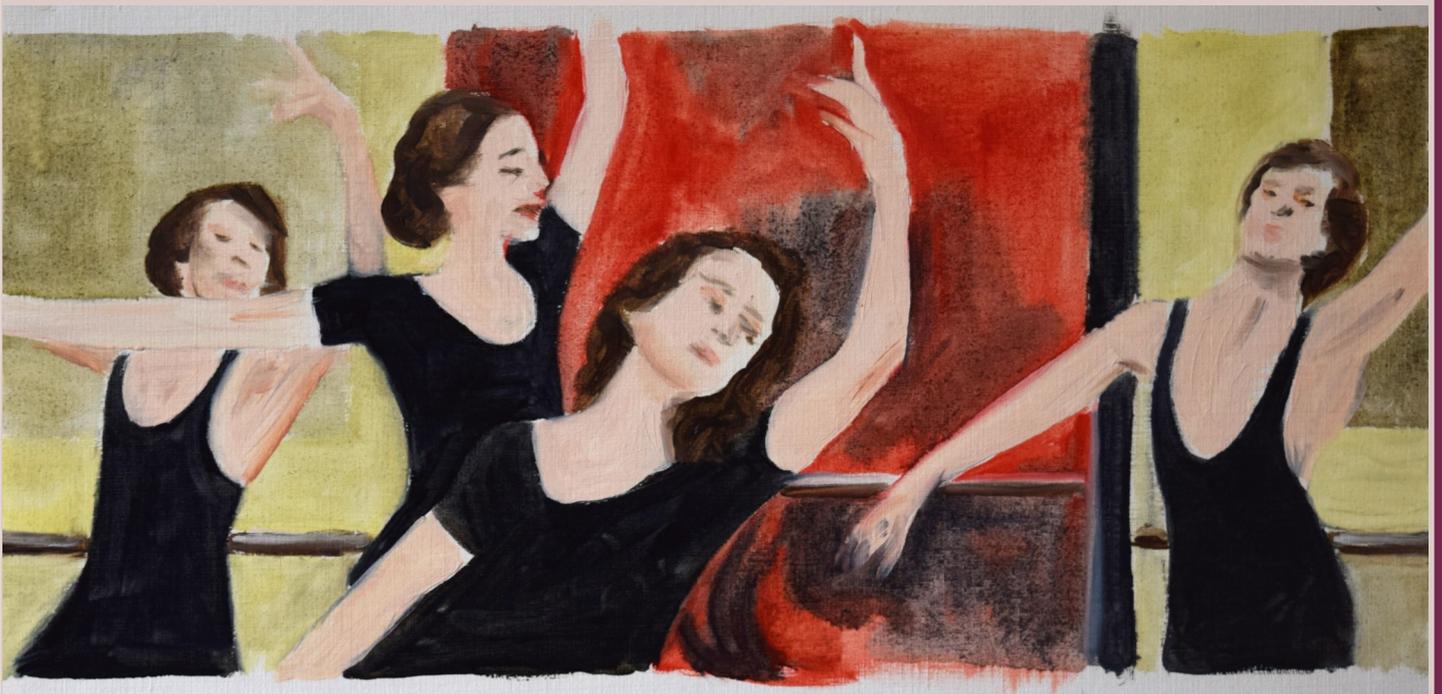


SUSPIRIA

Symposium:

Covering Trauma,
Memory and the Body



10:30—17:30

Saturday 11 June 2022

Hitchcock Cinema, ArtsOne

Mile End Campus

Queen Mary University of London

London E1 4NS

Supported by

BAFTSS

We are delighted to welcome international speakers for panels 1, 2 and 3, who will be delivering pre-recorded presentations. To ensure the smooth running of the Q&A for virtual speakers please join the following Zoom link via your mobile phone, laptop and tablet and submit questions for virtual presenters via the 'chat' function. You will need the passcode below for entry.

Suspirias Symposium Zoom Meeting Link

<https://qmul-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/81003893096?pwd=RmFNTFF3SWWhKc3JobmpWUU9VM3c0dz09>

Meeting ID: 810 0389 3096

Passcode: 524324

Or you can scan the QR code which will take you to the Zoom meeting waiting room.



