, expects to see something. The pregnant pause of what we can infer is diegetic sound breaks with a different vocalization produced by Kayako. Just before she appears onscreen, beginning to descend the stairs, an electro-acoustic mix of a human moan with an echoing rumble effect takes over from her leitmotif, as if attempting to deliver a more distinct human vocalisation from Kayako. The moan can be interpreted in a similar way to her guttural leitmotif, one of the only sounds she could make after her neck was broken.

It can also be paralleled with the experimental vocalizations occasionally deployed in butoh performances. Butoh performer Murobushi Kō uses frightening vocalizations to convey the non-human in his performance *quick silver* (2006), where he 'emits lacerating primal screams hailing out of the cracks of his conflictive body, which provoke cracks in the audience, lacerating their bodies.' [797] This powerful audio impact through a performance that examines corporeality resonates with the frightful yet tragic moans of Kayako. Other aspects of butoh dance, including disjointed movements often adopted in the performance art, are also comparable in the insect-like representation of Kayako's

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[796] The connection to bones here through the timbre of the technique is that of the *dorodoro* which was used in supernatural/horror plays traditionally performed in the summer in Japan. Traditional summertime kabuki performances featured *suzumi shibai* (涼み芝居; 'cool plays') – ghost plays that included musical gestures like *dorodoro* which, along with the content of the supernatural tales, were designed to send chills down the spines of the audio-viewers.

[797] Katja Centonze, 'Murobushi Kō and his Challenge to Butoh' in *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance*, Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario (eds.) (New York: Routledge), 233.

movement, especially as the camera cuts at one point in her descent to just behind her, showing Rika's reaction as she gasps. Petty notes the unusual nature of disjointed movement in butoh:

> These jerky, grotesque movements unique to butoh can be seen as a counterpoint to the [kabuki] theater's tradition of *mie*, in which an actor will strike and hold, or "cut," a powerful or emotional pose in order to draw attention to a particularly important moment in the performance. [798]

Kayako's jerky movements not only draw attention to the climactic conclusion of the film's narrative but can be seen to draw, I argue, on the political motivations of butoh: remembering and dying. The crunching and cracking sounds of her limbs, accompanied by her bodily contortions, are a reminder of her brutal death, her human and bodily connection to the world she has partly left behind as, '[u]nlike ascendant forms of dance whose politics rest on overcoming gravity, butoh does not seek to escape the body.' [799] Instead, it heightens 'the return of body to flesh' [800] because, '[i]n various states of beauty and decay, the body of butoh, like the body of nature, always moves slightly beyond comprehension.' [801] Indeed, the audio-viewer is left intrigued by the why Kayako moves and why she is motivated to target innocent people. This can be read as a moment of protest – Kayako's protest as she rises up against the pre-modern patriarchy that repressed and killed her, albeit now seeking vengeance through all who come into some kind of contact with her by adopting an avant-garde style that embodies a form of protestation:

> In dance, butoh represented yet another idiom of protest. It emerged in response to Japan's rupture with the past and the bitter irony of becoming modern and on the road to economic ascendency without a coherent identity to accompany it. [802]

Kayako's muteness means she cannot verbalise what happens to her even as she releases a vocal moan at the end of the film that is more human in quality than her signature guttural rattle. Despite releasing this sound, which also possesses intonation as it rises and falls in pitch, her mouth is

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[798] Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic', 149. The *mie* pose is a distinctive element of kabuki.
[799] Horton Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*, 74.
[800] *Ibid*., 74.
[801] *Ibid*., 75.
[802] Christal Whelan, *Kansai Cool: A Journey into the Cultural Heartland of Japan* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2014), 122.

firmly closed at this point in the sequence. However, her movement synced with the rising and falling pitches of the moan do not suggest that it is acousmatic, as the sound matches with the action onscreen. Any ambiguity around whether this electronically manipulated vocal moan is from Kayako is dispelled as Kayako reaches the bottom of the stairs. She is then shown with her mouth open crawling towards Rika, who crouches helplessly on the floor. Kayako's strained vocal delivery is perhaps a cry for a form of help that is too late.

At this point, the low sustained synthesized string sound on F2 begins to subtly crescendo, and another higher sustained string tone enters on F4. This is significant as F is the tonic key of the central piano melody from the opening montage of *Ju-on*. Kayako continues to move towards Rika, still dragging herself along the floor. She reaches one arm out to Rika, and it is then that the first two phrases of the lamenting central theme enter over the sustained lower sting tones and at a slower tempo. The ringing higher-pitched tone remains on the soundtrack too. Toward the end of the melody's second phrase, Kayako's distorted moan rises in tone and transitions back into Kayako's once actual human moan. As Rika places her fingers over her eyes and we adopt her point of view peering through, it is then that Kayako's physical appearance begins to match her voice. However, it is not Kayako transforming back to her human form that Rika sees through her fingers, but herself, with a paler complexion, long black hair and wearing a white gown. Aurally at this point, there is a crescendo on the final sustained A♭5 of the central melody. However, as we expect Kayako's face to be shown as she slowly looks up, it is Rika's face that is revealed, and it is then that the theme shifts up a semitone, beginning a new section on F#5, still played by synthesized strings placed high in the mix.

As the third pitch of the new melody enters, the shot cuts back to an extreme close-up of Rika as she gasps. What then follows is a sequence of visual doubling similar to when Rika saw Kayako instead of her own reflection. As Lim notes, '[t]he second montage is dominated by the same motif but shifts to a revisionist remembrance of various set pieces in the film that show Kayako to have been Rika all along.' [803] What Rika saw in the mirror earlier was not only the downfall of Kayako but her own impending demise: 'The linear past, present, and future assumed by homogenous time gives way

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[803] Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*, 213.

to inexorable, fatal circularity, […] Rika, the heroine trapped in a malign house with a murderous patriarch out to punish his wife, stands on the threshold of Kayako's prior fate.' [804]

Figure 63. Rika sees herself transformed into an *yūrei* as she tries to hide behind her fingers.

This circularity is also demonstrated aurally with the development of the film's central melodic theme as Rika finally sees her fate. However, because the patriarch is yet to inflict his violence on her at this point in the film's conclusion, there is no counter-melody. The ringing of the house leitmotif continues for the first two phrases of the repeated, slowed down, central theme. It then merges into the sustained strings of the new development: the domestic space remains the site of Rika's doom, ever pervading. Just as the central theme ends on a chromatic interval in the melody line, so too does the development ending G#5-G5. However, the development section of this piece, delivered as a much slower lamenting melody, voices a melodic perception of femininity, now transferred to Rika.
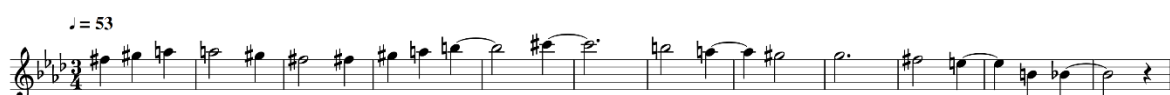

Figure 64. A melodic development to the central piano melody.

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[804] Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*, 213.

As the melody concludes, four final pitches enter that descend to the B♭4. While possibly suggesting a modulation back to F minor via this fourth chord note of the key, there is no tonal resolution: a chorus of harmonized wordless male voices take over, producing 'ah' sounds and ascending-descending pitches that merge into a wave of synthesized sound and low rumbling bass frequencies as Takeo walks down the stairs, breathing heavily. The development of the central melodic theme that accompanied Rika's montage, now abruptly halted and cast distinctively apart from the remainder of the climax, can be heard to possess a quality of *yūgen* in its lamentful dark beauty and its F# minor key, reflecting the melancholia central to the concept. At this moment in the film Rika begins to understand Kayako's torment and sees her own sad fate. Petty notes an example of *yūgen* in *The Tale of Genji* when discussing several noble female characters subjected to suffering, including Lady Aoi, who is haunted by the spirt of Lady Rokujo:

> None of these women are responsible for the predicaments in which they find themselves, which Zeami contends increases their beauty, as it shows that even the most fortunate and beautiful people cannot escape that suffering which all living beings share. It is in this sadness, caused simply by living life itself, that Zeami sees *yugen*. [805]

The sadness of the melody reminds the audio-viewer that Kayako and Rika are both victims of a horrific fate. It is the four pitches at the end of the development melody that represent an aural violence, as they are overridden by the male chorus and the patriarch walks down the stairs to commit actual violence. There is a cut to an extreme close-up of Rika's face as she gasps in shock and a cutaway shot is used that parallels the opening visuals of Kayako's bloodied body wrapped in plastic, even adopting similar grainy visuals. This time it is Rika's lifeless face that is revealed, a single tear running down her cheek. The wordless chorus' voices bleed over the shot with an additional electronically manipulated vocal effect layered over the top. The shot cuts back to the close-up of Rika's face, her shock implies she has witnessed this vision of her impending fate. Just before the cut back to this close-up the male chorus of the patriarch is taken over by dissonant chromatic strings played in an aggressive bowing style, close to the bridge. Added shots cut back and forth between

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[805] Petty, 'Stage and Scream: The influence of traditional Japanese theater, culture, and aesthetics on Japan's cinema of the fantastic', 81.

close-ups of Takeo and Rika's faces, including shots from Rika's perspective, as she observes Toshio watching on from the landing above.

Lara Bernadette describes how this penultimate musical cue provides an alternative scoring approach to traditional Hollywood horror film scores:

> As a feature similar to the music in Hollywood horror productions, instruments with a bass character are used a lot. However, unlike Hollywood, instead of playing a single note continuously with big reverb and delay effects, melodies for instruments that can cover other parts of the spectrum are also written and filled in the mid range. An example of this is the addition of pizzicato violins on top of the string composition in one of the final scenes to increase the feeling of tension. [806]

This example of an alternative scoring approach once again opens up considerations of sound to representations of Japanese-cultural concepts through its sensitivity towards timbre. This is utilized here in the exaggerated bowing techniques of the dissonant high-pitched strings that underscore the sonic violence, joining the sustained low bass male vocal sounds as their staccato articulation aggressively puncture the visuals heightening the horror of Rika's impending death. This final sequence of the film marks the point in which 'the traumatic past of the child and his mother are restaged in the present experience of other characters, even though it is not a past that belongs to them.' [807] By having Rika experience the same fate as Kayako, the audio-viewer acquires prosthetic memories. As Landsberg expands:

> They are not memories of events we lived through, […], yet through an act of prosthesis enabled by cinematic identification, they become part of our archive of memory. The point here is not that we forget who we are as we watch the film, but rather that we are enabled, for a short period of time, to see through different eyes, and think beyond our own social position. [808]

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[806] Laura Bernadette, 'Ju-On: The Grudge" Film Sound Design Review'
(https://medium.com/@bernadettelara/ju-on-the-grudge-film-sound-design-review-f5350b6921e4 2 November 2021).
[807] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema, 208*.
[808] Landsberg, 'Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture', 155.

The audio-viewer experiences these prosthetic memories through the visceral experience of the final visuals, and the alternate shots of Takeo and Rika as he approaches, and especially through the shots that adopt Rika's point of view. This final sequence is coupled with an alternative score that uses sound-design and timbre to highlight the significance of socio-cultural contexts including the 'traumatic consequence of family breakdown and abuse, as the violent combustion of one family unit threatens to spread across the whole of Japanese society like a virus.' [809]

The film concludes with visuals of empty streets in the Tokyo neighbourhood, showing different missing person posters; the opening musical theme plays over the desolate visuals. No people are shown, emphasising the spread of the curse. As Schaub explains, the final visual shows Rika in the attic, '[h]er eyes are closed as the camera slowly zooms in on her bloody face. Finally, she opens her eyes, and we hear Kayako's familiar stuttering, this time coming from Rika, as the film ends, suggesting, as the epigraph tells us, that a new curse is born.' [810] At first, Rika could be mistaken for Kayako with the description Schaub provides. This is because, as shown earlier in the second montage that she sees when she is alive, Rika is presented as the traditional *yūrei* figure. The *yūrei* is a figure first illustrated by Maruyama Ōkyo, who painted *The Ghost of Oyuki* (the spirit of his deceased mistress) sometime around 1750 after she visited him one night. The image the artist produced is 'always recognizable as yūrei, always following Maruyama's basic image of a pale-faced, white-robed person with long black, dishevelled hair and no feet.' [811] However, as Rika is shown in the attic as a *yūrei,* the final audio of the film confirms she, like Kayako, is more like the vengeful figure of the *onryō,* as the haunting vocal rattle of Kayako signals the ongoing nature of the curse.

[809] Balanzategui, *The Uncanny Child in Transnational Cinema,* 207.
[810] Schaub, 'When Cute Becomes Scary: The Young Female in Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema', 407.
[811] Davisson, *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost*, 37.

Figure 65. Rika has become an *onryō*

4.8 Conclusion: 'Japanese Conceptions of Audio': Music and Sound Design in *Ju-on: The Grudge*

This chapter has demonstrated how a number of music and sound design examples in *Ju-on* can be interpreted as representing aspects of some of the Japanese concepts presented in Chapter Two, and as depicting the film's Japanese spirits through culturally specific audio treatment. Various moments of distinctive sound design reveal the film's assimilation of Japanese aesthetics including *ma*, *sawari*, *yūgen* and *wabi sabi*. The lack of resolution in the film's opening theme aligns itself with the non-linearity of remembered space that is symbolised by the house, and also, one might argue, the meaning left open to interpretation through the concept of *ma* in the lack of a cadence point in *Ju-on* opening musical theme. The theme's simple musical make-up allows for individual sounds to be emphasised over diatonic melody, counter-melody and harmonics in a way that also seems directly related to a uniquely Japanese concept of sound. This is reflected in the use of an electronic effect resembling the shimmer of metal brushed against a cymbal in the opening theme. It is heard once, but the lingering reverberation of the cue is representative of the use of *sawari*, as discussed in other examples from the film's sound design earlier in this chapter.

