

Cole Clark

Silent Possession: Motherhood and Lived Experience in *You Won't Be Alone*

This presentation will examine *You Won't Be Alone* (Stolevski 2022) as it creates a cinematic world for viewers to embody multiple gendered subjectivities, forming an image of womanhood, especially as it relates to motherhood. This will reveal how societal definitions of woman are learned and enforced through lived experience and the taking on of others' subjectivities, and how they can be embodied in many genders. I aim to examine the central character's childlike perspective as a reflection of the film watching experience, wherein a viewer enters a relationship with the screen in a phenomenological process of touching and learning. The film accomplishes this through the narrative of a child who is doomed by her mother to become

a witch upon turning 16, possessing the bodies of people she kills accidentally in her new witch form, and taking on their subjectivities by possessing their bodies. The viewer is aligned with the child's difficult position throughout the film and made to see her attempts at entering society as attempts at learning what it is to be human, the audience experiencing the changes in appearance and perspective as instructive. These changes in gendered subjectivities result in misogyny, death, and prejudice, but they are also often positive experiences, revealing the ways in which human qualities of compassion and kindness are embodied and learned through empathy with subjectivities other than one's own. This leads to a final embodied subjectivity of a woman who becomes a mother, which this presentation will focus on, as the definition of woman and a "good" mother is tested throughout the film, ending with a perspective informed by the various subjectivities taken on throughout the film.

Cole Clark is an undergraduate student at Chapman University, studying Film Studies with a minor in English. He is a member of the accelerated Film Studies MA program, and will complete his Masters degree in Spring, 2024. His work has been published in *Film Matters*—an undergraduate academic film journal—and accepted for presentation at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), covering topics such as masculinity and phenomenological ways of reading film performance.