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Expressionist Use of Colour Palette and Set Design in Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977)

At the time of *Suspiria*'s release in the United States in 1978, the *Soho Weekly News* critic Rob Baker identified Dario Argento's new cinematic experience as a "horror film (*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*) laden with [...] the self-conscious convoluted fairy tale *Alice in Wonderland*"¹. Baker's statement introduces two fundamental issues regarding the film itself. *Suspiria* constitutes a step forward in Argento's career both in terms of narrative and style. Firstly, the film is the director's first foray into the realms of the wholly supernatural horror of occultism and witchcraft. Particularly, Argento chooses the narrative trope of the fairy tale to narrate the negative effects of black magic on people and the horrific consequences that may derive from opposing the occult power of witches. Secondly, the film was inspired by the visual tropes of German Expressionism, such as Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (*Das Kabinett Des Dr. Caligari*, 1920). Baker's analysis, however, allows ample space to *Suspiria*'s fairy tale component by referencing Lewis Carroll's novel but does not explore how and to what extent *Suspiria* may have been influenced by Wiene's film.

Argento himself is very open about the importance of German Expressionism on his style of filmmaking even going so far as to state that: "il cinema espressionista tedesco [...] penso sia molto presente nei miei film [...]". In *Suspiria* c'è molto espressionismo"². As previous studies on German Silent Cinema have pointed out, Expressionist films, such as Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and Friedrich W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922), depend heavily on cinematography and *mise-en-scène*. More specifically, one peculiarity of these films is that some of the visual qualities of cinematography and *mise-en-scène*, such as the manipulation of the film stock, the stark contrasts of light and shadow, and the totally artificial and stylized sets, interact graphically to create an overall composition with the characters' states of the body and the soul. If one adopts this definition of the term "expressionist" for *Suspiria*, it proves useful to analyse the peculiarities of cinematography and set design in German Expressionism and to demonstrate whether and to what extent these peculiarities are applicable to Argento's film. By doing this, the present article seeks to discuss how colour and set design in *Suspiria* also function as projections of the characters' bodily and mental states to such an extent as to determine both the development and the several nuances of the story itself.

Expressionist use of colour palette

Suspiria was co-written with actress and screenwriter Daria Nicolodi. At narrative level, the tale of twenty-year-old Suzy Banyon travelling from New York to Freiburg and joining an all-girl academy presided over by a coven of evil witches came from a story allegedly told by Nicolodi's maternal grandmother. At the age of fifteen, Nicolodi's grandmother decided to perfect her piano studies at a prestigious school of music in France. Over time, she realised that the staff was also devoted to black magic and esotericism and escaped from the institution⁴. At aesthetic level, the supernatural theme of the film is visually conveyed by the director's use of a totally artificial blue-red-yellow colour mixture⁵. In the opening sequence depicting Suzy's arrival in Freiburg, the transition from the rational world, as represented by the airport, to the world of occultism and witchcraft, as represented by the outside, is in fact marked by an abrupt change in colour palette that manages to persist throughout the entire film. After crossing the automatic door, Suzy is adrift in a psychedelic world of swirling blue, red, and yellow, which drench her figure and the outside, at times alternating their presence, at others mixing in a single shot. In order to achieve such an artificial effect, Argento instructed cinematographer Luciano Tovoli to film with an outmoded IB stock with a high

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layer of gel that was provided by Kodak and was at 30/40 ASA against the 500 that can be found today⁶. Tovoli used a big arc light and placed some frames made of tissue and velour paper extremely close to the actors' faces. The light emerged from them in a different way than when using normal gel frames (Fig. 1)⁷. As for the surrounding background, Tovoli managed to bounce the light onto a mirror with the result of sharpening the images more than if they were directly illuminated (Fig. 2). The negative print of the film was subsequently given to Technicolor who split the colour negative into three separate black and white negatives, one for red, one for blue, and one for green. Technicolor printed one colour on top of the others to give the film a shimmering look. The final result emphasizes a deliberately unrealistic setting that is much more vivid in colour definition than emulsion-based release print⁸.



