

Color Symbolism

(From *The Symbolism of Place*)

Objects (or contents) within places possess obvious colors. Not so obvious, is the color of the context that contains the objects.

However, even if this type of distinction can be applied, it serves no useful function in our study. Both the more "subjective" elements of place symbolism found in time, space and phenomena and the more "objective" elements of place symbolism found in color, number and elements have a strong relationship to place. It is place which is the unifying aspect for them all serving as a coalescent idea around which they all revolve.

1) Light And Darkness

Color symbolism is one of the most universal of all types of symbolism with broad application over the entire spectrum of symbology. This wide use finds color symbolism as an important element in such diverse areas as art, literature, liturgy, heraldry and alchemy.

Because of its broad symbolism, pursuing this elusive prey can be frustrating unless one begins with the fundamental proposition that all color symbolism derives from the basic contrast between the white of light and the black of darkness. This contrast between light and darkness is fundamental to all symbolism and is one of the primary aspects of symbolic theory. As many observers have remarked, dark and light symbolism is central to the myth of creation which involves a "birth" from the darkness of the unconscious into the light of consciousness. In this respect symbolism of light and dark is also symbolism of the journey of the hero in all stories as a journey and birth from darkness into light, from ignorance to self-knowledge.

The origin of the contrast between light and dark is that aspect of time we have defined previously as cyclic time and the division of cyclic time into the light of day and darkness of night. Max Luscher in The Luscher Color Test provides a useful explanation of this division primary to color significance:

"In the beginning man's life was dictated by two factors beyond his control: night and day, darkness and light. Night brought about an environment in which action had to cease, so man repaired to his cave, wrapped himself in his furs and went to sleep, or else he climbed a tree and made himself as comfortable as he could while awaiting the coming of dawn. Day brought an environment in which action was possible, so he set forth once more to replenish his store and forage or hunt for his food. Night brought passivity, quiescence and general slowing down of metabolic and glandular activity; day brought with it the possibility of action, an increase in the metabolic rate and greater glandular secretion, providing him with both energy and incentive."

Originally these two environments were symbolized by light and darkness. Eventually, the dark and light colors developed from this basic contrast with dark-blue symbolizing the night and with the color yellow symbolizing the day. The contrast has a psychological symbolism with the black darkness of unconsciousness relating to the dark-blue night when the unconsciousness world rules over the conscious world. The white light of consciousness relates to the bright-yellow of the day when the conscious world rules over the unconscious world.

From this basic cycle of nature dark-blue has gained a symbolism of quietness and passivity while bright yellow has become the color of hope and activity. Interestingly enough, the qualities of activity and passivity associated with these original contrasts also relate to the archetypes of masculine and feminine. The day is ruled from above by the masculine sun god, while the night is ruled from below by the feminine moon Goddess. As we have demonstrated previously, above is a masculine concept symbolized in above places possessing height such as mountains while below is a feminine concept symbolized in below places possessing depth such as oceans and valleys.

The distinction between the masculine and feminine aspects of light and darkness also corresponds to the nature of light and its origination. Light originates from either reflection or from radiation. It is either radiant light or reflected light. Radiant light is created from within and flows outward while reflected light is created from without and is either absorbed or reflected by the object. Dark colors absorb light while

lighter colors reflect light. The basic contrast between light and darkness corresponds to a contrast between reflected and radiant light. The sun which rules the light of day is radiant light while the moon which rules the light of night is reflected light.

As one might suspect, the early contrast between light and darkness seems to have a relationship to instincts and the more primitive parts of the brain while the consciousness of different colors is related to the more advanced part of the brain. Max Luscher in The Luscher Color Test remarks about this relationship of colors to the brain:

"In Man, the more sophisticated interpretations of what his senses tell him appear to be functions of the more 'educated' part of the brain - the cortex...Color vision is...related to both the educated and primitive brain...The distinguishing of color, its identification, naming and any aesthetic reactions to it, are all functions of the cortex; they are therefore the result of development and education rather than of instinct and reactive response. Reflexive and instinctive visual functions on the other hand appear to...(go) to the much more primitive midbrain, operating in terms of contrast and affecting the physical and glandular systems through the pituitary..."

The contrast that Luscher talks about is represented by the achromatic colors of black, grey and white the colors associated originally with the cycle of night and day.