Overall, *Ju-on* complements and challenges Hollywood approaches to scoring horror not only through its use of Japanese cultural concepts in sound and music, but also as an example of a film

score that can be argued to mobilise culturally-specific concepts of sound to deconstruct perception and challenge analysis of the visuals. This is primarily demonstrated through the examples of ambiguous sound sources and off-screen sound, and the exploitation of what Rick Altman describes as a 'sound hermeneutic', in which 'cinema sound typically asks the question ''Where [does the sound come from]?'' Visually identifying the source of the sound, the image usually responds: ''Here!'' The sound hermeneutic is the full question and answer process, as followed by the film spectator/auditor.' [812] In *Ju-on*, answers may be left open to analytical interpretation on the part of the audio-viewer, but as this chapter has demonstrated, a recognition of the cultural concepts at work within the audio encourages recognition of other structures of meaning at play beyond Hollywood-style conventions – such as the careful placement of sounds that produce *sawari* in order to challenge a particular audio source and suggest the porous boundaries between the living and the dead. The modern dance form of butoh is also utilised as a bodily form of protest, highlighting the tension between pre-modern and modern Japan. The assimilation of butoh with various socio-cultural contexts will be explored further in Chapter Five in comparison with the US remake of the case study. In conclusion, the ability of the characters in *Ju-on* to hear sounds that would normally be associated with underscoring is but the most prominent example of a scoring approach outside of the dominant model. The audition of this culturally-charged soundtrack can be read as a cue to the audio-viewer to engage in our own hermeneutic process in relation to *Ju-on's* horrifying sonic specificity.

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[812] Rick Altman, *Sound Theory. Sound Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 252.

Chapter Five: Music and Sound in the Japanese transnational film remake

5.1 The rise of the Japanese horror film remake

Over the last two decades the rising popularity of Japanese horror films and their impact on the international film market has been widely noted. [813] Since the release of Nakata Hideo's 1998 urban ghost film *Ringu*, a number of directors have adopted cultural approaches that depict specifically Japanese cultural and ideological conceptions of the ghost. Nakata Hideo's 1996 film *Joyū-rei* (*Don't Look Up/Ghost Actress*) can also be identified as a significant example of the renewed interest in Japanese cinematic representations of spirits. A collective term that has been associated with these films is *shinrei-mono eiga* ('ghost story films'). [814] These films, in turn, have inspired a number of remakes worldwide. Notable interpretations include *The Ring* (Verbinski, USA, 2002), *The Grudge* (Takashi, USA/Japan/ Germany, 2004), *Dark Water* (Salles, USA, 2005), and *One Missed Call* (Valette, USA/Japan/Germany/UK, 2008). These representations offer cinematic explorations of technophobia, social struggle, viral outbreaks in the digitized realm, and the distortion of biological/machinic distinctions.

In response to these Hollywood remakes, a small number of publications have begun to address the phenomenon of the transnational J-horror remake. These include Valerie Wee's *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes,* in which she examines how 'the phenomenon of the transnational remake offers an opportunity to understand how differing cultural and ideological perspectives find expression in a range of narrative and representational revisions undertaken during the remaking process.' [815] In *Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Hollywood* (which also addresses Hollywood remakes of Japanese horror films), Wang Yiman asserts the need to 'reenergize the political valences of subcolonial and semicolonial discourses for the study of cross-Pacific film remaking.' [816] She goes on to discuss power inequity in the contemporary era of globalization, observing how,

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[813] See Colette Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Jay McRoy, *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005); Jay McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008).
[814] McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema*, 75.
[815] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 23.
[816] Wang Yiman, *Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Hollywood* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 7.

[T]he differential experiences of modernity and globalization based on one's class, gender, racial, ideological, and geopolitical positions in the power structure are significant not only in studying twentieth-century Chinese remakes of Hollywood, but also for understanding twenty-first-century Hollywood remakes of East Asian Cinema. [817]

Iain Smith and Constantine Verevis's publication *Transnational Film Remakes* is one of the first comprehensive collections that discusses existing scholarship on film remakes and the transnational context. The authors note that their publication is 'the first to engage with case studies drawn from across the globe.' [818] Smith and Verevis also refer to the role of sonic content in Hollywood remakes of Japanese horror, noting James Wierzbicki's scholarly contributions, which demonstrate 'that while the remakes may look quite similar, they often sound remarkably different.' [819] However, while there are references made to music and sound in the essays, including a more detailed discussion on song as part of *The Parent Trap's* maintenance campaigns in Verevis's essay '*Das Doppelte Lottchen* and *The Parent Trap*', there are no essays that focus solely on analysing the role of sound and music in transnational remakes in the collection. Furthermore, as previously discussed in this thesis, Wierzbicki's contribution opens up the under-studied area of music and sound design in Japanese horror film remakes, alongside William Whittington's overview of acoustic difference in what he calls 'J-Horror and H-Horror' [820] – but their remits are, understandably, limited.

This chapter, however, provides an in-depth examination of audio in a Japanese 'ghost' film and its America remake that have not hitherto been assessed together. Through these two films, I will examine the relationship between sound, music and 'storytelling conventions and customs [that] reveal uniquely different social and cultural points of view regarding the relationship between the natural and supernatural world, between the rational and irrational, and between the living and the dead.' [821] The chapter will continue the theme of framing the analysis with Non-Hollywood and Hollywood theoretical approaches to music and sound discussed throughout the thesis, now taken through the

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[817] Wang, *Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Hollywood,* 7.
[818] Iain Robert Smith and Constantine Verevis, 'Introduction: Transnational Film Remakes', in *Transnational Film Remakes,* Iain Robert Smith and Constantine Verevis, (eds.), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 3.
[819] *Ibid.*, 5.
[820] Whittington, 'Acoustic Infidelities', 11.
[821] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 25.

transnational arena. Alongside the depth and specificity of the analysis presented, the chapter's context in this thesis's examination of ancient and modern Japanese cultural conventions and their manifestations in horror sound and music, adds a distinctive and, I hope, telling specificity to my contribution to this important wider field of investigation.

Writing of Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Kairo* (Japan, 2004) [822], Steve Jones notes that 'the human self is not the only subject of infection [in this work]: the film form too suffers from Internet dial-up interference sound effects.' [823] Jones points to the unsettling nature of the film's use of sound, but offers only a brief account of how audio effects contribute to the film's representation of spirits. In his book *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations*, Steven T. Brown addresses more questions about the role of sound in *Kairo* and specifically how sound flows modulate affect in Japanese horror cinema. Brown's analysis addresses the important role sound plays in Kurosawa Kiyoshi's horror films, 'privileging not only acousmatic voices, ambient noises, and sonic drones, but also the omission of sound and the dynamic manipulation of sound and silence.' [824] The book opens up a welcome dialogue about the sensory role sound plays in the film, especially at a micro level, to subtly affect reception by the audio-viewer. Brown provides a rich analytical approach to the use of sound in *Kairo*, among other Japanese examples, in the context of transnational horror cinema. However, further questions are triggered by *Pulse*, the American remake of *Kairo*.

Jim Sonzero's *Pulse* (USA, 2006) regenerates questions of the role sound and music play in the film. Sonzero's version, with a screenplay by Wes Craven and Ray Wright based on the Japanese original, is defined here as a transnational remake. A remake offers 'infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a [film's] culture.' [825] In practice it is not just a case of identifying and cross-referencing a remake from prior knowledge of the previous film and intertextual references. It is also the impact of the extra-textual discourses that surround the audio-viewing experience – the ability of the remake to refer to more general structures of intertextuality (quotation, allusion, adaptation). *Pulse* is an example of a remake that deterritorializes its narrative

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[822] Commonly referred to in English as *Pulse*, although a better translation for *Kairo* would be *Circuit*.
[823] Steve Jones, 'The Technologies of Isolation: Apocalypse and Self in Kurosawa Kiyoshi's Kairo', *Japanese Studies* 30/2 (September 2010): 189.
[824] Steven T. Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations* (Cham: Springer Nature/Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 29.
[825] Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2017), 202.

from *Kairo*, taking a film made in one cultural context and remaking it in another. More specifically, *Pulse* universalizes *Kairo* and its central themes to make it appealing for a global audience, prompting questions such as '[h]ow might a transnational perspective offer us a deeper understanding of a specific socio-political context, and of the politics underpinning film remaking more generally?'[826] In turn, one might question the specific socio-political contexts overwritten through the act of remaking, and the politics underpinning the act of overwriting.

To contribute to these important contemporary discussions in film theory, this chapter examines how culturally specific representations of ghosts, and their adaptations in the transnational remake, inflect these two films' different commentaries on a shared social concern: the effects of the rising importance of technology on everyday life in advanced societies. Drawing attention to these concerns, the films' depictions of the supernatural demonstrate cultural differentiation in the context of belief systems which, I will argue, impacts the portrayals of ghosts through both image and audio.[827] By analyzing the role of music and sound in *Kairo* and *Pulse*, a richer understanding of how socio-cultural contexts are represented by audio in Japanese transnational film remakes can be gained. First, this chapter will examine the relationship between industrial and commercial factors in the soundtracks for these films, considering thematic concerns that will be examined throughout the rest of the chapter.

5.2 Commercial Implications

Music and sound play a commercial role in transnational film remakes. In the case of *Pulse*, Valerie Wee has addressed the industrial contexts of the remaking process, focusing on a shift from the art house ethos of *Kairo* to *Pulse*, a more explicitly commercial product committed to predictable Hollywood horror film tropes. Wee provides a meticulous breakdown of the commercial concerns and production issues involved. This includes an assessment by the genre film division of the then newly

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[826] Iain Robert Smith and Constantine Verevis, 'Introduction: Transnational Film Remakes', 2.
[827] There is a wider debate which cannot be fully explored here around the term 'supernatural' in relation to Japanese culture: what is defined as supernatural in one culture is instead regarded as strange or mysterious, but natural, in Japan. Other terms, such as ghost, *yūrei* or *yōkai* could be relevant here. However, in the context of this thesis as discussed in the introduction, I have chosen the term 'supernatural' to mean the irruption of the ghostly world into human experience.

formed Weinstein Company, distributed by Dimension Films, which is crucial in tracking the youth-oriented commercial trajectory of *Pulse*. Wee observes how most aspects of *Pulse's* production line were tailored to a specific niche audience. This includes the recognition of factors associated with the contribution of U.S. genre-defining horror director and producer Wes Craven as co-writer (famous for the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise), and the choice of Jim Sonzero as director, hitherto known as a creator of pop videos.

Wee's assessment of *Pulse's* creative contexts goes on to highlight how casting recognizable actors 'would attract "the right audience."' [828] This included Kristen Bell, known for her role in the American teenage mystery TV series *Veronica Mars* (2004-7), Ian Somerhalder from the popular disaster-survival series *Lost* (2004-10), and Christina Milian, an R&B teen-pop star whose third studio album *So Amazin'* was released just months before *Pulse*. Simone Murray addresses this further in her research on the political economy of media, in which she illustrates some of the ways in which audiences take on board media industry markers of cultural praise such as film awards. [829] As in Wee's argument, this includes the use of identifiable actors. It is also worth noting that *Kairo* features the popular Japanese model, television and film actor Katō Koyuki, who later gained recognition beyond Japan for her role in Edward Zwick's tale of the encounter between US and Japanese martial arts traditions, *The Last Samurai* (2003), starring Tom Cruise. Well-known actor and director Yakusho Kōji also makes an appearance as the ship's captain in *Kairo*.

While Wee's research provides a resourceful breakdown of how *Pulse's* production worked to achieve its economic goals, she makes no specific reference to the contribution to this commercial agenda of the film's soundtrack. Both *Kairo* and *Pulse* make use of pre-existing music. Its function is not only to deliver a form of musical allusion, commenting on character perspectives, settings, and on the action more generally, but to direct awareness to extra-filmic associations, or what Kay Dickinson describes as 'micro-cultural stratification'. [830] In both films, reliance on the audio-viewer's previous experience of pop music in given national markets fulfils both artistic and commercial purposes. In

[828] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 171.
[829] See Simone Murray, 'Materializing Adaptation Theory: The Adaptation Industry', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 36/1 (2008): 4–20.
[830] Kay Dickinson, 'Pop, Speed and the "MTV Aesthetic" in Recent Teen Films', in *Movie Music, the Film Reader*, Kay Dickinson, (ed.), (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 146.

Kairo a sole example is used, overlapping the final shot of the film with the end-credit sequence. The lyrics of the pop song 'Hane – Lay Down my Arms' reinforce the narrative theme of nuclear fear and the apocalypse, pertaining to a broader socio-historical context in Japan, notably the country's devastating bombing in World War II: 'In the blue sky, fluttering, my exposed white breast burned.' Despite the lyrical relevance to *Kairo*, this upbeat rock-pop ballad is performed by Cocco, the famous Japanese pop/alternative rock singer/song-writer. In the year of *Kairo* (2001), Cocco released her fourth album, *Sangurōzu*, and also announced her retirement (from which she later returned). The use of this pop song in the film can be viewed as a commercial strategy to increase consumption of the film through synergistic appeal to an existing fan base, alongside its nuclear connotations.