Figs. 1 and 2

In this regard, as Gallant has argued, “scenes in daylight present us with an environment of logic and security, [...] but the lustreless, pastel-coloured equilibrium is drastically altered as darkness brings an outpouring of anguish, horror, and the supernatural”⁹. Specifically, *Suspiria* provides two types of spaces in relation to colour palette, one realistic and the other Gothic (Schulte-Sasse, <http://www.kinoeye.org/02/11/schultesasse11.php>). While the realistic spaces, such as the airport and the convention centre where Suzy and Dr Mendel meet, are shot in naturalistic light, the Gothic spaces are the ones dealing with black magic and showing the abundance of diegetic and non-diegetic use of the IB stock with the result of identifying such stock with the presence of some kind of danger. Similarly, as Horrocks has discussed, *Suspiria*'s spaces in relation to colour palette may be divided into three main categories: the magical, the daylight, and the monochrome¹⁰. The first two categories are highlighted by the presence of a blue-red-yellow scale, sometimes alternated and sometimes all present in a single shot. While the magical spaces are the ones taking place at night, in which the supernatural is perceived by the medium of the IB stock, the daylight are the ones taking place during the day, although the presence of the supernatural is still evident. In this case, the co-existence of blue, red, and yellow is not identified by the IB stock, but by a diegetic use of colour palette through the architecture and the décor (Fig. 3). The only monochrome sequence that takes place in natural daylight is the one during the meeting in the convention centre, in which a single incident of natural colour is provided to alert the audience to the fact that the danger of black magic is currently away (Fig. 4).



Figs. 3 and 4

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Although significant, the aforementioned analyses just focus on the “symbolic” aspect of colour within the film to the detriment of its “dramatic” role. A more exhaustive definition of the use of colour in *Suspiria* is provided by Venzi, according to whom:

I colori esposti non sono qui lavorati in funzione espressivo - simbolica, vale a dire non *rappresentano* le forze maligne che infestano le case infernali; più propriamente essi *sono* quelle stesse forze, ne costituiscono la più pregnante e oscura manifestazione; il processo costruttivo [...] consegna in questo senso ai colori un'identità drammaturgica, richiede loro di agire all'interno della vicenda, di segnarne le evoluzioni, di orientarne il corso¹¹.

The artificial and psychedelic quality of colour in *Suspiria*, therefore, is not just aimed at warning the audience of the imminent danger of occultism and witchcraft. Rather, it becomes the full embodiment of such danger, regularly substituting the witches' presence by acquiring a character status and a dramatic role. In light of this consideration, one can draw a parallel between the use of colour in Argento's film and the use of colour and lighting that was at the basis of German Expressionist films of the 1920s. Although these films were filmed in a black and white stock, Expressionist directors were able to explore a dramatic use of light through the constant manipulation of bright and dark areas within a sequence and a dramatic use of colour through the technique of tinting the original footage. As East has suggested, in *Nosferatu* “Murnau establishes formal dichotomies such as light/dark and naturalistic/abstract through the manipulation of light. Given the content of the respective poles, a thematic opposition of rational and irrational is created” (East, <http://kb.osu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/1811/32037/East.pdf?sequence=1>). In the sequence in which Hutter reaches the dining hall after surviving his first night at the haunted castle of Count Orlock, for example, the long shot of the room reveals not only checkered floor tiles that run from right to left diagonally, but also angular strips of light that cast a harsh shadow effect against the main axis of the room. These strips of light enhance the diagonal of the tiles and underscore the right angle of the room with one beam falling on the jamb of the arch (Fig. 5). This combination of acute and right angles is a matrix for ambiguity and distortion. More important, it becomes a full projection of the vampire's presence as it embodies some kind of danger that not even the safety of dawn is able to remove (East, <http://kb.osu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/1811/32037/East.pdf?sequence=1>). In Argento's film, a similar strategy is perceivable in the sequence in which Suzy reaches the academy the morning after her arrival in Freiburg. As soon as the woman approaches the school of dance, the projection of the balcony's shadow on the left side of the building creates a disquieting human shape in a long shot that closely resembles the profile of a witch in traditional folklore (Fig. 6). In this regard, one can argue that the shadow embodies the fact that the academy itself incorporates the physicality of the owner, in this case represented by the deranged evil triad of witches, Helena Markos, the director of the school, Madame Blanc, the assistant director, and Miss Tanner, the leading ballet teacher, and the safety of daylight is misleading the audience concerning the lack of danger.