Schedule

10:45 **WELCOME**

11:00—12:00 **PANEL 1: Intertextuality**

Chair: Alice Pember

Alexander Howard and Julian Murphet—University of Sydney and University of Adelaide

“*Suspiria* and Historicism” [virtual]

Laurent Shelvington—Notre Dame University and University of Western Australia

“Between Voice and Gaze: *Suspiria* (1977) to *Suspiria* (2018)”

Louis Bayman—University of Southampton

“Beauty, horror and the irreconcilability of the *Suspirias*”

12:00—13:00 **LUNCH**

13:00—14:00 **PANEL 2: Dance**

Chair: Archie Wolfman

Lexi Turner—Cornell University

“The Dance of an Other: Queer Dance as Ritual in *Suspiria* (2018)” [virtual]

A. Samyukthah and K. Sanskriti—Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur

“‘Volk’ and the ‘Hysterical’ Laugh of the Medusa in *Suspiria* (2018): The Agency of Female Body” [virtual]

Alice Pember—Queen Mary University of London

“Rupturing the Body Politic in *Suspiria*”

14:00—15:00 **PANEL 3: Politics and Memory**

Chair: Tim Lindemann

**Romano Ponce-Diaz and Karina Monserrat Acuña Murillo—
Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo**

**“A Traveler in Foregone Dreams: Race and otherness as horror in
Suspiria (1977)” [virtual]**

Archie Wolfman—Queen Mary University of London

“The Concentratory Imaginary in *Suspiria* (2018)”

Xavier Mendik—Birmingham City University

**“‘Do You Know Anything About Witches?’ Spectres of Insurgency in
Suspiria and Supernatural Cinema of the Seventies”**

15:00 **BREAK**

15:15—16:15 **PANEL 4:**

Gender, Embodiment and Motherhood

Chair: Cathy Lomax

**Virginie Sélavy—London Film School and National Film and Televi-
sion School**

**“Devouring Mothers, Ascending Daughters: Controlled Bodies and
Bodies Out of Control in the two *Suspirias*”**

Nicole Hamilton—Ulster University

**“‘Motherhood, Matriarchy and Malice: Womanhood in Luca
Guadagnino’s *Suspiria*”**

Darren Gray

“*Suspiria* and Complex Embodiment”

16:15—17:00 **WINE RECEPTION**

WHAT WITCHES BE

By Sarah Nichols

After *Suspiria* (2018)

We dance as if our ancestors' bodies
were on fire.

we are the
secret art,

haunted women,
violent,

our instruments

bloody

chosen for
sorcery

this true dance.

This holiness,

These recanted saints,

ourselves.

This is a found poem. Source: Hill, Frances. *The Salem Witch Trials Reader*. New York: DaCapo Press, 2000.

Sarah Nichols is an independent scholar, poet, and essayist. She is the author of ten chapbooks, including the essay collection *Press Play for Heartbreak* (Paper Nautilus Press, 2021, and winner of the Vella Chapbook Prize) and *Hexenhaus* (Milk and Cake Press, 2020.)



All artwork by **Cathy Lomax**

Cathy is a London-based painter and PhD student. She is currently writing a thesis on make-up and stardom in classical Hollywood cinema. More information can be found here: <http://www.cathylomax.co.uk/>

Abstracts

Laurent Shelvington — “Between Voice and Gaze: *Suspiria* (1977) to *Suspiria* (2018)”

