

**Steven T. Brown, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations*, Cham: Springer, 2018. East Asian Popular Culture series. 330 pp. \$24.99. ISBN: 978-3-319-70628-3. E-ISBN: 978-3-319-70629-0.**

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In his book *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations*, Steven T. Brown sets a congenial and cheerful tone, dedicating it to his dog Guinness, who has unwaveringly endured his continuous consumption of horror films. This extraordinary book delves into the realm of Japanese horror cinema, exploring its connections to world cinema and analyzing the techniques that create a cinema of sensations and a wide range of horror affects. Brown takes on the commendable task of examining selected films that represent J-horror's transnational hybridity within the context of global cultures. With six comprehensive chapters spanning 330 pages, the book offers a deep and engaging exploration of its subject matter. Each chapter is further divided into sections with thought-provoking headings, and the inclusion of extensive bibliographies and lists of extended notes after each chapter adds to the book's scholarly value. The inclusion of graphical elements and image illustrations throughout the text further enhances its appeal.

In the first chapter, titled "Introduction," a meticulous review of the literature is presented, establishing the significance and scope of the book. Brown traces the origins and evolution of J-horror, starting with Nakata Hideo's *Don't Look Up (Joyūrei, 1996)*, *Ring (Ringu, 1998)*, and *Scary True Stories (Hontō ni atta kowai hanashi, 1991-92)*. The second chapter, "Ambient Horror: From Sonic Palimpsests to Haptic Sonority in the Cinema of Kurosawa Kiyoshi," dives into the movement of sound and emotive responses in the horror films of Kurosawa Kiyoshi. In the third chapter, titled "Double Trouble: Doppelgängers in Japanese Horror," Brown explores the concept of the Doppelgänger and its portrayal in J-horror films.

The fourth chapter, "Cinema Fou: Surrealist Horror from Face of Another to Gozu," examines Japanese surrealist horror films in comparison to

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transnational and international surrealist artistic productions. The fifth chapter, titled “In the Wake of Artaud: Cinema of Cruelty in Audition and Oldboy,” investigates into the terms “torture porn” and “Asia Extreme” and their relevance to J-horror. The final chapter, “Envelopes of Fear—The Temporality of Japanese Horror,” explores the timing and temporality evoked by J-horror’s cinema of sensations.

The opening chapter of the book is engaging as Brown argues that his work differs from previous studies that merely provided J-horror surveys. Instead, this book offers a transnational analysis of selected films, shedding light on previously overlooked facets of the genre. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 primarily discuss Japanese films within a transnational context, while the fifth chapter compares Japanese and Korean horror films. Brown positions Japanese horror not only in relation to world horror cinema but also in connection with cultural nuances, such as literature, folklore, and music.

Brown’s review of previous literature is thorough, and he effectively highlights the limitations of earlier studies. He criticizes the tendency in previous studies to read the transnational aspects of Japanese horror only in terms of remakes and adaptations. To support his argument, he references prominent studies by Valerie Wee, Stefan Sunandan Honisch, Daniel Herbert, Colette Balmain, David Kalat, and Andrew Dorman, which examine the numerous Hollywood remakes of J-horror classics. Brown strengthens his argument by citing Hiroshi Takahashi’s views on the interplay between world cinema and Japanese horror, emphasizing Japanese specificity and transnational hybridity. The inclusion of diverse perspectives and references from experts in film studies enriches the text, showcasing Brown’s deep understanding of the subject.

The book’s presentation is both discursive and argumentative, with Brown substantiating his arguments by using Hollywood horror films as case studies. However, readers who are unfamiliar with the cited films may find it challenging to follow the author’s train of thought. Brown also incorporates interviews with subject experts, providing multiple perspectives on the topic. His references to renowned thinkers such as Michel Foucault contribute to the book’s academic dimensions. Furthermore, Brown effectively incorporates modern concepts like the theatre of cruelty and surrealism. One notable finding is the prevalence of vengeful ghosts impersonating the shape, appearance, or voice of a potential victim’s family member or friend, which

serves as a common motif in J-horror cinema. Additionally, Brown examines Japanese horror from a gender perspective, noting the predominance of male directors and filmmakers. He also draws an interesting comparison between “homosociality” (patriarchal society forging bonds between men for the orderly transference of power) and “homosexuality.”