Figs. 5 and 6

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As regards the technique of tinting the original black and white footage, Expressionist directors availed themselves of certain conventions in order to guide the audience to full understanding of the environment in a way that black and white film could not provide. In Expressionist films, the addition of alternating blue, green, and yellow indicated respectively the night, the daylight, and the interiors¹². In Murnau's *Nosferatu*, however, as soon as Hutter crosses the bridge to reach the vampire's mansion there is the abrupt passage from the tinted blue of the night to tinted orange, as if this abrupt passage was meant to anticipate and identify with the evil creature and with the supernatural state of the surrounding area through colour manipulation. Likewise, the opening sequence of *Suspiria* in which Suzy leaves the airport of Freiburg by taxi is characterized by a persistent blue in the external environment, while the girl's face is illuminated by an alternation of red and yellow in medium close-up. On the one hand, the abrupt change in artificial colour palette is meant to symbolize the fact that Suzy has just entered the dimension of the supernatural. On the other hand, the blue-red-yellow scale both anticipates and substitutes the physical presence of the witches through the IB stock. Another example of this consideration is provided in the sequence of the maggots dropping from the ceiling of the academy onto the ballerinas' faces and hair. Although Madame Blanc argues that the reason for the infestation is that some spoiled food arrived by mail from a company they believed to be reputable, Argento is more interested in conceiving the sequence with a crescendo in tension, zooming in and out of the spaces and cross-cutting the girls' scared gazes and shouting, rather than in providing a concrete explanation of the maggots' presence on the upper floor of the school. As soon as Miss Tanner reaches the attic to uncover the sealed boxes from whence the maggots are coming, a saturated blue colour palette makes it impossible to decipher their content, as though these filthy creatures had come out of nowhere and had been generated from the corrupted and befouled environment, which is embodied by the colour itself (Fig. 7).

Moreover, Argento opts for artificial red and yellow in two key sequences in which Sarah, Suzy's best friend, is the protagonist. Following the maggot infestation, Madame Blanc organises temporary accommodation for the night in the practice hall. There, Sarah is haunted by a distinctive whistling snore coming from someone behind a tent. She immediately convinces herself that the terrible wheeze comes from the school's director, Helena Markos, who is not abroad as both Madame Blanc and Miss Tanner assert, but is hidden somewhere in the academy. The peculiarity of the sequence resides in the fact that as soon as Sarah perceives the evil presence, the whole screen is tinted red as if to identify it with the evil witch (Fig. 8). Likewise, what the audience witness in the sequence of Sarah's murder in the attic is a window lighted in saturated yellow as a possibility of a way out. This conviction is quickly denied by the film's events. When Sarah climbs out of the window, she is suddenly immersed in an abyss of razor wires. As she wiggles in the pool of wires, a yellow-illuminated open door is visible on the left side of the screen, as if to indicate that even if there is a way out it is unreachable (Fig. 9). The saturated yellow is not identified with salvation, but it is only a transient illusion of such because the control of black magic is everywhere and unlimited.

The dramatic role of colour is eventually expressed in the final sequence of the film. Suspicious of what is happening, Suzy starts following the noise of the teachers' footsteps and finds herself in Madame Blanc's office. There, she notices three irises painted on the wall, one blue, one red, and one yellow (Fig. 10). This fact enables her to trace a hidden door in the wall by turning the blue iris which is in relief. Beyond, she sees a secret lair where a coven of witches is gathered, apparently directed by Madame Blanc and comprising of most of the staff. The three irises diegetically convey the presence of the evil triad, Markos, Blanc, and Tanner, as they evoke the cult-like experiences the coven of witches share by echoing the blue-red-yellow scale of the entire film. The only thing Suzy can do is to act by interpreting the colour, turning the blue iris to find out the truth and gaining access to the ultimate mystery of black magic.



Figs. 7 and 8



Figs. 9 and 10

Expressionist use of architecture and décor

As far as *Suspiria's* setting is concerned, after visiting several places between Austria, Northern Italy, and Switzerland, Argento eventually opted for the Black Forest in Baden-Württemberg, south-western Germany, as the ideal place for his cinematic tale¹³. Precisely, most of the film is set in the *Tanz Akademie* of Freiburg, a gothic-style building from 1516 that is historically known as *Das Haus Zum Walfisch*, the house of the whale, and whose highly stylized qualities of architecture and décor perfectly embody the nightmarish and surreal atmosphere of the entire story¹⁴. However, as Gallant has suggested:

In [...] *Suspiria*, [...] shape [...] and movement do more than simply articulate the anxieties of their characters, they substitute character psychology altogether [...] The people that inhabit these worlds are ciphers, their two-dimensionality flaunted unrestrainedly, while their physical environment is psychologised in the extreme¹⁵.