Pulse integrates pre-existing pop songs throughout the film in a generally more semantically streamlined way. Australian rock band Intercooler's 'Goodness of the Girl' is heard when the audio-viewer is first introduced to Mattie and her friends. The title of the song and its lyrics are an example of what Rick Altman calls editorializing, alluding to Mattie's characterization as the hero, the good girl. [831] The second pop reference is heard as Mattie is shown responding to her alarm clock on what is seemingly a typical morning for a college student. This appropriated music gives the illusion that the film is potentially a teenage rom-com as Mattie gets changed, applies her make-up, and checks her appearance in the mirror to the sounds of punk-rock band Overnight Lows' track 'Delay The Wait'. The final example, 'Esto Es Lo Que Hay', from Venezuelan dance band Los Amigos Invisibles, is heard playing in the character Stone's car as he travels to the apartment of his deceased friend Josh in order to investigate his computer. This again plays an editorializing role, here alluding to Stone's ethnicity as a character of Hispanic descent. The Latin dance beats, however, can also be interpreted as providing a stark contrast to the deathly silence of Josh's apartment, and the ghost that waits in the darkness.

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[831] See Linda Williams, 'When the Woman Looks', in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, Barry Keith Grant (ed.), (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), 17-36.

5.3 Regenerating Narrative

Kairo delivers a dystopian vision of the connections between communicative technologies, social isolation, and a viral outbreak that blurs the barriers between the human and the technological. Set in Tokyo, the film presents the parallel narratives of two protagonists: a young woman named Michi, who works at a plant nursery, and Kawashima, a university student. The two are brought together in the aftermath of various interactions with a website that invites people to meet a ghost. Michi investigates her co-worker Taguchi's suicide, and later, the deaths of her two other co-workers. Kawashima experiences strange phenomena when he starts using the Internet. The wider plot reveals that this is not the average computer virus, but ghosts who invade the world of the living through the Internet and other forms of technology.

This leads to a number of deaths and disappearances, eventually amounting to an epidemic. There is a sense of the unknown around the use of technology in the film. This is highlighted in Kawashima's character, who is first shown trying to sign up to the Internet. This is amplified when he meets Harue, a Computer Science postgraduate student: Kawashima struggles to recognize what a website address is, and admits to not knowing anything about computers. There is a factor of naivety that is also highlighted through *Kairo*, which draws attention to the fact that this is not a film of the last decade but was produced when dial-up was a standard form of Internet access, and file storage relied on floppy discs. The film's exploration of the dangers of technology is emphasized by characters, like Kawashima, who have only just begun to use the Internet and do not fully understand it.

Likewise, Jim Sonzero's *Pulse* (2006) explores the idea of the Internet as a bridge to alternate worlds through the experience of its main protagonist Mattie, an American university student. After investigating the alleged suicide of her boyfriend, Josh, under mysterious circumstances, Mattie discovers that the dead are returning and attacking the living through forms of communication technology. The most striking narrative difference between the two films is the explanation, or lack of explanation, of why the ghostly invasions are occurring. *Pulse*, as will be fully explained below, does provide an explanation as to why the events are occurring, and in this way draws attention to their

horrific nature. *Kairo* is more ambiguous, which opens the film up to being interpreted as a social study of Japan, as this chapter will demonstrate.

In *Kairo*, a graduate student named Yoshizaki who works with Harue explains to Kawashima the identity of the mysterious figure he has seen in the library, and why it seemed to vanish as Kawashima gave chase. Yoshizaki places Kawashima's experience in a broader context, explaining why ghostly appearances are occurring everywhere. He tells Kawashima that the spirits inhabit a space with a finite capacity. As a result of the space running out, they have overflown into our world, and "[n]o matter how simple the device, once the system's complete it'll function on its own, and become permanent. The passage is now open … that's how it looks". [832] With the exception of his initial introduction to Kawashima and this scene in which he provides an explanation, Yoshizaki does not appear again in the film. Upon concluding his explanation, Yoshizaki also comments that "it's all hypothetical", leaving any real explanation open-ended, and raising questions as to who is responsible for the virus and why Yoshizaki can explain what is happening.

By contrast, *Pulse* delivers an explanation of the on-screen events. After Mattie tracks her dead boyfriend's computer to Dexter, the man to whom it has been sold, she is informed about a memory stick Dexter finds hidden underneath the machine, which contains a virus that will shut down the ghostly invasion. It comes to light that Josh had used his hacking skills to access the network of Douglas Ziegler, a fellow hacker who had unearthed something in his computer system that allowed spirits to come through. That 'something' is explained in detail later on in the film by Ziegler as a super-wideband telecom project, in the course of which new frequencies were discovered. However, as Ziegler continues to explain, these frequencies are also revealed to be on a spectrum that is used by the ghosts as a source of transmission into the world of the living.

The gap in the explanation as to why spectral presences are entering the human world is one of many narrative concerns left unanswered in *Kairo*. This reflects a cultural acceptance in Japan of narratives that do not privilege coherence, but instead what Valerie Wee has called 'the Japanese aesthetic commitment to exploring ideas and possibilities that extend beyond what is known.' [833] In

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[832] All English-language dialogue quotations are taken from the subtitles which feature on the DVD release by Optimum (2006).
[833] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 84.

Japanese cinema the result is a filmic composition that delivers more than a logical narrative. As Donald Richie explains, '[t]he idea that each unit should push the story through to its conclusion is not one to which Japanese literature, drama or film subscribes. Rather, separate scenes can be devoted to separate events.' [834] More significantly, Japanese cinema finds importance in events in a film that may seem minor or tangential in a Hollywood film, similar to the way in which Japanese prose, suggests J. Thomas Rimer, often moves 'inward, with a narrative line pushing beyond plot, often beyond character, to a general realm of feeling.' [835] This is where the analysis of music and sound can play a key role: in raising awareness of culturally determined modes of presentation.

Pulse, on the other hand, commits to a narrative of coherence, linearity and clarification. Both Dexter and Mattie are goal-oriented characters, active in their motivations to stop the viral invasion from spreading. It is only at the last possible moment, when the counter-virus they upload fails and the ghostly network is re-booted, that their motivations switch to an escape plan. This episodic structure is clearly identifiable as an example of the tight cause-and-effect progression of the dominant Hollywood film tradition, in which 'goals are defined, redefined, thwarted, and then decisively achieved or not. Turning points are created by reversals of intention, points of no return, and new circumstances demanding that goals be recast.' [836] This initial comparison demonstrates how narrative organization suggests cultural differentiation.

5.4 Ghostly Cultural Considerations

In *Kairo*, ghosts lack personality and human responsiveness; they represent a postmodern/post-humanist manifestation of a much older Japanese icon. Japanese ghosts, most commonly described as *yūrei* (translating as 'faint/dim spirit') [837], are historically portrayed – consider the earlier examples in this thesis from the multiple *Yotsuya Kaidan films*, *Jōyurei* and *Ringu*– as being female spirits wearing a white kimono with long unbound black hair, and often missing legs and feet. However, while Kurosawa's ghosts 'frighten through traditional strategies, including mutilated appearance, unearthly

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[834] Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 8.
[835] J. Thomas Rimer, *Pilgrimages: Aspects of Japanese Literature and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 113.
[836] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*, (London: University of California Press, 2006), 35.
[837] See Zack Davisson, *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost*, Seattle: Chin Music Press, 2015.

speech, and surprise, it is their relationship to –and constitution through – digital special effects technologies that promises their biggest scare.' [838] Late-industrialist and technology-driven ideological values drive the ghostly visual presentations in *Kairo*. Manifesting in cyberspace, their exterior corporeal presence is merged with artificiality, taking the form of faded electronic spectral manifestations, and signifying how technology has become 'inseparable from the self.' [839]

This can be linked to the indigenous Shinto system of ritual practice based on the natural world, which observes that everything has a spirit, whether inanimate or living, and is regarded as being part of a unified single creation, as linguistic etymology suggests: 'When someone dies, his or her spirit moves from *konoyo* (the world of the living, or this world 'here') to *anoyo* (the world of the dead, the world over yonder, "there"). As such, the two worlds exist simultaneously, occupying the same space and time, with permeable boundaries between the two.' [840] While in the folk beliefs of Shinto, and more generally in Japan, it is argued that the natural and social environments are interrelated, *Kairo*, however, draws attention to the loss of connection created by the effects of technology and the isolation that saturates society.

This is also amplified by the soundtrack, which uses the sounds of technology to signify increasing urban alienation. For example, as Kawashima sits in an amusement arcade, the looped melodies and the whirring of the machines create the illusion that he is interacting in a busy urban social space. Besides the sound of the technology itself and the appearance of a sole ghostly black shadow, however, Kawashima is alone. Furthermore, when the spirits' voices are heard on the telephone, they are both disconnected from a visible bodily representation and dehumanized by the use of heavy digital distortion. It is only when Kurosawa allows us to see and hear the ghosts that their humanity temporarily appears.

This is best exemplified in a scene towards the end of *Kairo*, as Kawashima and Michi are shown trying to flee the city, and Kawashima is directly confronted by a spirit. Refusing to acknowledge death or a belief in the supernatural, he maintains a defensive stance, denying what he

[838] Kit Hughes, 'Ailing Screens, Viral Videos: Cinema's Digital Ghosts in Kiyoshi Kurosawa's Pulse', *Film Criticism* 36/2 (Winter 2011-2012): 36.
[839] Jones, 'The Technologies of Isolation', 186.
[840] Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*, 48.

sees, despite the apparent physical presence of the ghost in front of him. It is therefore the soundtrack that guides the audio-viewer's comprehension of this scene. After sourcing fuel in an abandoned factory, Kawashima becomes trapped in a room the door of which is framed with red tape. In response, a low synthesized drone enters the soundtrack, followed by a laboured, reverberating exhalation that merges into the dialogue at the word "[f]orever". This is swiftly followed by an electronic, percussive effect, apparently non-diegetic in nature. The camera responds by coming closer to Kawashima's point-of-view, revealing the ghostly outline of a figure on the far side of the room, close to where Kawashima entered. "Death was ... [e]ternal loneliness", utters this figure, in grainy, electronically manipulated speech. As Kawashima's breathing becomes urgent and he backs towards the door, grasping at the handle, the ghost utters the words "Help. Help. Help". Despite Kawashima's words of denial, his heavy breathing is reinforced by low, sustained electronic tones on the soundtrack, which reveal his fear. [841] The spirit repeats the same words about eternal loneliness as Kawashima continues to reason that the ghost is not real, despite conversing with him. He makes a rapid move in an attempt to catch the spirit and to prove that he will disappear, but as he grasps the spirit's shoulders an electronic rush of sound is heard before silence descends.

A low, pulsing electronic tone then enters quietly, creating a wave in volume as it dips and then crescendos while Kawashima, falling to the floor, slowly backs away from the spirit. The tone is sustained momentarily before a lower and louder throbbing electronic pulse enters. The camera reverts to the subject position of Kawashima as the spirit's voice enters, heavily bathed in reverse reverberation which 'makes the attack of the ghost's voice swell at the beginning of each word' [842] as he states: "I am ... [r]eal". The pulsing continues under the dialogue shifting to a higher pitch, again delivered in waves of altering dynamics. A higher register of electronic sound and distorted audio rumbles create additional sound layering. As the spirit starts to move towards Kawashima and the camera, percussive waves and echoes of additional electronics are panned across the speakers from right to left, accompanying the swaying, fluctuating movement of the spirit. Intermittent static is also heard and, as the spirit comes closer to what is now the audio-viewer's eye-level, the sound of Internet

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[841] Brown refers to the use of continuous pitches or clusters of frequencies as producing an ambient drone, a device utilised by Kurosawa as an aural device to highlight a disconnection from environments and temporal suspension in time despite a character's on-screen visibility. Brown explores how this creates an aesthetics of discomfort. See Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations*.
[842] Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations*, 49.

dial-up enters the soundtrack, eventually breaking into a single sustained tone as if replicating a dead phone line and foreshadowing Kawashima's disconnection from life. Brown notes how in interviews Kurosawa states that he had wanted it to sound as if Kawashima 'had been trapped in a machine when he enters the factory room' [843], again emphasizing the theme of isolation.

Figure 66. Kawashima is confronted with the reality that the spirits of the dead have begun to take over the physical world.

Kairo draws parallels between human and spectral identity when organic dialogue is electronically manipulated through sound-design technology. There is ambiguity as the living and the dead commune, part of the film's haunting critique of technologically induced alienation. As commonly noted in initial reviews of the film, *Kairo's* spirits remind the characters of their isolation and loss of social interaction in the faceless realm of impersonal online global communications. Tom Mes observes how 'the horror lies not in the threat of an almighty, autonomous technology that might take over or destroy our lives, but in the effects that the presence of technology, and in particular communications technology like the Internet and mobile phones, has on our lives and our ways of communicating as human beings in society.' [844]

This commentary also connects to the backlash against the digital revolution on account of its creation of the *hikikomori* ('shut-ins') phenomenon, in which Japanese youths draw away from

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[843] Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations*, 49.
[844] Tom Mes, 'Pulse', (https://www.midnighteye.com/reviews/pulse/, 21 June 2001).

familial relations into an isolated existence, often communicating solely through online means. In *Pulse*, the spectres are presented as alien and as part of a virus that is a contagion of media. The horrific visual nature of the remake's spectres defines them as unhuman, 'malevolent entities feeding on the life force of the living.' [845] Again, however, the sound design of the remake reinforces the visual presentation of these spectres, which are now given a monstrous face. The visual illustration of the sonic is necessary in the US version because it confirms the horrific narrative meaning. This narrative reinforcement functions as part of the dominant Hollywood film model, and is a technique often adopted in American remakes. In the Japanese version, horrific sound and allusive visuals are all that is needed to establish narrative connotations as demonstrated in the previous case study chapters.