The lack of color distinction in early cultures confirms this original light and dark symbolism of color. This point is underscored through analysis of a number of areas, one of the most important being that of literature. Christopher Rowe in "Color In The Ancient World" from the Eranos Conference book

Color Symbolism discusses Homer's use of color in The Iliad and The Odyssey. One of the conclusions he reaches is that the ancients experienced properties of colors rather than the specific colors themselves. Rowe remarks that Homer experienced the world not as essentially colored, but as brilliant, gleaming, glowing and lustrous. During the Homeric period there were three basic color terms: white, black and red. This was the first outstanding feature of Homeric usage. The second outstanding feature was the importance of brightness and darkness, and in particular "the ambiguity of *leukos* and *melas* between 'white' and 'bright', 'black' and 'dark'".

Color researchers have noted that contrast is the first aspect of color that a young child is able to perceive. Variations of color are a result of further development and education. In this sense, earlier cultures are similar to young children in that contrasts and tones of colors are much more conscious than the modern subtle variations of these tones and contrasts. In the above example there is confirmation of this early perception of contrast in the great works of Homer. The concern is not with specific colors but rather with properties of colors and the contrasting tones of light and darkness.

2) Color Properties & Classifications

The modern spectrum of colors has developed from the original division between light and dark, white and black.

Although the world of color has exploded into hundreds of colors from this original division its aspects can still be seen in contemporary color classifications and properties.

One of the major classifications is the division between achromatic tones and chromatic colors. The achromatic tones of black, grey and white represent the basic symbolic contrast between night and day while the chromatic colors of red, orange and yellow have a close symbolism to the "advancing" colors associated with the day.

The division of the chromatic and achromatic colors has been further developed from those above by a number of researchers. One is Shigenobu Kobayashi, Founder of the Nippon Color & Design Research Institute and recognized as one of the world's leading color authorities. Shigenobu provides additional classifications of chromatic and achromatic colors in A Book Of Colors. The color spectrum of chromatic colors is elaborated by Shigenobu in the following manner: red, red/orange, orange, yellow, yellow/green, green, blue/green, blue, blue/purple, purple and red/purple. The color spectrum for achromatic colors is classified: white, light gray, medium gray, dark gray and black.

Corresponding to this division into achromatic and chromatic colors is the classification into "advancing" and "retreating" colors. The advancing colors of red, orange, yellow and white relate to the day and symbolize assimilation and activity. They reflect light and are termed warm colors. The retreating colors of blue, indigo, violet and black relate to

the night and symbolize dissimulation, passivity and debilitation. These colors absorb light and are termed cold colors. Between the advancing and the retreating colors is the intermediate color of green which spans both the advancing and retreating groups of colors.

The primary colors are made from the advancing colors red and yellow and the retreating color blue. All colors can be made from blending these three primary chromatic colors in varying proportions and combinations. For example, by mixing red and yellow the color orange is created, or, by mixing yellow and blue, the color green is achieved. Adding an achromatic color such as white, gray or black determines the tone of the created color.

Color properties involve color tones and variations of color tones represented by the tones of vivid, bright, dull and dark. Kobayashi finds a symbolism attached to these tones: vivid tones are brilliant, powerful, clear and full of life, suggesting a strong and substantial image; bright tones are clear, like precious stones and are sweet, dreamy, pale, delicate, soft and whitish; dull and subdued tones are warm and peaceful and suggest a quiet and reserved image and dark tones are deep and thick and yet subtle with an image of high quality and also a hard and heavy feeling to them.

In addition to the properties of specific colors, there are also symbolic relationships created when two or more colors are used together. This relationship involves complimentary or contrasting colors. Complimentary colors use similar colors or

similar tone values. An example would be the use of dark blue, medium blue and light blue used together or vivid tones used together. Contrasting colors pair opposite colors or opposite tone values. An example would be pairing red/orange with dark blue or the pairing of a vivid tone with a dark tone. Complimentary and contrasting colors have found application in many aspects of modern culture but particularly painting. Vincent Van Gogh once said, "for expressing the love of two lovers, use a marriage of complimentary colors, their combinations and contrasts, the mysterious vibration of colors coming together."

3) Specific Color Symbolism

The contrast between light and darkness and the basic color properties and classifications find examples in the symbolism of specific colors. In this section we will look at symbolism associated with the basic colors and tones of colors. We will suggest place symbolism in these specific colors but will save most of our comments on color place symbolism for the following section.