A typical example of this statement is provided in the final sequence of the film, in which Suzy fatally stabs Helena Markos's neck with the tail feather from a glass peacock that is located in the witch's bedroom. The act itself provokes an apocalyptic effect on the building, as it crumbles, explodes, and shakes in a fiery inferno just after Suzy has run outside into the rain from which she first entered. As a result, killing Helena Markos is like killing the pulsating heart which had kept the whole *Tanz Akademie* alive. Gallant's consideration has also been validated by Argento himself when he stated that "in *Suspiria* [...] la casa dove si svolge la storia non è altro che un *organismo vivente*"¹⁶.

If one takes into account Vidler's definition of architecture and décor as a "living organism", from Vitruvius to the present, it includes the notion of the building as a body of some kind, the idea that the building embodies states of the body and states of the mind that are based on bodily sensation, and the sense that the environment as a whole is endowed with bodily or organic characteristics¹⁷. In this regard, Vidler's definition is fully applicable to German Expressionist Cinema, in which the different states of the body and the soul are identified in the various geometries of the setting¹⁸. As Schneider has stated, "one of the defining features of [...] *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* [...] is a warped reflection of the protagonist's psychological instability in highly artificial and often hyper-aestheticised [...] set design [...]"¹⁹. Specifically, the small town where Wiene's story takes place is rendered through unrealistically

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distorted and exaggerated architectural shapes and through a series of curving, oblique, and rectilinear lines converging across an undefined expanse toward the background, for the expressionist purposes of reproducing the dreamlike atmosphere seen through the eyes of a madman²⁰. As a result, these spaces achieve a dramatic status as they “do indeed seem to vibrate with an extraordinary spirituality”, creating the animation of the inorganic through bodily and mental projections²¹. Such a strategy is also traceable in *Suspiria* through the depiction of the *Tanz Akademie*. In the film, the exaggerated ceiling-height and the vaulted doors of the interiors of the building constantly give the impression of dwarfing the actresses, as if they were being crushed by the massive environment (Fig. 11). This impression does not occur at random, as the idea of reducing the actresses’ size through architecture and décor was a factor of Argento’s original conception. *Suspiria*’s original setting was to be a children’s school. Argento eventually changed the script after an argument with his Italian distributor, who considered the idea of children being chased and tortured by evil witches inappropriate²². However, Argento managed to transmit the original idea through the production design. The door handles, for example, are purposely placed higher than normal as if the story was told from a child’s POV (Fig. 12)²³. This is a purely expressionist technique, as the environment becomes the character’s mental projection. Specifically, the adult actresses’ perception of the environment is proportional to the perception of a child acting in the same place.



Figs. 11 and 12

With regard to the set design, Argento instructed designer Giuseppe Bassan to re-create some pieces of furniture based on the German Art Deco and Art Nouveau styles or *Jugendstil*, especially the ones present in Bavaria and in the Black Forest²⁴. The interiors of the academy are constantly punctuated by the mathematical alternation of both styles that rigorously identify the various areas and sometimes coexist within a single space. As Schmutzler²⁵ and Arwas²⁶ have argued, Art Nouveau in architectural and pictorial décor has been an attempt at re-creating style by taking inspiration from nature. In this regard, the techniques adopted were to reproduce animal and natural shapes through architectural décor and to directly paint explicit or stylized anthropomorphic and organic features onto the wall. The desired effect was to create an ideal combination of artifice and nature. Similarly, as Lenzi has discussed, the peculiarity of the architecture and décor within the *Tanz Akademie* is the constant dualism of artifice and nature²⁷. Specifically, the sophisticated elegance of the environment is to be found in the mathematical and obsessive recurrence of animal and natural shapes through architectural and pictorial devices. The audience can recognise features of Art Nouveau within the academy in the golden staircase leading to the first floor, whose décor reproduces an intersection of curvilinear lines in the form of a serpent. Both the curvilinear lighting apparatus and the series of female statues carrying a plant present the same ochre colour of the staircase and clash with the ogival vaulted front door. These curvilinear lines are eventually re-created in the window shades placed above the dormitory doors, which reproduce the organic shape of a shamrock. Madame Blanc’s studio is the ultimate essence of the Art Nouveau techniques. It is a circular and enclosed room featuring a completely hybrid style, in which there are a series of oval pictures on both sides, whose design recalls Beardsley’s style (Fig. 13). The wall behind