In the latter half of *Pulse*, Mattie's room-mate Isabelle is shown doing her laundry in the building's communal laundrette. As she starts to place her clothes in the washer, the metal gate to the laundry room suddenly closes and a low electronic pitch enters the soundtrack over the ambient hum of the washing machine. The film cuts from a close-up of Isabelle's face to a panning shot emanating from the rear of the row of dryers behind her, moving right to left as if someone is peering at her. This pan is accompanied by a breathy sound, electronically manipulated, which reinforces the fact that someone or something is sharing the space with her. Further electronic tones bleed from the initial drone before we cut back to Isabelle, whose attention is drawn to the sound of a power source shutting down, followed by a point-of-view shot of the flickering of a light bulb above her. The shifting electronic tones are still heard in the background, along with the continued whirring of the washer, together with an added layer of electronic tones that produce a pulse-like sound entering the soundtrack as the camera focusses on the failing light. We cut back to Isabelle's face looking up at the light and then re-adopt her point of view, returning to the light as it flickers again before a reassuring surge of generator sound indicates that power has been restored.

As the film cuts back to Isabelle continuing to do her laundry, the original sustained electronic tone is maintained on the soundtrack while the diegetic sound of the dryer door opening is suddenly foregrounded, with all other electronic sound lowered in the mix, with the exception of a hollow-sounding wind effect. The film cuts back to a wide shot of the laundry room as a gush of electronic

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[845] Chuck Kleinhans, 'Marxism and Film', in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 110.

sound accompanies the sight of an item of clothing being thrown out of the tumble dryer, the throwing seemingly happening of its own accord. It is at this point that the sound layers start to build up and the sustained tones of high register strings are brought to the foreground – a generic Hollywood signifier of dread and suspense. A crescendo is heard from the strings after the first clothing item has fallen out of the machine, followed by a low human vocal sound, almost grunt-like, that is electronically manipulated to alter its recognisability as a distinctly human acoustic sound. The camera zooms in on Isabelle's face as the strings continue to rise in volume, joined by the return of the indistinct vocal sounds. Isabelle takes a forced breath as the lights are heard and seen flickering again, and the sound of the clothes being thrown out of the machine is amplified, producing a hard thud. A further sustained, high-pitched, electronic drone is then added louder in the mix than the strings. Further layering is provided by a wordless choral passage dominated by female vocals, adding to the otherworldly nature of the overall sound design. As Isabelle glances inside the machine, the blended choral music and electronic drones fade out, with just the sound of the flickering light heard in the foreground of the mix, along with the final sound of clothes shifting in the machine.

It is then that the monstrous spectre emerges from the dryer drum, head lunging, with what appears to be five arms and legs flailing out of the machine in an insect-like manner, scored by a cacophony of electro-acoustic vocal effects. A bird-like screech is unleashed, synchronized with the image of the screaming spectre's facial expression, leading the audio-viewer to believe that it produces this screech organically, along with the amplified sound of the spectre's hand slamming on the floor and the unearthly, metallic sound effects that accompany its movements. These effects dominate the sound-mix in this sequence, which also consists of electronic drones, the sounds of the flickering light, and manipulated choral voices. In the final moments of the scene the spectre unleashes a roar-like vocal sound and suddenly appears to suck the life out of Isabelle. A profile close-up, paralleling her with the spectre, is visually effective and concludes with Isabelle releasing a scream that is electronically manipulated before the cut to the next scene, the sound bridging the transition.
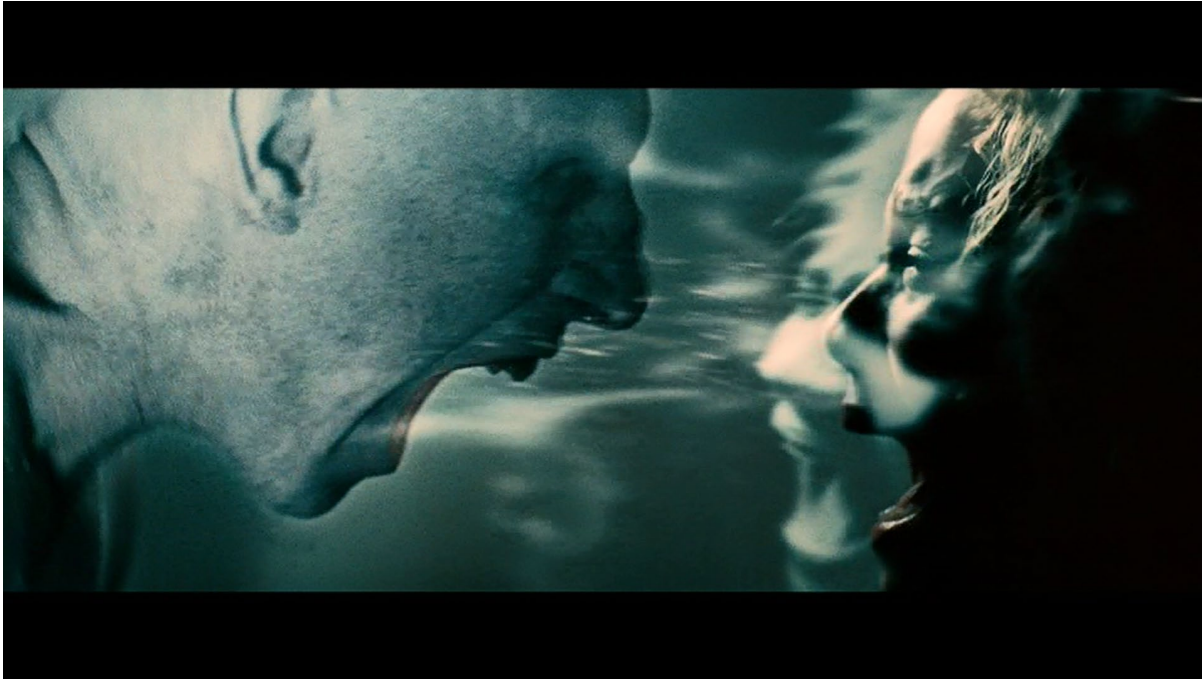
Figure 67. Feeding on the life force of the living: Isabelle is attacked by a spectre.

The grotesque visual representation of the spectre represents 'Hollywood's practice of

illusionism' while nevertheless 'producing a coherent imaginary subject position.' [846] Despite being

portrayed as unknown malevolent forces, the spectres are rationalized according to this dominant

model of cinematic practice. This is achieved by drawing attention to the representation of evil, which

they embody through the use of shocking visual and aural effects. The demonized figures in *Pulse* are

thus defined 'in traditionally Western terms of abjection, where any and all entities that flout culturally

determined boundaries and categories are viewed as abominations.' [847] The premise of this lies in the

dialectics of opposition – which aligns the natural with the good and the supernatural/unnatural with

evil – that Beth Braun notes in her discussion on American television shows with supernatural

elements: 'there is of course nothing new in using supernatural settings and characters to play out

narratives of good versus evil.' [848] Traditional Hollywood films often use these models of opposition

as the underlying dimensions of conflict in their discourse. Many Hollywood supernatural horror films

depict the supernatural/unnatural negatively. Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (USA, 1968),

William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (USA, 1973), and Stuart Rosenberg's *The Amityville Horror* (USA,

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[846] Kleinhans, 'Marxism and Film', 110.

[847] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (*London: Routledge, 1966), quoted in Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, *96.*

[848] Beth Braun, 'The X-Files and Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Ambiguity of Evil in Supernatural Representations', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 28/2 (2000): 88.

1979), for example, suggest some of the ways in which 'Western/Judeo-Christian beliefs tend to relegate the spiritual to an alternative realm beyond that of the physical and view crossing between these realms as an unnatural and, ultimately, threatening act.' [849]

The cultural differentiation of good and evil is not found in *Kairo*, where the ambiguous, human-like, organic representations reflect a mixture of Buddhist and Shinto thought. Katarzyna Marak specifically draws on these spiritual teachings in her discussion of Japanese and American horror cinema, observing the dualistic Shinto/Buddhist understanding of the world – 'all things bear good and evil inside.' [850] In Japanese Buddhism this is demonstrated through the interconnected concept of human beings as good and evil, while Shinto recognizes that everyone has the intrinsic potential for good. This ambivalence is echoed by C. Scott Littleton, who expands on the dichotomy of good and evil, noting that in Shinto tradition 'all phenomena, both animate and inanimate, are thought to possess both "rough" and "gentle", or negative and positive, characteristics […] depending on the circumstances.' [851] In summary, it is the blending of opposites, including the natural and supernatural, and striving to maintain the balance between nature and human relationships, known as *wa* (benign harmony), that is at the core of Shinto theology.

Drawing upon *Kairo's* representation of traditional Japanese cultural elements, *Pulse* presents a point of negotiation between cultural representation and re-representation. The audio-viewer experiences moments that are directly inspired by the original film in its narrative and visuals, such as the scene in *Kairo* when Yabe, one of Michi's co-workers, discovers one of the forbidden rooms. The meaning of the red tape that is used to seal off doorways or portals that contain the alienated ghost forms of the victims is never fully explained. These ghosts are instrumental, however, in helping to spread the contagion of loneliness through contact with figures like Yabe. As he enters one such isolated space, only ambient sounds are heard at first, building anticipation for the appearance of something inhuman in the unsettling quietness. Yabe walks towards the rear wall, which is shrouded

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[849] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 65.
[850] Katarzyna Marak, *Japanese and American Horror: A Comparative Study of Film, Fiction, Graphic Novels and Video Games* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2015), 188.
[851] C. Scott Littleton, *Understanding Shinto: Origins, Beliefs, Practices, Festivals, Spirits, Sacred Places,* (London: Duncan Baird, 2002), 26.

in darkness. The lighting then shifts and the back wall is slowly illuminated to reveal a mass of red

tape stuck over what was possibly a window. As the end wall of the room fades into well-lit focus, a

solo female voice drifts on to the soundtrack. Her wordless moan rings out as Yabe stands completely

still before turning to look behind him, as if he hears her voice.

A woman is shown standing against the opposite wall, motionless and robotic, her hands by

her side and her face masked by shadow. She is not the source of the melody being sung: her face and

mouth show no movement. The next shot reveals a close-up of Yabe's terrified face before we cut

back to a static shot of the woman from Yabe's point-of-view, as she begins to walk towards him. The

woman's extended movements are played out in slow-motion as a high-pitched, synthesized sound

accompanies her movement, voice-like in its delivery, filtering in and out as it too is slowed down in

tempo and electronically manipulated. The slow-motion speed of the woman's movement is

exaggerated as she is shown almost stumbling and contorting her body to regain her balance as she

proceeds towards Yabe. The contrast of speed between the woman's much slower, unnaturally drawn-

out movement and Yabe's reactive natural movement 'upsets the conventional "naturalism" of the

diegetic world, marking it as supernatural.' [852] While the ghost's movement could be described as an

inhuman projection in the digital landscape of the film, it is also an example of the use of a Japanese

performance style that alludes to a wider socio-cultural context.

The woman's movement is inspired by the avant-garde dance style of butoh, discussed in

Chapter Two and in Chapter Four. The organic nature of the form and use of aesthetic characteristics

that challenge western archetypes of beauty produce distorted and grotesque physical imagery in order

for the dancer to 'reveal the human being in his banality.' [853] Death is a theme often explored in butoh.

Co-founder Ohno Kazuo defines it as a means 'to meander, or to move, as it were, in twists and turns

between the realms of the living and the dead'. [854] Considering this meaning, some features of butoh,

such as the crumbling white painted body mask, have often evoked the trauma of the World War II

bombings and can be read as a creative expression of pain and anxiety regarding nuclear war – a

method of performance centred on the acceptance and contemplation of imperfection and the constant

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[852] Hughes, 'Ailing Screens, Viral Videos', 32.
[853] Jean Viala and Nourit Masson Sekine, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, (Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988), 17.
[854] Ohno Kazuo in Ohno Kazuo and Ohno Yoshito in *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within*, John Barrett (trans.), (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 205.

flux of all things. As butoh co-founder Hijikata Tatsumi puts it: 'The dancer, through the butoh spirit, confronts the origin of his fears; a dance which crawls towards the bowels of the earth.'[855]

Figure 68. Unsynchronized layers of music and movement: The shape-shifting approach of the ghost, interpretable as the practice of butoh.

This example from *Kairo* demonstrates how sound, music, and dance can be interpreted more deeply to understand a socio-historical context, but also how that context can be adapted to inflect contemporary themes. A national dance tradition is used here to highlight metamorphosis as a metaphor for the breakdown of communication in a technologically motivated society. *Pulse* adopts a similar approach, delivering a vulnerable moment in the film in which the inhuman and metaphorically faceless viral spectres are humanized, in order to emphasize their ontological and existential threat. Stone, an equivalent to Yabe's character, visits the deceased Josh's apartment and encounters a spectre in a moment that adapts the scene described above in *Kairo*. Stone hears muffled, high-pitched voices coming from Josh's bedroom; the door is sealed with red tape. As Stone forces the door open, a low drone is heard, paired with higher pitched pulsing tones, followed by a string glissando that is sustained as he starts to look around the room. A lingering high-pitched ring is heard, joined by a soprano vocal delivering two tonal moans, suggesting a living presence. As Stone walks towards the bathroom, the layers of sound start to increase. The high-pitched pulsing tones fade in and

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[855] Tatsumi Hijikata in Jean Viala and Nourit Mason-Sekine, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, Nourit Masson-Sekine (ed.), (Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1988), 188.

out of the mix, while a continuous electronic buzzing and whispered vocal effects are added, before a thud is heard from the bedroom. Stone turns, reacting to the sound.