(a) Black

As we have shown, the basic symbolism of black comes from the contrast between night and day and relates to the state of

unconsciousness. Related to this symbolism are other elements symbolized by black such as evil, death, despair, shame, destruction, corruption and grief. The basic element of earth is symbolized by black and in the heavens the planet God for black is Saturn. In symbology black has been associated with the concept of time and the number 8.

In popular culture and advertising black is considered a classic, elegant and sophisticated color and is often used to denote quality. It is also thought of as an "underground" or "subculture" color, appealing to those considering themselves highly individualistic.

(b) White

White represents the light of day and consciousness and stands in opposition to the black of night and unconsciousness. Transcendence and perfection are symbolized by white as well as youth, simplicity, air, illumination, purity, innocence, chastity, holiness and sacredness. The sacredness of the color leads to its being worn at all Christian sacraments. In advertising and popular culture, it is often used to connote the freshness and purity of products such as dairy products.

(c) Grey

Grey is best expressed in cyclic time symbolism as a twilight time between day and night. It is therefore a color of

transition, marking a boundary between states. As Max Luscher notes in The Luscher Color Test:

"It is neither colored, nor dark, nor light, and is entirely free from any stimulus or psychological tendency. It is neutral, neither subject nor object, neither inner or outer, neither tension nor relaxation. Grey is not an occupied territory but a border; a border as a 'no-man's land,' as a demilitarized zone, a region of separation providing a partition between contrasting areas. Grey is a Berlin Wall, an Iron Curtain, on either side of which is a different approach."

Grey is the color of neutralization, egoism, depression, inertia and indifference. It is the color of ashes and the color between black and white. It suggests shadow and the "in-betweenness" of twilight or of a cloudy day.

(d) Red

Red is the color of emotions making the heart beat faster and adrenaline flow. Red suggests passion, sentiment and the life-giving principle. Masculinity, sexual excitement, and anger are symbolized by red. The color red communicates vitality and power and is associated with blood, wounds and sublimation. It is the zenith of color and is symbolic of the element fire and the sun and the ancient war gods. The planet Mars is the cosmic symbol of red. Red possesses an advancing activity of assimilation which demands attention.

Red was the first color to emerge from the basic contrast between black and white. This early emergence is seen in the use of red in early western literature such as The Iliad and The

Odyssey and most likely relates to the blood of the battle and the hunt. As Luscher notes in The Luscher Color Test:

"To primitive man, activity as a rule took one of two forms - either he was hunting and attacking, or he was being hunted and defending himself against attack: activity directed towards conquest and acquisition or activity directed towards self-preservation. The outgoing actions of attack and conquest are universally represented by the color red; self-preservation by its complement, green."

Luscher points out that the red and green colors associated with hunting are "autonomous" because hunting (red) and defending oneself (green) are self-regulating and under man's control. At the same time, attack being an acquisitive and outgoing action is considered to be "active" while defense, being concerned only with self-preservation, is considered to be "passive."

The early correspondences of colors to basic parts of life still play a profound part in the modern world. A major part of color symbolism in the modern world can be found in the fields of psychology and physiology. For example, Luscher notes experiments in which individuals have been required to contemplate red for varying lengths of time. The results of experiments with red have shown that red has a decidedly stimulating effect on the nervous system - blood pressure increases, respiration rate and heartbeat both speed up. Red is, therefore, 'exciting' in its effect on the nervous system, especially on the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system.

(e) Green

Green symbolizes sensation and vegetation. It serves as a connecting link between the black of mineral life and the red of animal life. It spans both the advancing and retreating colors. The season of Spring is symbolized by the color green. Associated with the idea of Spring is prosperity, gladness, confidence and peace. The God Venus and nature symbolize green and there is an association to a fertility of fields.

(f) Blue

Of all the colors, it is the colors blue and green which have the greatest emotional range. Blue has been called the most suitable color of psychic interior life. A philosophical inquiry into the nature of the color blue is the subject of the book On Being Blue by William Gass. The book offers a far-ranging philosophical investigation into the aspects of blue symbolism. Anyone who doubts that one color can have a great significance should turn to this book.