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the desk is decorated in the Art Nouveau style, with a mixture of elaborate vegetable fantasies that re-create through painting the form of the real natural vegetation on the sides of the room. The flower vases on the desk partially reproduce the colour scheme of the film, which is also expressed by the painted irises on the left side of the central wall. Both the real and painted floral fantasies clash with the structural geometry and representation that is contained in the misleading and deceptive perspectives typical of M.C. Escher's *Relativity* (1953) on the central wall (Fig. 14).



Figs. 13 and 14

Such a co-existence of artifice and nature that is traceable in Madame Blanc's studio also lies at the heart of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, in which "the painter's images are fully at home, harmonize perfectly with the work's theme and style: with its attempt to make the physical setting a hieroglyph of inner experience, its suffusion of landscapes and townscapes with feelings and states of mind"²⁸. In Wiene's film, Jane's bedroom and sitting room are presented with a series of floral fantasies in the central wall. These floral fantasies are made of concentric circular and curvy lines that symbolically match the voluptuousness of the protagonist's curvy female body (Fig. 15). Similarly, the Art Nouveau shapes in *Suspiria*'s set design are characterised by morbid and voluptuous circular lines that symbolically match and graphically interact to create an overall composition with the almost exclusive female presence within the academy. While the circular and concentric flowery wallpaper in the academy's dressing room (Fig. 16) and in Olga's apartment (Fig. 17) takes up the voluminous hairstyle of the ballerinas, Madame Blanc's flouncy dresses, hairstyle and jewellery reproduce the harmonic circles and lines on the artifice of her studio.



Fig. 15

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Figs. 16 and 17

With regard to Art Deco, Argento re-creates the angular and linear geometries of the clerk's office in Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Fig. 18) in the depiction of Miss Tanner's rehearsal room. The rehearsal room has ochre wallpaper that is characterised by a series of subtle vertical lines of the same colour and is interspersed with a series of squared multi-coloured glass windows and mirrors on the central wall and on both sides. These geometric angles and lines match Miss Tanner's brusque gestures and stance and create an overall composition with the ballerinas' postures while practising (Fig. 19). The alternation of Art Deco and Art Nouveau that is typical of the *Tanz Akademie* is also present in



Figs. 18 and 19

the building where Pat Hingle and her friend are brutally murdered. The interiors of the building are emblematic of the Art Deco movement, characterised by geometric shapes arranged with symmetrical elegance and alternating orange and white (Fig. 20). The lift has Art Nouveau decoration, with curvilinear lines for ostentatious refinement (Fig. 21). In this regard, one can argue that the perfect compatibility in the architecture and décor of both the *Tanz Akademie* and the building where the first murder takes place metaphorically indicates the ubiquity of witchcraft and its evil control over people which forms the central theme of the film. If Madame Blanc's physicality is identified by Art Nouveau lines and Miss Tanner's physicality is represented through Art Deco lines, the repetition of these features in the other building projects their omnipresence through architecture and décor and metaphorically conveys their responsibility in the concretisation of the criminal act against Pat and her friend.



Figs. 20 and 21

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Additionally, both buildings diegetically cite the work of M.C. Escher. In this regard, Argento pays tribute to the Dutch artist at the beginning of the film, Escher Strasse being the fictional address of the *Tanz Akademie*. As Argento has stated:

Le génie de cet artiste, explicitement cité dans la fresque en *trompe-l'œil* dissimulant la porte escamotée, hante tout l'intérieur, plein d'escaliers, de couloirs qui mènent va savoir où [...] Par cette succession de pièces, de vitraux hermétiquement fermés, de pièces sombres, sans issue, j'ai voulu créer une atmosphère de claustration totale, où règne une seule certitude: l'Académie de Danse est un labyrinthe dans lequel on rentre, mais duquel, peut-être, on ne pourra jamais sortir²⁹.