Here a range of voices becomes more distinct and is placed high in the mix. Bathed in reverberation and electronically manipulated, the words require concentration on the audio-viewer's part to comprehend their meaning. Emerging from the multiple voices are the words 'help me'. At this point, the sound has built up with the pulsing tones and electronic buzzing reinforcing the suggestion that an unnatural presence shares the space. As Stone moves back into the bedroom, the camera's focus widens, and he sees the window is covered in red tape similar to that which confronts Yabe in *Kairo*. The next shot adopts Stone's point-of-view, followed by another shot in which the camera is positioned directly in front of Stone's face, adopting the perspective of the ghost. This contrasts with *Kairo*, where Yabe's point-of-view dominates the equivalent scene.

As Stone stares directly at the camera, the upper layers of electronic sound subside and an amplified bass drone sound and crackle effect are heard before the camera shifts back to Stone's point-of-view. This first shot, as Stone sees something in the shadows, creates a parallel between the spirit and the audio-viewer, since when he looks directly at the camera, he is essentially looking at us, suggesting that perhaps we have become the ghosts. This aligns with the film's commentary on our relationship with technology and how, instead of bringing people together, it encourages an isolation that may result in us becoming ghostly shadows of our former selves as we rely more and more on technology to communicate. The 'us' and 'we' here refer to the subject-position fashioned by the film's targeting of a key demographic who are primary users of technology– a teen US audience.

After this close-up of Stone's reaction there is a cut to his point-of-view as an arm becomes visible in the dark shadows across from him. High-pitched tremolo strings enter, along with a low electronic drone slide; electronically manipulated choral vocals are heard in the mix as the strings, also modified, dramatically rise to a crescendo. String glissando effects intermittently enter among the tremolos as the ghost begins to step out of the shadows and walk towards him. We cut back to a close-up of Stone's frozen face before the camera resumes his point-of-view, the film utilizing the same shot/reverse-shot approach as *Kairo*. While the female ghost in this sequence has the same human-like

appearance as her equivalent in *Kairo*, her image as she walks towards Stone suddenly flickers like a computer generated hologram.

The spectre's wavering movement could be read as a parallel of the butoh dance form that inspired the equivalent scene in *Kairo*. Although negotiating a re-working of this scene, however, there is a culturally specific meaning that is lost by the computer-generated representation of *Pulse's* ghost. Despite butoh's improvisatory nature, its focus on the consciousness of the body itself is rejected by the artificiality of *Pulse*'s replication. Orlando Vincent Truter observes that 'the Western body proves resistant to modes of embodiment in which the individual subject is abandoned and the body is foregrounded as a sentient entity.' [856] The artificiality of *Pulse's* replicated ghost is reinforced by the combination of the crackling of static with a synchronized flickering visual, as if the ghost is being transmitted into the room. As she gets nearer to Stone, his point-of-view shifts out of focus, while the soundtrack continues to crescendo: the vocals build up, producing a flood of wordless sound, with the higher register string tremolo and electronic bass. The ghost's face begins to come into focus and we cut back to Stone with a percussive thud as he jumps across the bed. This gives purposeful momentum to his action as he begins to rip the red tape off the window, looking outside as the camera, shooting from street level, captures his face looking out, one might suppose, at humanity.

As Stone tries to escape, a more distinct ticking beat is heard. A sustained, higher register electronic tonal layer is added, producing what is almost a ringing sound. The next shot cuts to a static view under the bed, with Stone quickly falling to the other side of it and into shot, the audio-viewer adopting his point-of-view as he looks around for the spectre. All sound drops to a minimal level at this point, with the exception of the lower drone and the sudden build-up of a second wave of electronic sound as Stone suddenly looks up in horror. The next shot focuses on his upper body, and then reverses back to his point-of-view as the face of the ghost slowly appears over the top of the bed, looking down on him. The block of electronic sound is reinforced by the return of the high-register tremolo strings, before this wall of sound is interrupted by the sound of a camera shutter in a double burst of sound. This is synchronized with the face of the ghost jolting forward, as if it is being

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[856] Orlando Vincent Truter, 'The originating impulses of Ankoku Butoh: towards an understanding of the trans-cultural embodiment of Hijikata Tatsumi's dance of darkness' (Ph.D diss., Rhodes University, December 2007), 90.

projected into the moment by the audio effect. Her face now comes into focus: letting out an inhuman screech, she leaps forward, her hands clutching the side of the bed. This replaces the murmuring vocal delivery heard earlier in the scene with an alien-like sound.

Figure 69. Stone finds himself facing a malevolent digital ghost in a scene from the remake which tries to replicate the moment in *Kairo* when Yabe comes in to contact with a ghost.

Any parallel with the series of shots in *Kairo* in which Yabe's point-of-view is adopted as the ghost peers over at him is again diminished. The artificiality of the spectre in *Pulse* is reinforced as her face lunges forward towards Stone and into a close-up; a visual effect casts her into the physical space of the room as if she has materialized from a computer. Her movement is also marked with a distorted bird-like screech. Stone's scream follows at this point, his voice electronically manipulated to signify an out-of-body sound. The accompanying visual shows a computer-generated image of his face ascending towards the camera, which adopts the ghost's point-of-view. We then cut to a black screen, marked by an electronic thud as he becomes a technological avatar.

In *Pulse*, the score also reinforces narrative coherence. The audio-viewer is made aware of what is about to happen through the highly structured nature of the score, which follows many Hollywood conventions. As Peter Hutchings observes, music in horror film 'is often foregrounded as a presence [...] this can manifest itself in shocking or discordant effects of various kinds that seek to

support or amplify visual moments of shock or suspense.' [857] This approach contrasts with the sense of disembodiment that *Kairo* creates through the electronic audio treatment of its human voices. The use of reverberation and echoes disconnects voice from body. Coupled with the fact that vocal delivery moves between different sound channels, this challenges the audio-viewer's ability to form a coherent narrative interpretation. Alternatively, the animalistic approach to the spectres' voices in *Pulse* does not create such a challenge. As will be explained, it is the scoring and character dialogue that articulate their motivations.

5.5 Scoring Technological Concern

While the treatment of music and sound draws attention to culturally specific representations of the supernatural in *Pulse*, and this invites comparisons to *Kairo*, the scoring is also indicative of wider social concerns. The apocalyptic outcome of *Pulse* is symptomatic of a proliferation of, and consumer reliance on, reproductive electronic and digital technology. The putatively infectious nature of the technology can also be linked to broader social concerns in the films, in relation to their period of production and the difference in technological advancements. *Pulse*, released in the year preceding the introduction of the iPhone in Summer 2007, is littered with footage of people using mobile devices that to an audio-viewer today would seem outdated. The prolific use of mobile technology presented throughout the film, however, reminds us of a society beyond the world of the film which constantly needs to update its forms of consumer technology. Computers also play an integral role in *Pulse*. In one scene after Josh's death, Mattie and her friends are shown using a form of Messenger on their computers; even as a ghost, Josh participates in communication through this medium, using the software to ask his friends for help.

Pulse's Sonzero recognizes this and heightens Kairo's initial focus on the Internet as the source of the ghosts' invasion, drawing attention to devices in a much more overt manner to demonstrate the dangers of technological advancement – dangers which today are more closely associated with the heightened use of social media and cyber bullying/stalking, themselves referenced

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[857] Peter Hutchings, 'Music of the Night: Horror's Soundtracks', in *Sound and Music in Film and Visual Media: An Overview*, Graeme Harper, Ruth Doughty, and Jochen Eisentraut (eds.), (New York: Continuum, 2009), 224.

in the film during a scene near the beginning when Mattie attends a Psychology class. The focus on devices has an impact on the use of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds in the film. Stark audio design is heavily electronically manipulated to emphasize the very sounds of the technology that endanger its users. This is highlighted in a number of scenes in which people are shown using mobile phones and computers, such as in the scene where Mattie, Isabelle and Tim meet in an Internet café to discuss the mysterious package that Josh has sent Mattie; the diegetic sounds of computer games and clicking keyboard keys litter the soundtrack, and, placed high in the mix alongside their dialogue, emphasize the constant use of the devices.

Kairo, however, released after the turn of the millennium and the initial rise of the Internet, explores the fears and anxiety of a technologically advancing society with concerns about isolation and social dysfunction. In Japan, thriving telecommunication companies like NTT DOCOMO, Inc. and the multinational information technology corporation NEC constantly deliver new products. Notably, therefore, *Kairo* expands its critique to include the institutional structures that have promoted these technologies through commercialism. This is particularly implied when Michi and Kawashima are shown sailing away from an apocalyptic wide-angle shot of a city. This backdrop is Tokyo, the once thriving late-capitalist technological epicentre now represented, in the film, as a stark and desolate urban void. This lifeless cityscape is juxtaposed with the sounds of the very thing that is feared to be lost because of an immersion in technology: humanity.

Kairo's non-diegetic music often features orchestral scoring, the use of acoustic instruments adding a sentimental humanism to the urban desolation of the visuals. The use of music here conveys a sense of the human still lingering amongst the desolate city backdrop and can be read as an example of *yūgen* through the melancholy portrayed, which still suggests a dark beauty in what remains of a human society. This is particularly the case when Michi and Kawashima are shown fleeing the city, driving through the deserted streets of Tokyo, the camera adopting Michi's point-of-view behind the wheel, accompanied by a suitably propulsive orchestral score. Whispered voices are heard throughout the film – victims calling out for help – and at one point, when Junko is consumed with her own loneliness and loses her will to live, she literally disappears, leaving a black stain on the wall of Michi's apartment. As Michi calls out for her friend, the stain turns into ashes and a gust of wind

suddenly fills the apartment. With the ashes swirling around, a final disembodied ghostly wail is heard on the soundtrack before the ashes disappear through the open balcony door and window.

A similar vocal audio effect is heard earlier on in the film when Yabe visits Tagushi's home, whose shadowy stain remains on the wall in the very spot where he committed suicide. However, as Taguchi appears to see his friend in place of the shadow and asks him what happened, the film cuts to a medium shot of the wall, revealing Taguchi's shadow again. An electronically manipulated wail with a glissando effect is heard over the lone, female, wordless vocal that dominates the soundtrack at this point in the film. As Jones observes, 'the humans are ultimately subject to introspective decline. Fear is propagated by technology in "Kairo", but it is coupled with the longing for contact, not a desire for annihilation.' [858] This narrative contrasts with *Pulse*, which focuses its commentary on the parasitic media devices themselves and the control they have over people, infecting them like a virus. In *Pulse* the technology becomes a fetishized and commodified other, while in *Kairo*, the threat is represented as coming from within the subject.

In one of the final scenes of *Pulse*, the audio-viewer is made aware of the full role played by technology in these spectral attacks. Mattie and Dexter, having fled the city, are resting in a stolen car. As the camera zooms in on the pair sleeping, sustained descending chromatic pitches are played by strings in the underscoring signify unease and thus the oncoming supernatural threat. Crackles of radio static enter as a member of the United States Army delivers an emergency announcement heard by Mattie: 'Cell phones, computers and PDAs are all conduits for the invasion. Dispose of all technology before proceeding to these locations.' During the crackles of the announcement a bass boom sound effect enters. As the camera zooms in on Mattie's mobile phone, which is on the dashboard, the sustained string pitch from the previous cue slowly transitions into dissonant high-pitched string tremolos via a glissando. In her naivety Mattie checks the mobile, rather than turning it off. The dissonant tremolo strings continue with added string glissandos and the addition of the intermittent bass booms, building the tension as Mattie realises her phone is a conduit for the spectre. This realisation is swiftly followed by an electronically manipulated descending groan sound from the roof of the truck. As the groan sound descends the tremolo strings fade out and a high-pitched sustained

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[858] Jones, 'The Technologies of Isolation', 189.

string tone enters the soundtrack slowly producing a crescendo quietly enters the soundtrack. The shot

cuts to adopt the point-of-view of someone peering in at the window, accompanied by heavily

manipulated low electro-acoustic vocal effects. As the threat rises in intensity, so does the music.