The elements of the color blue are water and air. It is related to the depth of the ocean and possessing a close connection to the strong feminine symbolism of water. Some of the characteristics associated with blue are wisdom, loyalty, revelation, constancy, prudence, feeling, devotion, contemplation, heaven, truth and peace. It is a retreating rather than an advancing color symbolizing a passive rather than

an active state. It has attributes of the Gods Jupiter and Juno as the god and goddess of heaven.

The experiments with the color red we previously mentioned have also been performed using the color blue. Max Luscher notes that the reverse effect of red's stimulating effect has been found with the color blue. He notes that blood pressure falls and heartbeat and breathing both slow down. In opposition to red, dark-blue is therefore calming in its effect and "operates chiefly through the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system." Again, much of the psychology and physiology of blue relates back to its original symbolism of night and the peaceful time of night in opposition to the active time of the day.

(g) Yellow

Yellow is an ambivalent color symbolizing intuition, the light of the sun and illumination. It is an advancing and active color which suggests assimilation. It finds representation in Apollo the Sun God. It is associated with warmth and happiness and indicates newness, the future and development.

4) Color and Place

After reviewing some of the general and specific aspects of color and light symbolism we can offer some brief observations

about the relationship between color and place. The basic contrast of color pointed out in our previous section on "Light and Darkness" fixes this contrast as one involving time and its cyclical nature manifested in night and day. In addition to relating to daily cyclic cycles, color also relates to yearly cycles expressed through seasonal change. During the winter season darkness rules the world and therefore the colors black and dark-blue relate to winter. On the other hand, the summer is a time when light rules the world and the color white and yellow symbolize this period of time. Just as Spring is a time of transition between winter and summer, it is represented by green the color of transition. Autumn is represented by the advancing colors orange and red as another transition period between the yellow of summer and the dark-blue of winter.

Color also relates to the linear aspects of time we discussed in the chapter on time. The past is symbolized as a time of darkness because of its relationship to the state of unconsciousness both in individuals and in world history. The image of evolution shows an overall symbolism as lightness emerging from primordial darkness. With the symbolism of day and night the achromatic color tones of black, grey and white are introduced. These aspects of color symbolism depend on contrast more than anything else and as we have seen contrast is the first distinction made in the realm of color by both early societies and by children.

In the modern world, the dominance of certain colors may be associated with particular periods of time. In America, a number

of organizations such as The Color Marketing Group, the Pantone Color Institute and the Color Association of the United States observe and forecast the nation's collective color wheel. The Color Association has been forecasting color for the fashion and interior industries since the early part of the century. It finds that in 1915 the dominant color palette was composed of pastel colors. In the 1920s the dominant colors had shifted to royal purple, emerald green, peacock blue and coral red. Schuyler Ingle notes in the November/December 1992 *Aldus Magazine* that the 1920s change in color was as "though the decade had been invigorated with a new enthusiasm after a devastating war and flu epidemic and wanted to shake off in a big way the status quo that had come before." Ingle observes that thirty years later, in the 1950s, "cherry red, navy blue, aqua, and orchid purple defined contemporary color in reaction to the predominant military colors of the late 1930s and the 1940s."

Color trends are influenced by these large scale social, cultural and political issues and run in 20 to 30-year cycles. According to Leatrice Eiseman of the Color Marketing Group, what has come before will come again. The greens and earth tones of the early 1960s were associated with the beginnings of the environmental movement and a desire to reach back to roots and return to the land. During this period military colors were used by antimilitary forces in society. The colors of this period according to Eiseman finally worked their way into the American kitchen with the colors of harvest gold and avocado green.

The 1980s under Reagan was a time of patriotism and the colors of the 1980s reflected the red, white and blue of the American flag. It was evident in Nancy Reagan's red dresses and Ronald Reagan's blue suits and crisp white shirts. In the 1990s, the reds have browned off with the impact of environmental concerns and the shifting from a self-centered power to an earth-centered terra cotta. Margaret Walch, associate director of the Color Association, notes that "These are not flag colors and that's very unusual for Americans. A tendency to yellow, orange, and green is the big shift in color we can note in the '90s. These are not WASP colors - not the colors of Wall Street."

Apart from the cyclical and linear time aspects of color symbolism, there are also interesting psychological time dimensions. This relates to the relationship of color to the emotions and the fact that emotions operate within time. One of the major areas affected by this connection between inner time duration and color is in the area of art and painting. Rene Huyghe examines the increasing importance of color in painting of the western world in one of the essays from Color Symbolism titled "Color And The Expression Of Interior Time In Western Art." Huyghe observes that:

"In speaking of art there is a traditional division: the division between forms and colors. Although this division appears to be facile and academic, it is in reality extremely profound: it not only distinguishes two aspects of the art object but corresponds to a fundamental psychological difference between them. For form concerns space exclusively and so calls

only upon our experience of space - being spread on canvas - and also, psychologically, our experience of time."