The fantasy depicted in the central wall of Madame Blanc's studio is clearly inspired by Escher's lithograph *Relativity* (Figs. 22 and 23). In *Relativity*, Escher portrays a world in which the normal law of gravity does not apply. In it, there are depicted three stairways that connect with each other, and in two of them people are represented as climbing them upside-down, but based on their own gravity source they are climbing normally. Likewise, the internal structure of the *Tanz Akademie* resumes the composition and intersection of lines of the lithograph, as it is represented by a repetitive and stratified coexistence of corridors and stairs that make it look like a Chinese box. In this regard, the academy's structure strongly relies on Eco's definition of a mannerist labyrinth. According to Eco's definition, wherever you progress you face a kind of tree with many blind alleys. There is only one exit but you can make mistakes and you need the thread of Ariadne not to get lost³⁰. In *Suspiria*, Suzy follows her thread of Ariadne as the key to reaching the witches' secret. She counts the teachers' footsteps with the help of Sarah's notes until she reaches Madame Blanc's studio. At this point, Escher's lithograph assumes a dramatic role within the film. Suzy turns the blue iris that is in relief on the left side of the lithograph and is part of the design itself. A door drawn on the wall and part of the design gives access to the witches' secret hideout. The fact that the door is both real and part of the design imbues the reference to Escher's work with a role of transition between the real world and the world of the occult. The undermining of the law of gravity in Escher's lithograph depicts a world where the law of science has no value. Similarly, what is perceived behind the door in *Suspiria* is dominated by the supernatural and witchcraft, and in general by a world that does not relate to any physical law of nature.

The function of transition between the rational and the supernatural is also applicable to Argento's reference to Escher's *Sky and Water* (1938) in the bathroom of Pat's friend (Figs. 24 and 25). In Escher's *Sky and Water*, horizontal series of fish and birds are fitting into each other like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and the pictorial shapes are alternately foreground or background, depending on whether the eye concentrates on light or dark elements. As the fish progress upward and the birds downward they gradually lose their shapes to become a uniform background of sky and water respectively. This gradual loss of shape indicates the futility of objective reality, as everything may change before our eyes and bring us to an indiscernible world of fantasy. Similarly, *Suspiria* gradually transports the audience from one world to another and metaphorizes the coexistence of both worlds through the diegetic qualities of the décor.

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Figs. 22 and 23



Figs. 24 and 25

Conclusion

By dialoguing with previous studies on the “dramatic” role of colour and lighting at the basis of German Expressionist Cinema of the 1920s and by interacting with Anthony Vidler’s analysis of architecture and décor as embodiment of states of the body and states of the mind through the geometries of the setting, this article has demonstrated how both the highly artificial colour palette and the constant references to Art Deco and Art Nouveau in Argento’s *Suspiria* are granted the same function, mainly acting as projections of metaphorical bodily and mental types within the film. As a result, cinematography and set design in *Suspiria* not only combine with the stylistic and visual excessiveness of the images to convey the supernatural theme of the film, as recent debates have argued, but totally replace the characters’ psychology, by acquiring both a symbolic and dramatic status in itself that is able to determine the progress of the story as well as to articulate its various subtleties.

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Endnotes

1. Maitland McDonagh, *Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds: the Dark Dreams of Dario Argento*, 2nd ed., New York, A Citadel Press Book-Carol Publishing Group, 1994, p. 129.
2. Vito Zagarrò, “Aprire le finestre alle emozioni: Argento on Argento”, in Vito Zagarrò (ed.), *Argento vivo: il cinema di Dario Argento tra genere e autorialità*, Venezia, Marsilio Editori, 2008, pp. 31-32. TRANSL: [German Expressionist Cinema is very present in my films and *Suspiria* provides an example].
3. Daria Nicolodi (born June 19, 1949) was romantically involved with Dario Argento from 1974 to 1985. Actress and director Asia Argento was born from their union on September 20, 1975. As an actress, Nicolodi played in several of Argento’s films, such as *Deep Red (Profondo rosso, 1975)*, *Inferno (1980)*,

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Tenebrae (*Tenebre*, 1982), *Creepers* (*Phenomena*, 1985), *Terror at the Opera* (*Opera*, 1987), and *Mother of Tears* (*La terza madre*, 2007). Although Nicolodi is not mentioned in the credit sequence, she also collaborated on the script of *Inferno*.

