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Song of Spring and Petite Maman: Reciprocal Motherhood in Traumatic Contemporary Life

The post-pandemic world of the 2020s sees personal and collective trauma that recent films start to reflect. *Song of Spring* (2022) by Chinese director Lina Yang and *Petite Maman* (2021) by French director Céline Sciamma both reconsider daughterhood and motherhood in response to the loss of loved ones, memory loss, anxieties about distance and isolation, and other trauma. Despite the different contexts, these films depict the possibility of reciprocal motherhood between mothers and daughters, building upon the Freudian conceptualizations that suggest a girl becomes a woman in a positive process of becoming like her mother, and engaging with Linda Williams' and Nancy Chodorow's theories that highlight the fluidity between motherhood and daughterhood. Motherhood in these films has become a structure for reimagining family relationships and healing trauma. In *Song of Spring*, the memory loss of the daughter, who has been strong-minded and motherly to her mother, becomes the turning point where she gets to step back and be cared for by her mother. The alternating position or reciprocity of motherhood becomes key to their bond, which helps the daughter through Alzheimer's. *Song of Spring* further reveals a deeper trauma embedded in Chinese history related to the Cultural Revolution and implies how the bond of motherhood cures the loss of the father and deals with traumatic memories. Similarly, the invisibility or absence of the father in *Petite Maman* creates an uncomfortable imbalance in the family structure, which is only rebalanced through the mirroring structure between the two girls who mother each other

Feiyang Zhang received her BA in World Literatures and Cultures from Tsinghua University, MPhil in Film and Screen Studies from the University of Cambridge, and is now pursuing an MA degree in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California. Her academic interests lie in queer representations, generational problems, and the alternative family structures in cinema. Her MPhil thesis was *Queering Family and Futurity in Contemporary Films of Taiwan and Hong Kong*. Her paper *Between Purity, Sexual Corruption and Maternity -- Sexual and Ethnic Ambiguities in Love with the Proper Stranger (1963)* won the Pamela J. MacKintosh Undergraduate Research Awards at the University of Michigan.