A duration of time is involved with the experience of time, but color seems fixed and without any movement. Huyghe notes it "seems to be situated exclusively in space and to have nothing to do with time." Yet color "stirs up emotional forces in us which can be perceived only in time that has been lived through in inner duration" and consequently "it is through inner duration that time is concerned with color."

This emerging time element in color has made many great contemporary artists feel a strong analogy between color and music. Huyghe remarks that painting was traditionally defined as a plastic art and one concerned with forms and the conditioning of forms in space. However, for the past several centuries many painters have had misgivings about this centering around the color element of painting. He writes that they have told themselves:

"...that because of color the art of painting was not solely concerned with form, was not properly speaking a plastic art like sculpture or architecture but had analogies with music. Indeed, although music is performed in time and painting is not, one whole part of painting - which is color - does work upon us by occupying a succession of moments spaced out in time, ranging from the initial sensation, to the nervous excitation, to the emotions that follow the affective states. These are progressively realized moments; they unfold and thus occupy inner duration."

For this reason, color brings a whole new kind of value to painting. Huyghe observes that color at first played a limited

role in art "because the centuries of antiquity were unaware of this potentiality".

Just as color has a strong symbolic relationship with the time aspect of place, it also has a strong relationship with the space aspect of place. In particular there is a close correspondence between color and vertical space symbolism. This relates to the correspondence between white and light colors with "up" and "above" positions and black and darker colors with "down" and "below" positions. This association originates in solar symbolism relating to the light of the sun coming from above and also the location of God and heaven in above space and the Devil and Hell in below space. Color also has a relationship with inside and outside spaces with the darker colors relating to inside space and the lighter colors relating to outside space. The relationship of white and lighter colors to central spaces is related to religious symbolism noted by Mircea Eliade which finds sacredness in center space.

The relationship of color to natural phenomena centers around the various colors associated with climates and weather conditions of the world. Clear, warm weather where the light of the sun is not obstructed has a relationship to white and lighter colors while unclear and cold weather a relationship to darker colors.

The achromatic color tone of grey serves to define a type of "twilight" weather phenomena in the same manner that it defines a twilight cycle of time. The phenomena of fog, shadow and clouds are the major phenomena associated with the color of

grey. Its use in much of Dicken's literature not only represents the very real fog of London but a period of time between two periods, one dying and the other beginning. The color grey is implied by the heavy foggy weather in the opening pages of his famous Bleak House and this grey of London fog is in most all of his novels. The color grey's dichotomy of condition is given words at the beginning of Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities which opens with the sentence "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness." Dickens might just have well said that "It was a grey time."

Color has a relationship to the basic elements. While we will discuss the basic elements in a following chapter, we want to briefly note the relationships. The element of fire is associated with light, white, gold and red. The element of air is associated with the color yellow. The element earth is associated with the color black. The element water associated with the colors green and blue. We will explore these later in more detail.

In the next chapter we will discuss numbers and their relationship to place. One of the major aspects of color and number we can observe is the correspondence of colors to the number seven and many other phenomena of the world related to the number seven. This correspondence notes that there are seven basic colors, seven vowels (in the Greek alphabet), seven notes of music, seven parts of heaven, seven facilities of the soul, seven virtues and seven vices, seven geometric forms and seven

days of the week. In addition to the relationship of color to the number seven, we also note its relationship to the number two expressed in the basic contrast between light and darkness and white and black and its relationship to the number three expressed in the emergence of grey as between black and white.

Throughout this chapter we have indirectly discussed the relationship of color and psychology. As we saw, this relationship was first one of contrast in the most important aspect of mankind's world, the cycle of day and night. In one of the final chapters of this book we will specifically address the psychology of place. Here we might make a brief comment on this relationship. Many great thinkers including C.G. Jung have defined the basic human functions as thinking, intuition, emotion and sensation. In her book The Psychology of C.G. Jung, Jolan Jacobi, one of Jung's most important students, relates these functions to colors. She observes that the color blue relates to thinking, the color yellow to intuition, the color red to emotion and the color green to sensation. These relationships certainly seem to fit into the overall symbolism of these particular colors. The primary colors relate to the primary human functions.