4. Maitland McDonagh, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

5. Robert J. Craig, "Dario Argento's Palette of Death: Color Response in His *Three Mothers* Film", *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, Vol. 16, No 1, 1995, pp. 54, 56.

6. Alan Jones, *Profondo Argento: The Man, the Myths and the Magic*, Godalming, UK, FAB Press, 2004, p. 9.

7. Fabio Maiello, *Dario Argento, confessioni di un maestro dell'horror*, Milano, Alacrán Edizioni, 2007, p. 121.

8. Antonello Grimaldi, "Generazioni di cineasti a confronto", in Vito Zagarrìo, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

9. Chris Gallant, "The Art of Allusion: Painting, Murder and the "Plan Tableau", in Chris Gallant (ed.), *Art of Darkness: the Cinema of Dario Argento*, Godalming, FAB Press, 2001, p. 68.

10. Adrian Horrocks, "Suspìria: Magic is Everywhere", *Necronomicon: the Journal of Horror and Erotic Cinema*, Book 4, Hereford, Noir Publishing, 2001, pp. 36-41.

11. Luca Venzi, "Qualcosa di rosso: il colore", in Vito Zagarrìo, *op. cit.*, p. 228. TRANSL: [The colour palette in *Suspìria* is not processed according to its expressive-symbolic function, as it does not represent the evil forces that infest the haunted house. Rather, it is the evil force itself and it constitutes its most obscure and weighty presence in the film [...] This role gives the colour palette a narrative function, as it requires it to act within the story and to articulate its various subtleties].

12. David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, eighth edition, New York, The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2008, p. 164.

13. Gabrielle Lucantonio, "Il cinema secondo Argento", in Giulia Carluccio, Giacomo Manzoli, Roy Menarini (eds.), *L'eccesso della visione: il cinema di Dario Argento*, Torino, Lindau, 2003, p. 16; Fabio Maiello *op. cit.*, p. 113.

14. Francesca Lenzi, *Dario Argento, da "Suspìria" alla "Terza Madre": Inferno*, Roma, Profondo Rosso, La piccola bottega della fantascienza e dell'horror, 2007, p. 50.

15. Chris Gallant, "In the Mouth of the Architect: Inferno, Alchemy and the Postmodern Gothic", in Chris Gallant, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

16. Daniele Costantini, Francesco Dal Bosco, *Nuovo cinema inferno. L'opera di Dario Argento*, Milano, Nuova Pratiche Editrice, 1997, pp. 61-62, cited in: Giulia Carluccio, "Poetica dell'erranza. Flâneries, architetture, percorsi della visione", in Giulia Carluccio, Giacomo Manzoli, Roy Menarini, *op. cit.*, p. 62. TRANSL: [In *Suspìria* [...] the house where the story takes place is nothing but a *living organism*].

17. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1992, pp. 70-73.

18. Herman G. Scheffauer, "The Vivifying of Space" (1920), in Lewis Jacobs (ed.), *Introduction to the Art of Movies*, New York, Noonday Press, 1960, p. 77; Roger Manvell, Heinrich Fraenkel, *The German Cinema*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1971, p. 18; Anthony Vidler, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

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20. David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

21. Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1969, pp. 21-22.

22. Alan Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 81; Fabio Maiello, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

23. Gabrielle Lucantonio, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

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25. Robert Schmutzler, *Art Nouveau*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1964, p. 29.

26. Victor Arwas, *Art Deco*, London, Academy Editions, 1980, p. 16.

27. Francesca Lenzi, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

28. Siegbert Salomon Praver, *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 197.

29. Serena Gentilhomme, "La Chair et le Ciseau: Passion et Mort des Vierges selon Dario Argento: Actes du Colloque", in Jean Marigny (ed.), *Images Fantastiques du Corps*, Grenoble, Université Stendhal-Grenoble 3, 1997, p. 278. TRANSL: [The genius of this artist, explicitly cited in the *trompe-l'oeil* bas-relief dissimulating a retracted door, haunts the whole interior of the academy of dance, with its stairways and corridors that lead who knows where [...] By showing this maze, with tightly closed windows and dark rooms with no escape, I wanted to create an atmosphere of total confinement, where there is only one certainty: the academy of dance is a labyrinth that one can enter, but from which it is impossible to escape].

30. Umberto Eco, "Postille a *Il nome della rosa*", *Il nome della rosa*, Milano, Bompiani, 1983, pp. 524-525.