When Mattie wipes condensation off the window, the groans momentarily fade as the glass is

suddenly smashed and the screech of the spectre that has broken through is answered by Mattie's own

screams.
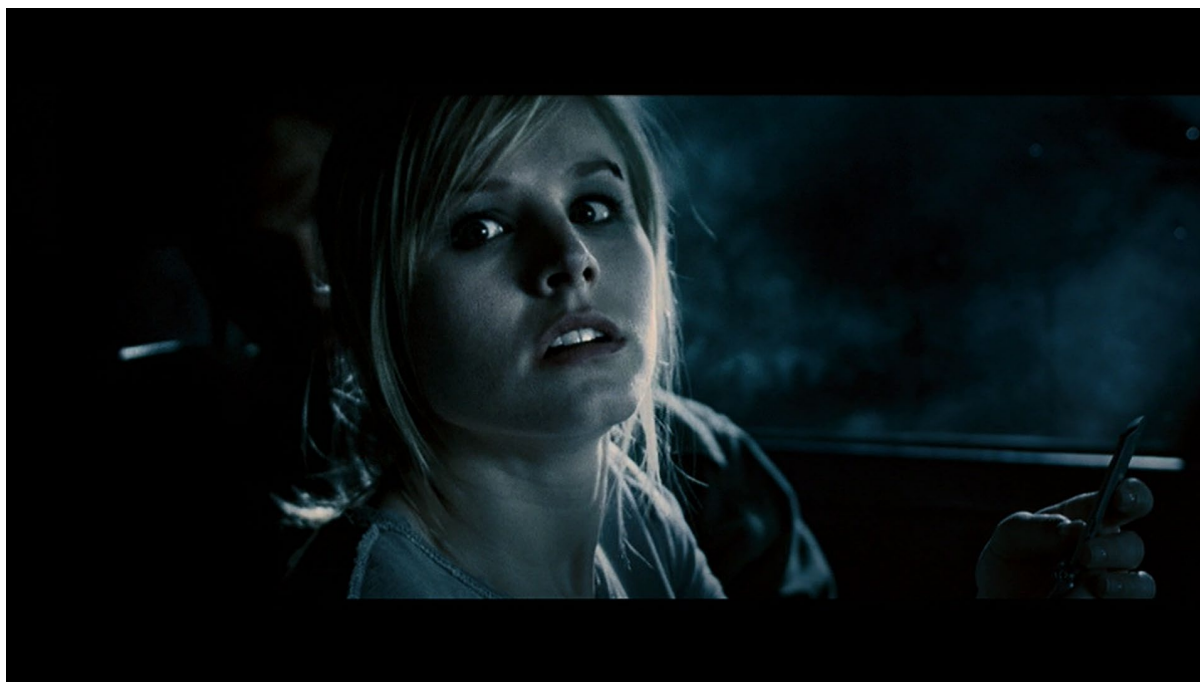
Figure 70. A reliance on technology: Mattie's realization that her cell phone is being used as a conduit by the

invading ghosts.

Interestingly, as the spectre is shown peering in at Mattie, her ghostly reflection and hollow

blacked-out eyes are similar to the more human representations of *Kairo's* spectres. This may allude to

the blurred barriers between technology and its users, signifying a symmetrical view of the interaction

between human beings and media. The ideological values of the society represented in *Pulse* place

such importance on this technology that, even when Mattie knows that her mobile phone is a trigger

(after hearing the announcement on the radio), the impulse to check it is still maintained. As Wee

observes, '"Pulse" depicts technology largely as a tool and a conduit, while the supernatural threat is

ultimately introduced by human actions and decisions.' [859]

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[859] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes*, 175.

The direct parallel between ghost and human is also prevalent throughout the scenes in the film in which victims of the virus appear on webcams as ghostly apparitions. They are presented in passive, lifeless states, or inflicting harm on themselves. One is shown wearing a plastic bag over his/her head and is repeatedly shown failing to pull it off: the image keeps cutting and going back to the beginning of the feed. The idea of showing victims reacting through a webcam feed is regenerated from *Kairo*. This can be interpreted as a form of identity collapse within the very frame of the remake, as the 'images effectively collapse the boundary between (the images found in) the Japanese original and the remake, even as these same images resonate with actual, real world, webcam images that both films' audiences are familiar with having engaged in similar forms of digital communication in actual life.' [860] In this way, the original film is invading the remake, in a parallel with the ghosts' invasion of reality, symbolizing the virality of the effects of technology through the medium itself.

The soundtrack of *Pulse* feeds on the media proliferation emphasized throughout by images in the film. This is demonstrated in the opening credits, which deliver a prologue dominated by sound. An electronic throbbing is heard prior to the opening shots, produced by a manipulated sound effect of what could be a fan rotating, perhaps representing the sound of a computer fan. A low electronic beat accompanies the pulse, joined by percussive low bass frequencies, repeating the same three-note pattern of three percussive thuds followed by an additional electronic moaning. A guitar scratch effect is heard, followed by an electrical flicker that accompanies a ripple of white light across the logo for the US theatrical distributor, *Dimension Films*, and then the next title credit, the logo for one of the three production companies involved, *Distant Horizon*. As this disappears from the screen, a ghostly electro-acoustic wind effect is heard over a consistent, layered, pulsing ostinato which sounds like a computer system starting up. As the first words of the main credits appear on screen, a more distinct form of electro-acoustic static enters, breaking away into smaller sound fragments signifying computer coding. Digitized sound effects are synchronized with the appearance of the main credits, which are displayed in the format of digital data and shown scrolling across the screen before breaking up like fragmented pieces of coding. These are followed by a computer boot-up sound effect and a close-up of an email text box in the background, fading to black as the credits continue to appear.

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[860] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their American Remakes*, 176.

As more digitized images begin to appear and then fade, a number of human voices are heard on the soundtrack, one after the other, linking the human to the digitized nature of the opening credit sequence. The soundtrack and images carefully link to different forms of digital technology in the background: 'At TCC Northeast, we have the largest cellular network in the five-state... Join the fun at Mondo Net. You get instant access to your friends.' The credits continue with the same electronic ostinato pulsing away on the soundtrack, with swells of sustained organ tones entering at different points across the sequence. The voices become layered and the sounds of digital flickers, static, and crackling become more intense, until individual voices can no longer be identified. Instead the audio-viewer is shown various lines of computerized text taken from a number of media interfaces, including social media. These lines of text are layered over one another, scrolling across the screen from right to left. A moving human mouth appears behind the layers of messaging text as the words become more and more congested. This discordant mix of voices is overshadowed by a gush of heavily manipulated sound, replicating a rising glissando on multiple strings, but speeded up and altered to deliver an explosion of sound that is seemingly sucked into a vacuum along with the ostinato. All sound is then shut down with a final sound perhaps replicating the noise of a computer system powering down. The word *Pulse* appears on the screen, flickering once over a blurred backdrop of coloured shadows: people on a college campus, the sound of their voices leaking onto the soundtrack.

The superimposition of sounds heard in the opening credits of *Pulse*, created by composer Elia Cmiral's mix of electronic and acoustic materials, points to the inseparability of modern-day society and digital media. [861] Throughout the film, the composer uses strings playing in the upper registers to create spectral sounds that are often joined by electronically altered vocal effects, synthesized pulses, and electronic sonic counterparts. This mix produces a homogenous soundscape that reflects the socio-cultural concerns of the film-the inseparability of the spectres, representing technology and its users. The relentless drive of the soundtrack never seems to pause for breath as it mirrors the momentum of the images, which continually deliver visceral shocks. *Kairo* also utilizes electro-mechanical sound effects to introduce the film. Brown notes how, prior to the production credits, 'for a full 17 seconds

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[861] Discussing the score for *Pulse* in an interview with Randall D. Larson, Cmiral describes how he 'used the Prague Orchestra, recording on the internet for a couple of days, a large string ensemble with no brass and four or five clarinets playing the highest possible tone.' See Randall D. Larson, 'The Splintered Scores of Elia Cmiral', (http://www.buysoundtrax.com/larsons_soundtrax_11_27_08.html, 2 August 2016).

we hear nothing but the chirping, squealing sounds of a computer modem handshaking with a server to establish a connection so that the transfer of information may occur.' [862] While this moment can be linked to *Pulse's* opening credits, Brown goes on to describe the dial-up sounds as being 'the voices of electronic "circuits" (the literal meaning of the word *'kairo'*) communicating with each other.' [863] By likening these sounds to a form of dialogue, they are humanized, connecting those who once lived and use the network as a channel to re-enter the world with a living humanity who risk becoming disconnected by an over-reliance on the very same digital network and more broadly, technology at large. As in the preceding case study chapters, this is an example of how sound design is used in Japanese 'ghost' films to highlight the fluid boundaries between the living and the dead. The cacophony of sounds with which *Pulse* opens is an aggressive assault on the senses that draws attention to the film's monstrous presentation of ghostly transference. *Kairo's* opening offers a stark contrast.

The start of *Kairo* makes use of silence, guiding the audio-viewer to reflect on the ways in which humanity is represented throughout the film. In the scene in which Michi is shown visiting Yabe's apartment after he has seemingly gone missing, for instance, there is a sudden shift in the soundtrack. As Michi enters the apartment, the use of silence creates an inhuman feeling: only ambient sounds accompany Michi's voice. An ashen shadow is shown on the wall, a visual representation of emptiness and loss, paralleling the muted soundtrack. This dissonance triggers a more active interpretive engagement from the audience owing to the silence's rupturing of conventional filmic transparency. As Michi stands in the apartment, the shot of her looking at the shadow is reversed and 'ambient noise drops out completely in the mix' [864], resulting in the audio-viewer being placed both visually and aurally in the position of the ghost. The words '[h]elp me' pan left and right to create an effect of closeness, as if they are rising from the audio-viewer himself/herself. They are heard clearly despite the reverberation and filtering effects that are applied, and at a volume that suggests Michi is being spoken to directly as the only person in the room. However, Michi's response reveals that she

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[862] Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations, 48.*
[863] *Ibid.*, 48.
[864] *Ibid., 46.*

does not seem to hear Yabe's spirit's words. Her facial expression remains neutral as her eyes search the shadow on the wall. [865]

Figure 71. A ghostly perspective: The audio-viewer is placed 'within' Yabe's spirit both visually and aurally.

The complete elimination of ambient sound in the mix emphasizes the fact that the words fall on deaf ears. This is reinforced further through the absence of any diegetic sound as Michi leaves the room, with not even the sound of the door heard closing behind her. In this scene, a voice is present but unable to break through into the diegesis. A struggle to rationalize its meaning adds to the ghostly moment. After adopting Yabe's point-of-view we cut to a static position looking into the room from the door, with Yabe's shadow now in front of the camera. The words 'help me' are repeated a fifth time, creating a verbal transition across the shots and distance from the source. However, this distance is interrupted for the sixth and final utterance, with the volume increased as if the ghostly disembodied voice is infecting both the audio-viewer's perspective and Michi herself. This moment in the film can be read as an example of prosthetic memory. As in the case study of *Ju-on*, when Rika is approached by the murderous Takeo at the end of the film, the audio-viewer experiences a moment through another's eyes. It enables a personal connection to a moment that the audio-viewer has not lived

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[865] Discussing the previous scene, in which Michi calls Yabe on the telephone, Steven T. Brown notes how Yabe's voice during the phone call is an example of what Michel Chion means by the 'acousmatic', "the auditory situation in which we hear sounds without seeing their cause or source" (Chion, *Film: A Sound Art*, New York: University of Columbia Press, 2009, p. 465). Yabe's voice is then 'de-acousmatised' once we discover that Michi will go to speak to him directly, which will establish the source of the disembodied voice on the telephone. However, Brown observes that Yabe's voice is 're-acousmatised' once more as his body is no longer physically present, with just the black body-like stain on the wall remaining. See Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations*, 44-45.

through but connects to through cinematic techniques, and as I argue in both cases, an alternative scoring practice heightens the power of the scene, 'as the camera and the cinema enable people to take on memories of difficult pasts and thereby facilitate the experience of empathy.' [866] As Landsberg continues, '[i]n so doing, they open up new doors for consciousness raising and progressive political alliance formation.' [867] This is part of Landsberg's argument that 'the political potential of prosthetic memory lies in its capacity to enable ethical thinking.' [868] In the case of *Kairo*, this is aligned with raising awareness of the socio-cultural potential of prosthetic memory, particularly through the treatment of sound-design in the scene at Yabe's apartment discussed here. As Yabe's humanized plea to Michi goes unheard, the shot/reverse shot pattern that links him to her is destabilized: his disappearance unsettles the privileged position of the human being as the primary structuring force of the shot. This reinforces the fear, articulated by Jones, that '[t]he more we utilize technology to expand beyond the means of the anatomical self the more we fear technology is somehow intruding upon the self' [869], until it is no longer human.

Analysis of film remakes, I have been arguing here, must consider the 'material phenomenon produced by a system of institutional interests' [870] through an analysis of sound and music, particularly when culturally specific representations need to be considered. Technophobia, for example, may transcend national and cultural boundaries, providing an example of a fear becoming universal across capitalist, technologically advanced societies, since ideological foundations dominate the manner in which these anxieties are presented in audio-visual constructs. Analysis of a film like *Kairo* and its transnational remake, *Pulse*, offers new perspectives on how technology undermines social cohesion through culturally determined means. Furthermore, the audio-visual examples analyzed above draw attention to the role sound and music play not only in the critique of technological advancements in these particular examples, but in future critical assessments of their representation in transnational film remakes and their scores.

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[866] Landsberg, 'Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture', 156.
[867] *Ibid.*, 156.
[868] *Ibid.*, 156.
[869] Jones, 'The Technologies of Isolation', 188.
[870] Murray, 'Materializing Adaptation Theory', 10.