We have seen the close relationship of color to the various aspects of place we discuss throughout this book. There is also a close connection between color and the actual physical places of the world. To begin, from above the earth is dominated by the colors green, yellow and blue with the green representing

vegetation areas of land, the yellow the non-vegetation areas and of course the blue representing the oceans and water.

Regarding nations and continents, there may exist a powerful color symbolism, or perhaps, lack of color symbolism. In the book Color Symbolism, Toshihiko Izutsu argues that there is a lack of color in the Far East. In his essay "The Elimination of Colour in Far Eastern Art and Philosophy" Izutsu writes that the "negative attitude toward colour is in fact characteristic of the Far Eastern aesthetic experience, whether it be in the field of painting, poetry, drama, dancing or the art of tea." This negative attitude towards color is observable in the Chinese and the Japanese cultures. The negative attitude is best illustrated in the art of ink painting.

There is also a color symbolism associated with the directions of east and west. The east represents the rising sun and birth and light, and the west represents the dying sun and death and darkness. Therefore, the light colors relate to the eastern direction while the dark colors relate to the western direction.

The major ecosystems of the world we have discussed have an overall contextual color symbolism. In this respect we can find the lighter colors in the mountainous higher places of the world and the darker colors in the valleys, oceans, caves, canyons and lower places of the world. The areas where vegetation dominates such as jungles are related to the color green while those without vegetation like deserts and polar regions are dominated by yellow, white and the lighter colors. Although forests are

mostly green, there is a closer symbolic association of them with the "shadow" of the unconsciousness so that one discerns a greater relationship to black than green.

5) Color And Story

We have argued throughout this book that place symbolism is the most important aspect of stories. In this chapter we have attempted to show the close relationship of color to place. An indirect result of this investigation has been to also show the close relationship between color and stories. In this final section on color we make this relationship more of a direct one by focusing on stories and color.

Color has played an important role in a wide range of story forms from ancient mythology, early literature such as The Iliad and The Odyssey to the modern novels of Charles Dickens. Its use has served as a strong symbol of internal character states and also as a definer of particular genres of stories. The most obvious is probably the relationship of the color black to the horror genre. Traditionally, horror stories involve aspects of place symbolism associated with the color black: a time of night when unconscious darkness rules over conscious light, when the winter season brings coldness to the world, when the "below" world rules over the "above" world and when the weather is stormy and grey rather than clear and bright. This color symbolism can be seen at work in the great works of horror

literature such as Dracula, Frankenstein and The Fall Of The House Of Usher. Darkness also rules over the hard-boiled detective genre of the film noir style of cinema from the 1940s represented by the stories of Dashiell Hammett and particularly The Maltese Falcon.

The romance genre concerns itself with the world of light rather than the world of darkness. The setting for romance stories is often the green of spring or the yellow of summer. It is an outside time ruled by above solar symbolism rather than below lunar symbolism. As we have mentioned elsewhere in this book, the color yellow has an important symbolism in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby which is one of the greatest romances of contemporary literature.

Although literature has provided an important laboratory to explore color in story forms its greatest and most evident use has been in cinema of the twentieth century. In an interesting manner, early cinema with its limitation to black and white film has a relationship to the original contrasts between black and white. The proliferation of color has allowed for many subtle variations of the original contrast between black and white, darkness and light. But the subtle variations provided by an increased technology of color film was not possible in the early days of cinema. This technical limitation was a large reason for the bold character traits of the early movie stars. Good and evil was drawn in terms of black and white rather than in terms of purple and turquoise. Even to this day, this primal drama created by black and white films such as Casablanca and Citizen

Kane still remains unsurpassed in cinema. Interestingly, the most popular modern film maker has returned to this basic black and white contrast and created another masterpiece of cinema. The film Schindler's List by Steven Spielberg is about the Holocaust and chooses the black and white medium partly to suggest the old newsreel documentary film format popular in the 1940s. However, the real reason for Spielberg's choice in working in black and white seems to be to put himself and his audience back in touch with that primal contrast we have discussed between night and day, darkness and light, evil and goodness. The greatest tragedy in human history must ultimately be seen in terms of that ancient battle between the dark forces of the night and the light forces of the day.