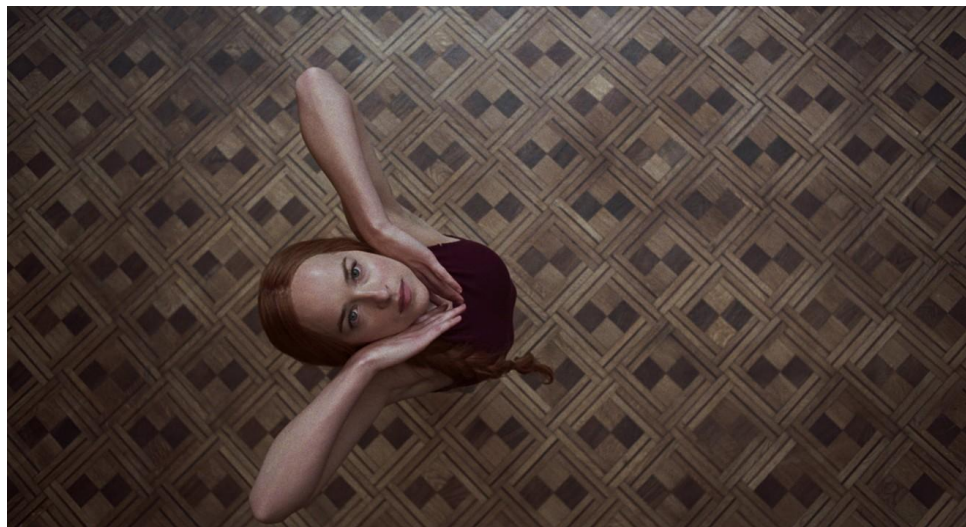


Kim Otzelberger
05/06/2020

Villains or Heroes : The Witches from Luca Guadagnino's 2018 *Suspiria* Remake

It's a well known fact that Dario Argento's 1977 *Suspiria* revolutionized the course of Horror Films. With its vibrant colors, unusual soundtrack, and unique storyline, filmmakers followed right in his footsteps creating films such as *The Love Witch* (2016). His creation of the German dance academy run by witches was a peak staple of the Horror Genre. In 2018, Luca Guadagnino took this idea and remastered it into a visual horror phenomenon that could stand out as the best Horror film of 2018. But were the witches in this film the villains, or the heroes?



Susie Bannion played by Dakota Johnson escapes her Mennonite family in Ohio and arrives at the Markos Dance Academy in Germany to audition. This has been her lifelong dream and there is nothing that would deter her from achieving it. Forcing her way into an audition, the melancholy nightmare begins. Immediately the witches see Susie as the next instrument for their ranking Supreme Witch to use as a stepping stone to get a new body. Mother Markos shows her approval for Susie by reaching to the celine from her basement dwelling. Madame Blanc, played by Tilda Swinton, on the other hand has other ideas. After witnessing her audition, Madame Blanc is pulled towards Susie in a way that is soul binding. With the knowledge of what may come next for Susie, Madame Blanc is torn between her dedication to the convent, and her admiration for Susie.

During a breakfast scene in the film, the witches vote on who will continue to run the Dance Academy. With a close vote, Mother Markos wins over Madame Blanc again. But this divide amongst the witches indicates the ties between good and evil. Those who voted for Mother Markos are the witches stuck in routine. Those that hold onto traditions that are no longer relevant to the way society is run and how they can continue to blossom in Germany. While those who voted for Madame Blanc are the witches who see prosperity and growth in their future. While they want the Dance Academy to survive, they know that new leadership is a must.

Throughout the film we as an audience get to watch the dance of death, both figuratively and metaphorically. As the students prepare their dance for their final performance, behind the scenes we watch as the witches prepare Susie for her sacrifice. Along the way, many students fall to their demise due to them discovering the secrets of the Dance Academy. There are graphically horrendous scenes that include a student's body pulled in every direction possible, leaving her paralyzed, and a student breaking her leg due to a hole in the floor opening up. This hint at body transformation is an element of foreshadowing to the final scene where the witches prepare Mother Markos' soul to be moved to Susie's body.



Within this grand finale, the room is filled with uncomfortable grunting, dancing, and a lot of hair. As the witches perform their ritual, Madame Blanc makes the sacrifice to save Susie resulting in her being beheaded by Mother Maroks. Susie slowly walks down the stairs and then reveals her secret. An incarnation of Death is shown taking the life of Susie's abusive mother in Ohio before suddenly appearing at the Sabbath and bowing to Susie, who reveals that she is the true Mother Suspiriorum. Maroks and her followers are violently killed as Susie dances in the rain of blood.



Does this indicate that good will always triumph over evil? This is a demonstration of souls being offered a second chance. While the perception of good vs evil is to the individual, what we can walk away

from this film knowing is that the choices we make everyday can steer us one way or another. The chaos we violently take on each and every day places us on the spectrum of good and evil. There are truly no villains or heroes in this film, rather individuals making selfish decisions or decisions for the group. And given the outcome, those that relished in their selfish ways, found that they no longer had a place on this Earth.