5.6 Further Considerations

Concluding this chapter, it will be productive to consider the global shift from analogue to digital media communication and, in particular, the major impact on the access of global film and television horror, including Japanese 'ghost' films, through streaming services. In March 2021, Stacey Abbott and Lorna Jowett's edited collection in the Horror Studies series, *Global TV Horror*, was published. The publication presents contributions that consider what television on an international scale brings to an understanding of horror and 'how the genre is adapted to suit different national, cultural and industrial contexts, exploring different fears, anxieties and cultural understandings of horror.' [871] However, the consistent thread that runs through the publication is the instituting of horror and its well-established history of global or transnational production, with Japanese horror film and television examples consistently being referenced, particularly in the publication's conclusion 'Transnationalism and TV Horror Fandom'. However, James Rendell's chapter 'Tracing Terror-Bytes: *Ring: Saishusho* as Japanese TV Horror, Online Transcultural J-Horror Fan Object and Digital Only-click Television' specifically discusses the influence of Japanese horror and, in particular, the transnational cult status of *Ringu* on a Japanese digital-only Gothic, mystery horror-melodrama with multi-narrative subplots called *Ringu: Saishūshō* (*Ring: The Final Chapter*, 1999). Rendell examines how fans of Japanese horror cinema have engaged with the TV series, despite the lack of formal playback formatting for J-horror TV, and with no official release in the West. What is particularly interesting is the focus of Rendell's study on users uploading the series to YouTube, thereby distributing the drama by fandom. Rendell notes 'how fans engage with 'digi-gratis (Booth 2016), as they upload the series onto YouTube as a form of what Rendell terms 'Only-click' TV: broadcast television solely available online via digital, often illicit, means.' [872] Rendell's article thereby opens up a bigger discussion when considering where the transnational Hollywood remake sits within this TV series based on an original Japanese horror film. Thus he 'argues that *Saishusho* serves part of an archival function, allowing fans to find out and discuss earlier "authentic" J-horror texts during times

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[871] Stacey Abbott and Lorna Jowett, 'It's Taking Over the Whole World: Global TV Horror, Then and Now' in *Horror Studies: Global TV Horror*, Stacey Abbott and Lorna Jowett (eds.), (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2021), 4.

[872] James Rendell, 'Tracing Terror-Bytes: *Ring: Saishusho* as Japanese TV Horror, Online Transcultural J-Horror Fan Object and Digital Only-click Television' in *Horror Studies: Global TV Horror*, Stacey Abbott and Lorna Jowett (eds.), (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2021), 216.

of 'inauthentic' Western versioning.' [873] Considering the role of music and sound would provide another critical area of discussion here, especially if extended to fan posts that compare sound and/or music between the different mediums. However, in this study, neither Rendell nor the fan forum posts he analyses reference sound or music.

Iain Robert Smith notes the impact of streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon, Shudder (a dedicated horror streaming service) and the increase in the availability of subtitled and dubbed TV horror series from Japan, such as *Tokyo Vampire Hotel* (Sono Sion, 2017). However, while Abbott and Jowett's edited collection, including Smith's input, focuses on some Japanese horror TV, it is essential to ask the broader question of where the Japanese 'ghost' film and its Hollywood transnational remakes reside amidst these digital services – especially given that Miranda Ruth Larsen notes that 'there's something about horror's appeal – especially in the TV format – that drives transnational curiosity'. [874] One result of that driving force extends the *Ju-On* story.

In July 2020, Netflix premiered the first horror series from its Japanese production wing: *Ju-On: Origins*. Directed by Shō Myake, the six-part series is based on the film franchise by Shimizu Takashi. Marketed as a prequel of sorts, a voice-over informs the audio-viewer that *Ju-On: Origins* 'was inspired by true events. All of these events originated from one house. However, the real events were far more frightening than the movies.' Adapting thematic material and expected conventions from franchise to a streamed series suggests new territory for analyzing music and sound in Japanese 'ghost' films and other media. As is the case with sequels, remakes and series adaptations, each new release adds a new layer of narrative complexity, recontextualizing what has followed before. In the case of *Ju-On: Origins,* this is pushed further by its self-referential nature to the films it came from, arguing that it tells the true story and that the prior films were, in fact, 'only' films. Commenting on what this means for future analysis, Daniel Krátký notes:

> This rhetorical figure constitutes a meta-fiction relationship where *Origins* does not share the
> same narrative space as the original *Ju-On*. In fact, in the fictional world of *Origins*, *Ju-On* is

[873] Rendell, 'Tracing Terror-Bytes: Ring: Saishusho as Japanese TV Horror, Online Transcultural J-Horror Fan Object and Digital Only-click Television', 216.
[874] Miranda Ruth Larsen, 'Transnationalism and TV Horror Fandom', in *Horror Studies: Global TV Horror*, Stacey Abbott and Lorna Jowett (eds.), (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2021), 238.

implicitly acknowledged to be a movie franchise. Or non-existing. Thus, the series complicates simple terms such as remake, reboot, sequel or prequel. This is the narrative intertextual network again. [875]

This is undoubtedly an area for further investigation, applying the questions my research begins to ask here, especially with it only being so recently in 2020 that the very first original Japanese horror series was distributed on Netflix. This is nowhere more obvious than is the show's use of music and sound.

This incorporation of new digital technologies does not deviate away from the aurally unique sonic palettes that the film composers used. Technology can enhance the original premise of the sound design or invite a new understanding of cultural influences on the soundtracks of Japanese 'ghost' film remakes and adaptations. The *Ju-on: Origins* score, composed by Haishima Kuniaki, has a minimalist reserve. The sound effects created by Shibsaki Kenji are coupled with the restrained non-diegetic scoring to reflect the slower pace. The TV shows' score does not overpower with an assault of audio-visual horror. However, it remains true to a practice of filmmaking and sound production approach that incorporates cultural aesthetics commonly used in Japanese 'ghost' cinema, unpacked in Chapter Two, and in the case study analysis of *Ju-on* in Chapter Four. I would like to focus on one sole example from the series' soundtrack, its end title song, *Sonkanyo* (the base of its meaning indicates an idea of destruction). [876] A traditional Ainu song performed by the four women of vocal group Marewrew [877] and sung in the Ainu language, *Sonkanyo* is one of the first traditional vocal songs of a native Japanese tradition to be used in the end credits of a contemporary Japanese 'ghost' film,

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[875] Daniel Krátký, "Space, Smoke and Mirrors: The Frightening Ambiguity of Ju-On: Origins (2020)" in *Japanese Horror Culture: Critical Essays on Film, Literature, Anime, Video Games*, Fernando Gabriel Pagnoni Berns, Subashish Bhattacharjee and Ananya Saha (eds.), (London and Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group Ltd., 2020), 54.

[876] Ainu is an exclusively oral language and endangered. It has no traditional writing system. See Sarah M. Strong, *Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie's Ain Shin'yōshū* (Honolulu: Univesity of Hawai'I Press, 2011).

[877] *Marewrew* means butterfly in Ainu. The group perform traditional Ainu songs to keep the culture alive. As 'The Ainu are an ethnic group originally indigenous to northern Honshu and Hokkaido (in present day Japan) as well as to the Kuril Islands, and the southern tip of Kamchatka and much of Sakhalin.' (Strong, 2011, 5.) The Ainu now mostly reside on Hokkaido. Joseph D. Hankins and Carolyn S. Steven's note that 'Ainu' is [also] known as a broad categorical term to refer to people who identify separate to the "*shamo*" ethnicity; *shamo* is an indigenous term for mainland Japanese. Today, some indigenous activists prefer the term Utari to Ainu as a break from the past when Ainu was often used derisively by *shamo*.' See *Sound, Space and Sociality in Modern Japan*, Joseph D. Hankins and Carolyn S. Steven's (eds.), (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 11.

commissioned pop songs driven by profit being the popular and conventional option. An example of this is presented in the *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* case study of Chapter Three.

Sonkanyo is almost delivered acapella except for sparse percussion sounds, which reflect different forms of Ainu oral traditions that are 'accompanied by the rhythmical beating of a short stick, repni, or clapping of hands (Howell R, 362).' [878] *Sonkanyo* is also sung in an imitative style with unique vocal inflections as part of the traditional Ainu vocal delivery. The inclusion of an indigenous performing art tradition in this Japanese TV production for an American streaming platform generates a need for a multi-faceted analytical approach. It is also worth noting, as Smith highlights, that '[t]he financial model for a company like Netflix is to move into new territories and to produce and distribute 'local' content but then to make that content available to all its subscribers worldwide'. [879] So, where does the role of music and sound fit in here, especially considering the reception of cultural influence of 'local' content in the productions being streamed? As Brenda S. Gardenour Walter observes, '[m]odern media and rapid communication technologies have made possible a language of transnational horror […] in which elements of terror are continually received, shaped, and transmitted in myriad patterns and multicultural contexts.' [880] Therefore, wider research questions must now be considered when examining the impact and roles of streaming services: What does the phenomenon – 'Japanese' horror shows/film and their soundtrack specifities becoming, in turn, a transcultural phenomenon (like, say, 'Nordic' noir) – mean for the meaning of the phenomena I have mapped carefully throughout this thesis? Unmoored from an audio-viewership of primarily Japanese consumers, for example, with some conscious and unconsciously absorbed knowledge of the aesthetic features I have charted here, what meanings do those sonic representations of those features lose? And what new meanings do they gain? Given the intensity of fan culture discussions of television dramas and their often forensic analysis of the origins and potential meanings associated with music tracks, could this phenomenon provide an entry point for non-Japanese audiences into a rich new world of

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[878] Joanna Charlotte Moody, 'The Ainu Speak of Famine: How Oral Traditions Reflect and Inform Historical Analysis of Changing Food Practices and Trade Relations in Early Modern Period Hokkaido (1603-1868)' (BS.c diss., March 2013), 89. The *repni* is a stick used by both the reciter and audience to beat time during the recitation of *yukar* epics (heroic epics about human protagonists).

[879] Smith, 'Transnationalism and TV Horror Fandom', 239.

[880] Brenda S. Gardenour Walter, 'Ghastly Transmissions: The Horror of Connectivity and the Transnational Flow of Fear' in *Transnational Horror Across Visual Media: Fragmented Bodies*, Dana Och and Kirsten Strayer (eds.), (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17.

cultural symbols and socio-cultural contexts – and, with that, permit the cultural concepts central to this thesis's analysis of Japanese 'ghost' film music and sound to begin a transcultural journey of their own?

This chapter has navigated such contexts through its detailed case study analysis. It also addresses where I believe that research and the sonic analysis of Japanese 'ghost' films and television needs further engagement beyond the remit of the present study: examining music and sound design's pivotal and neglected roles within the scholarship of Japanese 'ghost' films and their remakes as transnational phenomena.

Conclusion

This thesis presents a unique examination of music and sound in Japanese 'ghost' cinema, exploring the manner and extent to which a significant array of productions demonstrate alternative film scoring and sound design practices to conventional Hollywood paradigms. It offers an original examination of the ways music and sound in these films provide insight into Japanese cultural perceptions of the supernatural, and, in turn, the influence of traditional Japanese aesthetic expressions on the cultural construction of these phenomena through film music, sound and the moving image. In terms of film music studies, its survey and case studies also provide close audio-visual analyses of a group of films whose previous critical reception has been mainly focused on film visuals.

The study examines the dominance of the 'ghost' in Japanese horror cinema and how its many representations have been presented across the decades. It addresses the prominence of texts that have focused on earlier cinematic and theatrical visual aesthetics and imagery of the supernatural, but also on how the 'ghost' is used to highlight tensions between tradition and modernity. The survey presented here does so from an audio analytical perspective. It is informed by the multi-methodological approach outlined in the Introduction, which addresses film music as social practice and brings together ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and historical research presented through a semiotic model of audio-visual analysis, as introduced in Chapter Two. The concluding analyses form a substantial extension and development of the small amount of existing research that opened up discussion on music and sound in Japanese horror cinema, including significant work from James Wierzbicki and William Whittington. Exploring this earlier research introduced me to Japanese horror film music scores analyzed from the perspective of the wider influence of Japanese culture on film through theatre, music, and – of particular interest to my work – multifaceted Japanese concepts such as *ma*, *yūgen*, *wabi sabi*, *sawari* and the importance of *onshoku* (tone-colour). However, as my thesis demonstrates, while earlier contributions made important first steps, while offering much-needed soundtrack analysis alongside the visual, there was a clear necessity for work producing a much broader and deeper analytical survey of the origins and developments of 'ghost' scoring and its intimate, nuanced, and substantial relationship to specific ally Japanese concepts including but vastly exceeding those explored by previous scholarship.

Chapter One is a detailed historical survey of the development of the Japanese 'ghost' film score that considers the influence of traditional Japanese arts and socio-historical contexts. It makes an in-depth contribution to understanding how unique cultural and social perspectives influence film scoring at the heart of the films exploring Japanese constructions of the relationship between the living and the dead and specifically how the treatment of sound-design draws attention to the porous boundary between these two worlds. My research focuses on the variety of sonic practices in the films, assessed through an application of critical screen music theory. As part of this assessment, I address the role of audio in Japanese silent cinema examples that portray the 'ghost'. This is an area which calls for further investigation, and in this study, I have demonstrated how the narrative techniques used by the *benshi*, along with the audio-visual relationship in the case study of *Kurama Tengu: Kyōfu Jidai*, influenced later Japanese horror film soundtracks. Importantly, there is an assessment of theoretical literature that encourages an engagement with alternative critical approaches to film scoring better suited to the analysis of Japanese cinema. The chapter demonstrates a principle explored in detail across the full study: traditional film music-theoretical models can be challenged and usefully extended by taking a more culturally-informed approach to regional cinemas.