This paper proposes that the distinguishing factor between Dario Argento’s original *Suspiria* (1977) and Luca Guadagnino’s 2018 adaptation is each film’s relationship to the voice and the gaze. In psychoanalytic film theory, the voice and the gaze play parallel roles as objects which both entice the desire of the spectator, as well as confront them with the traumatic dimension of this very same desire. While retaining the formal analogy between each object, it will be argued that the singularity of each version of *Suspiria* can be meaningfully distinguished on the basis of what it elevates as its primary object, a mechanism most directly revealed in the closing scene of each film. Specifically, in the 1977 version of *Suspiria*, the final scene sees Susie kill Mother Markos and flee the school, while the rest of the coven are left to burn inside. In this final sequence the dimension of the vocal appears to resonate most strongly, as with the death of their leader, all the coven can do is continually scream in agony, as if it was Markos’ primary function as leader to keep the voice detained and suppressed. By contrast, in the 2018 remake, the final scene reveals the carving of Klemperer and Anke’s initials in the wall of their home, unnoticed by the present residents. As if in direct response to this hidden memorial, the post-credit sequence shows Susie starting at an unseen object before reaching out at it, smiling and departing, thus accenting the significance of the visual in the film.

Louis Bayman — “Beauty, horror and the irreconcilability of the two *Suspirias*”

“When I hear the words “aesthetics” and ‘style’, I get incredibly uncomfortable – I’m not striving for a beautiful image, an Instagram shot” — Luca Guadagnino on *Suspiria* (2018), interview with Nathan Heller.

“Guadagnino makes beautiful tables, beautiful curtains, beautiful dishes, all beautiful.” — Dario Argento mocking the same film, interview with Michael Nordine.

This essay seeks to trace the antagonism between the two *Suspirias* as one between two opposed conceptions of aesthetics, and especially on the opposing roles that each accords to beauty. Relocating the dance academy/witches’ coven to a period Berlin setting and adding a subplot about the Holocaust, the remake openly articulates the political consequences of a relationship that is only implied in the original: that between violence and beauty. In the original, this relationship contributes to an aggressive delirium that is one of the defining pleasures of 1970s Italian horror. In the remake it contributes not to delirium but understanding, enabling a narrative reconciliation with the nightmares of 20th century history and a vision of social progress beyond them – one that I argue is more akin to heritage cinema than horror.

I seek to discuss this difference in relation to aesthetic philosophies that argue for the political purpose of beauty, philosophies that have been influential in the artistic idealisation of historical change. I also seek to position it at the core of a fundamental opposition between the two films, their generic pleasures and their deeper meanings, or rejection thereof.

Alexander Howard and Julian Murphet — “*Suspiria* and Historicism”

Luca Guadagnino’s *Suspiria* (2018) aggressively foregrounds a term from the discourse of psychoanalysis, now a relic of twentieth-century philosophical and psychological thought, with which to negotiate a sequence of historical problems specific to its articulation as a remake (adaptation or reimagining) of a 1977 *giallo* by Dario Argento. The concept is ‘transference’. Transference traverses the whole semantic field of this film text, offering a hermeneutic device that, we will show, structures its conception and execution. This interpretative tool affords us a conceptual means with which to appreciate the decidedly querulous attitude that Guadagnino’s remake assumes as regards its source text. Lodged in what can be described as an antagonism over the ‘spirit’ of a film shot in 1977 is, we feel, a profound difference of opinion over the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and thus a contest over the very concept of a film’s ‘spirit’. Argento’s classic deliberately ‘spiritualizes’ the political context of its creation, and particularly its setting during the German Autumn of 1977, in order to produce an oneiric fairy-tale nightmare about innocence abroad. The ‘spirit’ of *Suspiria* is precisely what must be sacrificed in the 2018 adaptation, in order to rescue its material basis from the amnesia of posterity. This is a film about its own historicism and about historicism in general, and what it costs to produce a ‘terrible beauty’ out of the violence of terror. It is a materialist intervention in the culture of recycling, and offers, as a remake, a critical reading of a film apparently immune to the principle of a remake.

Lexi Turner — “The Dance of an Other: Queer Dance as Ritual in *Suspiria* (2018)”

Suspiria (Luca Guadagnino, 2018)'s distinction from the Argento original is perhaps most evident in the massive increase in emphasis on dance: no longer as a cover for witchcraft, but as its very practice and expression. Central to this concept is the notion of flexion, whereby the body becomes the discursive locus. The instructive context for the body’s awakening as flexive medium within this academy /coven highlights the restrictive parameters of discursivity: there are prerequisite degrees of alignment and synchronicity on the part of the subject to enter into discourses, and there are also methods of excision. The scene in which Susie’s movements in dance rehearsal have a remote, “voodoo doll” effect on Olga’s body, each graceful movement of Susie’s resulting in grotesque disfiguration of Olga’s, reveals the effects of flexion without synchronicity, embodying tensions between the body and the organism, indicative of the fractured yet extant cohabitation between the striated and the smooth.

