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Forum for *Suspiria* (1977)

In most horror films, women are typically characterized as victims through a dominant, patriarchal view. However, in Barbara Creed's psychoanalysis on film and feminism, she deconstructs the woman suffering from peril and strife. She analyzes the feminine role as monstrous while in conjunction with mothering aspects. Furthermore, the main correlation to the monstrosity of women is related to the female body and reproductive system. Freudian concepts emphasize that women are predominantly terrifying because they are castrated beings. On the other hand, Creed seeks to refute these claims by asserting that women are terrifying because of their ability to castrate. Hence, women are not "incomplete" individuals. Creed's theory undermines the idea in a reversed patriarchal world-view where women, even without a penis, are what causes men fear—with the reproductive body.

For starters, instances of *Suspiria* in comparison to Grimm's *Snow White* are profound throughout the film. After interpretation, the parallels are quite obvious, with Suzy Bannion's constant drowsiness and inability to be aware of her surroundings while in a trance. It was quite obvious that she had been being drugged without her knowledge, most likely from the wine given to her each night as a part of her "strict diet". Similarly, in *mise-en-scene*, color plays a prominent role by depicting mood and emotion. Suzy was always very pale and ill due to the effects of the dark magic. She always wore white or nude, in contrast to the vibrant hues of red, blue, and black. The portrayal of a "witch" is a common figure in fairy tales and the supernatural

realm, which exists all throughout the movie as strange occurrences take place without anyone physically causing them. The entire film is somewhat like a fever dream or a bad trip, as the thriller contains instances of delirium, memory loss, and mystery—a dark, parodical version of a familiar fairytale.

Pertaining to witches and the psychoanalytic dimension, women are being attacked by unknown/unseen assailants and are merely reduced to primary objects of art to amplify the visual sense of helplessness. The dainty, damsel figure of the women is accentuated by the gothic architecture of German Expressionism. The audience's fixation on who the killer is and what point of view is being shown creates more suspense and a longing for empowerment (women). The awaited answers of "Who?" or "What?" are answered towards the finale of the film, as Suzy can piece together the clues of what is transpiring in the "underworld" of the dance academy. The absence of male figures directly correlates to the monstrous-feminine ideology as the only men being represented are Pavlos, who is developmentally challenged, and Daniel, a man who is "castrated" or blind. With that being said, the men take on the very callous depiction Freud suggests as allegedly "useless" human beings. On the other hand, the power of the woman is constantly asserted throughout the film as the figures of mothers and the ones in charge. There is a female-dominated cast, with many house mothers, maids, and, of course, Madame Blanc (Joan Bennett). The plot reveals that the heroes, villains, and victims are all women as they attempt to push forward while all odds are against them. There is a secret coven of witches that draw their power from an ancient queen with the ability to alter life and death without physically being present. Suzy Bannion is the only successful student to figure out the witches' games after several other attempts were made beforehand. Via a game of telephone, each dancer would make every effort to reveal the truth of the academy before their untimely demise. Luckily, Suzy is

able to solve the mystery, kill the ancient evil, and take down the entire coven with intuition and intelligence. Aside from the misogyny and illustration of the male gaze, *Suspiria* is one of few films heavily dominated by women and encouraging independence, sexuality, and the idea of a matriarchy—although it was not victorious.