Chapter Two promotes the culturally informed approach introduced in Chapter One by examining how different art forms present the supernatural in Japan, and how sonic practice in the Japanese 'ghost' film relates to Japanese artistic and musical aesthetics first developed in other cultural forms. The chapter is framed with a theoretical consideration of aesthetics and semiotics tooled to audio-visual interactions and incorporating ideas from Charles Sanders Peirce and Philip Tagg. A semiotic model helps present each aesthetic principle discussed with clarity and to permit critical comparison, initially through an 'Orientation Classification' (the terms are from the work of Michael Hardt): a concept's definition as understood in relation to Japanese arts and music. This is especially important, given the often ambiguous origins, nature or multiple definitions of aesthetics clarified in the context of this research. This is followed by an 'Information Classification' that analyses manifestations of the aesthetic principle in examples from Japanese arts, examining their modes of delivery, meanings, and relationship to other aesthetic traits. Each aesthetic example is then considered via an 'Inspiration Classification' corresponding to reception and meaning generation, and most particularly cultural connotations of the concept when applied to potential manifestations of each

concept in the music, sound and audio-visuals of Japanese 'ghost' films. Unique readings of the sound-design and music in the film examples presented under this classification particularly highlight the importance of a Japanese cultural sensitivity towards timbre, and how concepts such as *sawari* draw focus to the boundaries between sound-design and music, challenging dominant scoring practices. The examples under the 'Inspiration Classification' presented in Chapter One also highlight the importance of theatrical origins and delivers several specific examples of continued audio practices from noh and kabuki theatre that manifest in the films' sonic treatment. This chapter demonstrates a wealth of Japanese aesthetic concepts, informed from my fields visits while on my International Placement Scheme Fellowship from 2014-2015. The aesthetic concepts presented had not previously been discussed in relation to Japanese film music, but without which, this thesis argues, Japanese film music studies has hitherto been substantially limited in terms of its critical and contextual reach.

Chapter Three, the thesis's first detailed film case study, reveals how cultural considerations of music and sound design through non-Hollywood approaches to Japanese 'ghost' films result in a more replete analysis of a film's storytelling and significance that would not be recognized by more conventional modes of film music analysis, or earlier, more limited approaches attuned to Japanese aesthetics. The three case studies presented in Chapters Three, Four and Five are all from the early 2000s. As stated in the Introduction, these examples are part of the transnational remake phenomenon that brought attention to dominant sociocultural anxieties in Japan at the time. As Wee notes, also writing on the American remakes of these Japanese horror films: [T]he 1990s and 2000s were marked by a series of political, financial and sociohistorical developments, including accusations of governmental misconduct, economic depressions, terrorist attacks and domestic tragedies, that would significantly undermine national confidence and enhance fear and paranoia in both Japan and the US.' [881] Furthermore, following technological advancements of the 1990s, particularly in Japan with advancements in computer and digital technologies, this marked the dawn of the information age, including the internet becoming mainstream in the early 1990s. With new artificial intelligences and digital technologies pervading culture, it was not surprising that the potential dangers of these technological advances often became the topic of 'ghost' films in the late 1990s/early 2000s, as in the

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[881] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their America Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*,16.

example of *Kairo* and its American remake in Chapter Five. Therefore, the films of the late 1990 and early 2000s discussed in this study, with 2009 specifically marking the end point, form the centre of this thesis' research and undoubtedly inspired further Japanese 'ghost' films after 2009, as the seminal examples presented here demonstrate.

Honogurai mizu no soko kara (2002) presents a film that explores Japanese cultural constructions of the maternal, the child, and trauma – topics which have all been written about previously, but nearly exclusively concerning visual representations. The study analyses how the identification of aesthetic concepts in the film's music and sound design are connected to its central socio-historical issues and themes – subjects that have not been analyzed in-depth prior to this thesis. Connections with the traditional Japanese theatre of *mugen*/phantasmal noh and its blending of 'natural and supernatural planes of experience', as Keiko I. McDonald describes them are made with the film. This not only brings attention to the impact of theatre traditions on contemporary Japanese 'ghost' film, but also demonstrates how the porous boundary between the human and spirit world is amplified through audio treatment in the film. Furthermore, the analysis is uniquely informed by an interview with the film's composer Kawai Kenji, which took place in 2015. This chapter also provides examples of the application of Alison Landsberg's concept on prosthetic memory through which the audio-viewer engages with a past narrative that they have not lived, described by Landsberg as being 'like an artificial limb, these memories are actually worn on the body these are sensuous memories produced by an experience of mass mediated representations.' Noting how these memories often mark a trauma, Landsberg's concept brings attention to the film's key themes of trauma, neglect and the struggling role of the single parent in a patriarchal society, through a relationship between sound and music that effectively breaks through *Honogurai mizu's* perceived barriers. The musical analysis of *Honogurai mizu* provides new insights into specifically Japanese cultural constructions in a Japanese 'ghost' film ranging far beyond the visual and exploring the connection between the world of the living and the domain of the 'ghost'.

Chapter Four's audio-visual analysis of *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002) continues to discuss how Japanese 'ghost' film soundtracks challenges and otherwise interrelate with conventional Hollywood scoring practices. This case study draws attention to the relationship between the pre-modern and the modern as articulated in Japanese 'ghost' cinema, and analyses how this is portrayed through the

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production's particular audio-visual dynamics, again moving beyond the visually-oriented focus of previous scholarship critiqued in the chapter. *Ju-on* utilizes Japanese aesthetic concepts identified in the audio to deconstruct perceptions. This is particularly the case with the depiction of traumatic space that is presented through an unconventional haunted house. The unusual nature of the space that is constructed through Chapter Five's argument parallels the ambiguity of diegetic/non-diegetic sounds in the film with the house, effectively demonstrating how liminal audio-visual spaces suggest the permeable boundary between the living and the dead. The ambiguous nature of sound sources in the film are also connected to the house, as traditional Japanese concepts such as *sawari* create a form of leitmotif that bridges the diegetic and the non-diegetic, with characters hearing sounds only in the house, that within the framework of Hollywood scoring conventions they would not 'normally' hear. The multi-faceted concept of *yūgen* is also explored in this chapter, primarily through the dance form of butoh, which I argue embodies the trauma and protest of Kayako's demise through the film's audio-visual treatment. What is unique about this analysis's critical interpretation of the film is its identification of the manner in which culturally-specific music and sound-design invite the audio-viewer to engage in a hermeneutic process relating to, and constructing, a ghostly sonic specificity created throughout the film. This process is further informed by the inclusion of interview content from Japanese composer Ashiya Gary.

The final chapter of the thesis offers a significant contribution to literature and analysis on Japanese horror cinema and the transnational film remake. Existing research presented in the chapter, such as Valerie Wee's contributions, stresses the importance of comparative engagement between Japanese horror cinema and adaptations/remakes, in order to provide insights into cultural and ideological anxieties shaped through the remake's narrative and representational revisions. Wee's published work address narrative and thematic similarities, differences in aesthetic conventions, historical narrative traits, and the divergence of key textual elements and their execution from a strongly visual perspective. My final chapter effectively argues, through the case study example of Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Kairo* (2001) and its American remake *Pulse* (2006), that culturally distinct aesthetics also shape cross-cultural adaptations via music and sound-design. It presents new thinking on the way changes or replications of scoring practices as texts move across different cultures and film making practices open an essential dialect of sonic exchange.

Key to this thesis has been a critical engagement with aesthetic principles emerging from an extremely wide variety of Japanese arts and cultural forms including traditional noh theatre, kabuki and butoh. It shows how aesthetic principles can be productively applied to 'ghost' film examples, cross-examining traditions of representing the ghostly and the horrific specific to Japanese arts. This is carried out through a comprehensive cultural assessment of texts through field visits, interviews and audio-visual analysis, forming a significant school of cinema that, as Wee summarizes, 'are part of, and borrow significantly from, a long line of earlier classical supernatural texts that range beyond the cinematic to date from centuries past.' [882] Therefore, the theoretical engagement with these Japanese aesthetics presented in this study provides unique crucial insights into the dialogue of traditional and modern themes that converge and clash in contemporary Japanese 'ghost' cinema, not just through the visuals, but also, and sometimes predominantly, through the soundtrack.

Carrying out this research, I was careful to consider the limitations of what can be explored in one thesis, ensuring that the use of particular definitions over others has been carefully explained. One such example, as explained earlier, is the use of quotation marks around the term 'ghost' – quote marks indicating, among other things, my explicit acknowledgement that my approach to this project is that of an Anglophone researcher who has been immersed in, but always to an extent culturally outside of, Japanese culture and identity. Where appropriate, I have applied the findings of wide-ranging archival work and field visits conducted while on a five-month research placement at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies – research that initiated many of the original aspects of this thesis's argument for the centrality to richer audio-visual analysis of a wider range of Japanese aesthetic principles in representations of the 'ghost'. However, this does not mean my understanding will not present its limitations. I accept that a complete understanding of definitions from a native Japanese perspective may be lost in translation. I hope that the thesis Glossary may be of guidance in offering definitions that have been carefully researched and presented to aid understanding of the audio, visual and socio-cultural contexts examined here. However, my research aims to invite audio-viewers to engage in their own hermeneutics of understanding, supported by the novel, detailed, and original research, evidence, and analyses presented in this thesis. I would also like to highlight the

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[882] Wee, *Japanese Horror Films and Their America Remakes: Translating Fear, Adapting Culture*, 24.

limitation of what I have not been able to write about concerning the word limit of this research, which highlights the even deeper wealth of analytical material these films have to offer to screen music and sound analysis, and a series of gaps that my discussion has begun to address in significant but understandably, carefully limited ways. One such gap is further research into the assimilation of other national and regional filmic influences from outside of Japan, beyond the influence of Hollywood models in different periods, within the complex process of cross-cultural interactions and exchanges. Future research I would like to undertake includes analysing music and sound in cross-cultural adaptations of Japanese films based on literary texts, such as *Josée*, a 2020 Korean romantic drama based on Japanese writer Tanabe Seiko's 1984 short story *Joze to tora to sakana-tachi (Josee, the Tiger and the Fish*) and the 2020 Japanese film *Joze to tora to sakana-tachi* . [883] Returning to Japanese 'ghost' films, further work could also include an analysis of the sonic content in Kim Dong-bin's 1999 South Korean film *The Ring Virus*, adapted from the novel *Ring* by Suzuki Kōji, but also treated as a remake of Nakata Hideo's *Ringu* (1998). Future research could also include examining the treatment of music and sound in the recent rise of Japanese-Korean film collaborations, such as the 2009 film *Boat* (*Bo-teu*) directed by Young-nam Kim with a screenplay written by Japanese screenwriter Watanbe Aya. I am also interested in conducting research into Japanese horror composer collaborations. In February 2015 I interviewed composer Shimizu Hitomi, who co-composed the music for Shimizu Takashi's 1998 television anthology *Gakkō no kaidan G* with Ashiya Gary. Shimizu has also collaborated with Ashiya Gary on music for the computer game *Sairen* (サイレン, *Siren* also known as *Forbidden Siren,* 2003). This thesis has focused primarily on film music examples, though as discussed in Chapter Five the rise in streaming services and on-demand audio-viewing platforms means that older Japanese TV-films are now available to access globally and this welcomes further research. While I acknowledge fully the dangers of cultural essentialism, however, of scholarly necessity, the main focus of this research has been to examine how the artistic and musical aesthetics have influenced scoring approaches, in order to more deeply understand representations such as the socio-cultural anxieties manifesting in contemporary (and earlier) Japanese horror cinema. This is integral to developing a fuller understanding of films that negotiate the

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[883] In 2020 Japanese director Tamura Kōtarō also adapted the short story into an animated film also titled *Joze to tora to sakana-tachi.*

complex, multi-layered interrelations of pre-modern and modern Japanese culture, including those negotiated and reinterpreted in the context of the transnational remake, as explored in the final chapter.

That closing examination of how the Japanese 'ghost' film has inspired transnational film remakes and, in turn, new approaches to film scoring also invites further discussion. This is especially the case with the concluding section of the chapter, which provides significant grounding for future studies to address the increase in new media and mass diffusion, as presented through the re-contextualization of Japanese 'ghost' film narratives into different media formats. For example, Netflix is now streaming its first original Japanese horror series *Ju-on: Origins* (2020). In addressing this particular example's relationship with the *Ju-on* film franchise, it can be treated as an instalment related to an entire fictional and cultural mythos, deeply connected to century-old Japanese cultural traditions, while constructing reinterpretations of those traditions in music and sound in a world that is witnessing increasingly fluid evolutions and the intermingling of cultural and media forms. I hope this thesis will encourage detailed examinations of these new audio-visual media manifestations of the 'ghost', including work adopting and adapting its approach to the development of intensely culturally-sensitive, detailed, and uniquely effective models of audio-visual analysis.

Keele University

RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES

13th November 2014

Hannah Bayley
Research Institute for the Humanities
Claus Moser Building

Dear Hannah,

Re: Music, sound and the transnational film adaptation: Japanese horror films and their American remakes

Thank you for submitting your application for review. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel. The following documents have been reviewed and approved by the panel as follows:

Document	Version	Date
Summary of Proposal	2	22/10/14
Letters of Invitation	2	22/10/14
Information Sheets	2	22/10/14
Consent Forms	2	22/10/14
Consent Forms for the use of quotes	2	22/10/14
Interview Topic Guides	2	22/10/14

The panel requests the following updates are completed and lodged with the ERP secretary before documentation is used:

- There should be a final review of the documentation including typing errors and grammar checks.
- The documents state that all data will be confidential – this should be updated to all 'personal' data will be confidential.
- Version numbers should be included on all documents
- The start date should be updated.

The panel would also recommend that for any future ethics applications, it should be ensured that the summary document is the required 2 pages long.

If the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application, you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via the ERP administrator at uso.erps@keele.ac.uk stating ERP1 in the subject line of the e-mail.

If there are any other amendments to your study you must submit an 'application to amend study' form to the ERP administrator stating ERP1 in the subject line of the e-mail. This form is available via http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/

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If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me via the ERP administrator on uso.erps@keele.ac.uk stating ERP1 in the subject line of the e-mail.

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