In this paper, I seek to explore in the *Suspiria* remake’s “queer dance horror” as investigating the potentials and perils of establishing queer space, and the ritualistic aspect of devised movement production and adaptation that blurs lines between medium and mode, presenting the body as palimpsest. I argue the affective extremity of *Suspiria*’s use of horror and gore compels us to consider the stakes of communication and creation within and between bodies, navigating and becoming sites of individual and mutual identification.

A. Samyukthah and K. Sanskriti — “‘Volk’ and the ‘Hysterical’ Laugh of the Medusa in *Suspiria* (2018): The Agency of Female Body”

“Dance must be cheerful and show beautiful female bodies and have nothing to do with philosophy.” — Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda

In response to the quote mentioned above, screenplay writer David Kajganich, and choreography lead Damian Jalet of Luca Guadagnino's *Suspiria* (2018) proclaim that dance has nothing to do with beauty and instead argue to politicize dance. The movie re-imagines the female body and agency by relying upon the intricate German choreographies, which adds to the overall necromantic effect of the film. Janet contributed to the wider thematic concern of dance and body politics in *Suspiria* (2018) by envisaging a dance piece called ‘Volk,’ inspired by a 2013 dance piece staged at the Louvre called *Les Médusés*, designed from the myth of Medusa. Cixous' concept of ‘Ecriture Feminine’ in her essay, ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’, is about spearheading a feminist discourse, written from a female's point of view rather than being subjects of male discourse dictated by Phallogentrism. Medusa's mythical aspects have a greater appeal to the movie, where the choreographer claims to have modeled the central dance piece ‘Volk’ on the Medusan influence. The agency of the female body runs central throughout the film, where they act as vessels through which to subvert and transfer power. In Luca Guadagnino's *Suspiria*, the integration of horror and history takes place with the female body as the focal point. The disintegration and jolt witnessed against the historical episode of the German Autumn are embedded with the shifting power dynamics amongst women at the Berlin Dance Academy. The movie ends with Mother Suspiriorum taking the reign of the Dance Academy, which marks the inception of yet another ‘fascist’ and matriarchal leadership. Adjacently, the fact that “Klemperer is not held accountable, rather reassured that what was done to him was a cruel and unjust mistake” establishes that *Suspiria* is a female-centric movie (feminine) yet not feminist (*The Vulture*). The paper builds on the argument that is laid on the fact that male authorship to the film renders limited subversion of Phallogentrism and falls in its trap by alleging that “when women are united, it is always to achieve an evil outcome.” (ibid.)

Karina Monserrat Acuña Murillo and Romano Ponce Díaz — “A traveler in foregone dreams: Race and otherness as horror in *Suspiria* (Argento, 2018)”

Recurring to the transdisciplinary position of Visual Studies and Decolonial Studies, an intratextual analysis of the ideological discourse of the film *Suspiria* (1977) by Dario Argento is presented. Through a reading focused on the *intentio operis* of the work, we will employ the narrative analysis models of Zavala (2014), Žižek (2009) and Yopez (2020), it is proposed that ideological western horror cinema generic conventions converge in Argento's work, in which otherness (Quijano, 2014; Smith, 2017) is represented as the source of terror. We will expose that *Suspiria* shows an ideological structure where the plot presents the American main characters entering the threatening world of racialized populations. Such a structure of Western horror cinema—in this case the Italian—has as its representative example the film *Cannibal Holocaust* (Deodato, 1980) and literary antecedents such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902). In this sense, it is possible to affirm that historically western horror cinema has produced cultural representations where racialized people are shown as dangerous and abject bodies (Montes, 2017). The present analysis is not a moral condemnation of Argento, we use his film to resume how ideology is placed voluntarily or involuntarily in all artistic production, either through explicit cinematographic language or through narrative anamorphosis.