The book’s vitality is enhanced by the inclusion of figures that provide visual insight into Japanese horror. Brown’s writing style seamlessly blends academic discourse with a conversational tone, making the text more accessible and alleviating the potential strain of reading a nonfictional work. Despite its length, the book manages to remain engaging and avoids becoming tedious or monotonous.

The language used in the book deserves mention as certain lines resonate with the reader and leave a lasting impression. For example, the phrase “the cinematographer is an author who writes with light and motion” and the statement “to live means to approach death gradually” are particularly evocative (Brown 230). Brown also explores the role of incantations and chants in heightening the horror effect, discussing the significance of sounds like “*kiri kiri*” that evoke piercing pain. He extensively explores the linguistic aspects of various types of vocal expressions, such as cries denoting pain, terror, and other emotions, and analyzes their utilization within the realm of J-horror. Brown’s proficiency in the Japanese language is commendable, and his inclusion of Japanese words with suitable English translations adds an extra layer of authenticity. It is worth highlighting that the author pays careful attention to Japanese words and spellings, adhering to Japanese word order for names throughout the text.

Another notable aspect of the study is Brown’s examination of Japanese horror cinema from a technical standpoint. He explores audiovisual mechanics such as envelope generators (sound controls), envelope sounds with reference (changing sounds), and dynamic manipulation of silence. Brown also discusses the poetics of color to elucidate the visual nuances of the genre. His use of the term “sound scape” to encapsulate all audio aspects of a movie is particularly apt (28). The book also investigates the techniques through which Japanese horror creates a cinema of sensations using atmospheric horror effects.

While the book offers significant value and contributes to the understanding of the genre, it does have some limitations that should be acknowledged.

One limitation of the book is the limited examination of regional and subcultural variations. *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations* primarily focuses on mainstream Japanese horror cinema and its transnational connections. However, the book may provide limited exploration of the diverse regional and subcultural variations within the genre. Japanese horror encompasses a wide range of styles, themes, and production contexts that can differ significantly between regions and subcultures within Japan. Readers seeking a more expansive understanding of the diverse landscape of Japanese horror, including regional variations, independent productions, or niche subgenres, may find that the book's analysis does not fully capture the breadth and depth of these lesser-explored aspects of the genre.

While *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations* provides an extensive analysis of Japanese horror cinema, it may not extensively address intersectional perspectives within the genre. The book's examination primarily focuses on aesthetic, technical, and transnational aspects, but it may not fully explore the intersections of gender, race, class, and other social identities in relation to Japanese horror. Readers seeking a more nuanced understanding of how these intersecting factors shape the production, representation, and reception of Japanese horror may find that the book's analysis falls short in addressing these important dimensions.

Additionally, the book's transnational approach, while valuable in understanding the global influence and reception of Japanese horror cinema, may lead to a certain degree of dilution or overshadowing of uniquely Japanese elements. While Brown emphasizes the hybridity and interconnectedness of J-horror, there could be a desire for more in-depth exploration of the cultural, historical, and social specificities that contribute to the distinctiveness of Japanese horror.

Furthermore, the book's analysis primarily focuses on the aesthetic and technical aspects of Japanese horror cinema, such as sound, visuals, and narrative techniques. While these elements are undoubtedly significant, readers seeking a deeper examination of the sociocultural implications,

thematic motifs, or audience reception may find the book's emphasis on formal aspects limiting.

Despite these limitations, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations* remains a valuable and informative resource. Brown's meticulous research, incorporation of diverse perspectives, and in-depth analysis of selected films provide a thorough understanding of the genre's transnational connections and the cinematic techniques that create its unique impact. It serves as an excellent starting point for further exploration and study of Japanese horror cinema, particularly within the context of global cinema and cultural exchange.

In summary, *Japanese Horror and the Transnational Cinema of Sensations* is a remarkable contribution to the study of Japanese horror cinema and world cinema at large. Brown's exhaustive introduction serves as a valuable orientation for readers of various disciplines. This book is an essential resource for film studies, horror/gothic media, and anyone interested in a thorough examination of J-horror within the context of global cinema. It is a valuable primary and secondary source of reference for students, scholars, teachers, and enthusiasts in fields such as Japanese Studies, Cultural Studies, Psychology, Humanities, and Media Studies. Moreover, the book's appeal extends beyond academic circles, as its exploration of horror elements makes it an engaging nonfiction read.

# CONTRIBUTOR

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