Alice Pember — “Rupturing the Body Politic in *Suspria*”

The ballet school setting of Dario Argento’s 1977 horror classic *Suspria* is almost incidental. However, in Luca Guadagnino’s 2018 remake of the film, elaborate dance sequences mobilise the movement vocabulary of German modern dancers (most notably Mary Wigman), to show how the coven work their magic through protagonist Suzy. Initial reviews debated the feminist politics of the film’s incorporation of modern dance, either praising this as a manifestation of the film’s depiction of collective feminine power, or condemning the conflation modern dance pioneers with a coven of murderous witches (thereby revealing more about their attitudes to the representation of powerful women as witches than the way the film fuses dance and magic). In comparison, my close reading of the camerawork and choreography employed in *Suspria*’s second dance sequence (which cross-cuts between Suzy’s dance and its bloody impact on the body of fellow dancer Olga) demonstrates how the film’s depiction of dance exceeds a feminist or anti-feminist binary. Though the direct, narrative link that the film draws between the 1970’s dance world and the aesthetic regime of the Third Reich has been noted in several readings, my close reading of this dance sequence will show how its cross-cuts between modern dance choreography and intensely disgusting images of body horror offer a formal commentary on the muscular bonding that underpinned the Nazi regime. With reference to this dance sequence, this paper suggests that Guadagnino’s *Suspria* manifests a political aesthetic of anti-fascism through its conflation of modern dance with violence.

Xavier Mendik — ““Do You Know Anything About Witches?” Spectres of Insurgency in *Suspria* and Supernatural Cinema of the Seventies”

Released in 2018, Luca Guadagnino’s redux of *Suspria* has sought to revitalize the Dario Argento original via a series of thematic and stylistic deviations that also foreground sociohistorical contradictions within the film’s West-German setting.

By integrating materials from the Red Army Faction’s campaign of insurgency, Guadagnino’s film exposes shared traumas of terrorism experienced across West Germany and Italy during the 1970s. They encompass West German anxieties over the Baader-Meinhof Group and the RAF, whose wider campaigns of terror lasted from 1968 until the mid-1980s, culminating with the German autumn of 1977. These urban atrocities were themselves replicated by Italy’s *Anni di piombo* (‘years of lead’), which lasted from 1969 to 1983 and included fascist bomb outrages in 1969/1980 and the leftist Red Brigade’s kidnapping and murder of Christian Democrat Premier Aldo Moro in 1978.

In their studies of European terrorism, Beverly Allen (1997) and Ruth Glynn (2009) have identified the importance of narrativizing insurgency traumas, which they see as annexing fears of political violence to fearful phantasies surrounding emancipated womanhood. Glynn views these anxieties as representing a form of ‘insidious trauma’, which becomes replicated across a range of film genres. For Bettina T. Becker (2000), these gendered constructions of terrorism also take on supernatural and demonic connotations (most notable in West German media reporting of key Baader-Meinhof personnel as witches).

This paper therefore seeks to explore how shared historical traumas equating womanhood with witches and insurgency can be read through the 1977/2018 versions of *Suspria*, as well as providing a template through which to analyse a series of supernatural horror/possession film titles that were in circulation across West Germany and Italy during the 1970s.

Darren Gray — “*Suspiria* and Complex Embodiment”

Disability studies and the horror genre don't have the most comfortable of critical relationships. As Cheyne (2019) has argued, there is a longstanding mutual reticence to critically examine horror's representations of the body through the lens of disability. This is to the detriment of both fields as horror's, sometimes very problematic, bodily representations provide a rich range of often unconventional and challenging material to engage with and investigate disability, normalcy and ideologies of ability.

Suspiria 1977 and 2018 are heavily concerned with the body and their representations converge around its corporeality, use-value and function as a site of knowledge. *Suspiria's* covens hold 'secret' knowledge that is 'hidden' and shared in the bodies of its members. This knowledge is hierarchical and dependent upon the physicality or 'able-ness' of its members. With knowledge and 'able-ness' comes power and an 'us' and 'them' dynamic based upon embodied knowledge. Using Tobin Siebers' theory of complex embodiment, it can be argued that *Suspiria* 1977 and 2018 investigate a dangerous ideology of ability and reification of the body that the viewer is invited to engage with. The dance school setting, a venue focussed upon “improving” and “perfecting” the body to an established and verifiable criteria establishes a clear delineation between acceptable/“normal”/extraordinary bodies and unacceptable/“abnormal”/deficient bodies. The post-war German setting is significant as it challenges the viewer to relate the objectification, inclusion or othering of bodies into a wider legacy of dangerous eugenic ideologies denigrating and othering socially or politically perceived “abnormal” bodies.

Nicole Hamilton — Motherhood, Matriarchy and Malice: Womanhood in Luca Guadagnino's *Suspiria*

When Luca Guadagnino announced his intentions to remake Dario Argento's cult classic *Suspiria* (1977), he said that it would focus on the uncompromising force of motherhood. The film reflects this by providing various depictions of mothers and motherhood in different settings: biological (Susie's Mennonite mother), professional (the matrons of the academy), and supernatural (Mother Markos and, later, Susie). With Guadagnino's intentions in mind, then, this article seeks to examine *Suspiria* (2018) through this lens, using the mother figure to uncover how the film explores womanhood, taking into consideration the themes of matriarchy, witchcraft, and sexuality. Much of the academic study on the mother figure in horror is rooted in psychoanalysis, with Sarah Arnold's *Maternal Horror Film* focusing on the “Good/Bad mother” dichotomy in the genre. However, in this article I posit that *Suspiria* destroys all notion of a “good” or “bad” mother in favour of a much greyer understanding, one that is not bound by patriarchal ideals of womanhood. Throughout, I refer to Susie's relationship with her mother and how this influences her own ascension to Mother *Suspiriorum*, with Blanc's seemingly maternal relationship with her dancers and Markos' matriarchal hold over the coven also being discussed. Utilising these characters, I explore how the film reflects both the love and trauma that can be inflicted by the mother figure. I conclude that Guadagnino's film provides a deeply complex view of motherhood and of women, one that show both reverence and repulsion simultaneously.

Virginie Sélavy — Devouring Mothers, Ascending Daughters: Controlled bodies and bodies out of control in the two *Susprias*

In numerous films featuring witches, the antagonistic forces are those of patriarchy or Christianity. But a significant number of witches' films oppose women to other women in a battle for power. Among those, some are concerned with a generational conflict between mother and daughter figures. Associating witches with a matriarchal order, they depict a struggle for existence and domination among women.

This is the case of both Dario Argento's *Suspria* (1977) and Luca Guadagnino's 2018 *Suspria*. Part of the Three Mothers trilogy, the original *Suspria* pits a young woman against a terrifying bad Mother. Retaining the same narrative premise, Guadagnino's version offers a twist on this female generational conflict, introducing the idea of usurpation, and adding yet another layer through the reference to the Red Army Faction.

At stake in this conflict is control of the female body, which the dance world of the films helps dramatise. Considering the two films were made in two key periods of feminist assertiveness (and Guadagnino's version is set in the decade in which Argento's film was made), this theme resonates with contemporary cultural shifts. But where socio-political struggles for emancipation have seen women challenge the patriarchal order, in the two *Suspria* films, control is sought or exerted on women by other women, in order to restore control on their own unruly bodies.

The two *Suspria* films therefore establish an intricate and ambivalent relationship between the mother-daughter conflict, ideas of power and the female body. In my paper, I propose to explore these complexities and contrast the differing visions proposed by the two films.

Mile End Campus

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The Hitchcock Cinema is located in the building ArtsOne. The back entrance to ArtsOne is open during the weekends.

The East Gate to the Mile End campus on Mile End Road will be open and is close to the ArtsOne building.

Towards Mile End station, there are several coffee shops, including a Starbucks, Costa, and the Coffee Room (on Grove Road, very close to Mile End station).

