

Shadows in the Shelter. “Fantastika” Variations on a Decadent Trope, between Literature and Cinema

Vincenzo Pernice

Abstract

Since J.K. Huysmans’s novel *À rebours* (*Against the Grain*) appeared in 1884, the retreat from the outside world became a trope in decadent literature, serving as a blueprint for fictionalized treatments of aestheticism, anti-bourgeoisie, pessimism. This paper aims to explore the cultural and social implications of contaminating such trope with elements of popular genres like fantasy, horror and science fiction, here grouped together under the umbrella term of “fantastika”, a category promoted by writer and literary critic John Clute since 2007 to describe the fantastic (non-realist) as a whole in narrative media. Three novels and three films will be taken into account, using a transmedia approach to highlight the relevance of the “fantastika isolation” formula not only when it actually started in the long 19th century, but also in contemporary cinema, as to encourage further analysis on its fate. The three novels are Huysmans’s 1887 *En rade* (*Stranded*), M.P. Shiel’s 1901 *The Purple Cloud*, Aldo Palazzeschi’s 1908 *riflessi* (*:reflections*). The three films are Giovanni Pastrone’s 1916 *Il fuoco* (*The Fire*), Lars von Trier’s 2009 *Antichrist* and 2011 *Melancholia*.

While none of the above mentioned case studies can be regarded as popular – with the partial exception of *The Purple Cloud* –, they all include imaginative elements inspired by fantastika (nightmares, visions, haunted houses, the last man on Earth, the end of the World). In doing so, distinguished authors seem to look for more entertaining ways to develop their otherwise static plots centered on one or two isolated characters. Yet, consistently with an elitist conceptualisation, their sociopolitical ideology appears to remain intact: accepting popular clichés does not translate into a more democratic literature or cinema.

Keywords: Art Film, Decadent Literature, Fantastika, Long 19th Century, Transmedia Studies

Introduction

Since Joris-Karl Huysmans’s novel *À rebours* [*Against the Grain*] appeared in 1884, the retreat from an outside world perceived as ugly and repellent became a trope in decadent literature, serving as a blueprint for fictionalized treatments of aestheticism, individualism, anti-bourgeoisie, and pessimism. This paper aims to explore the cultural and social implications of contaminating such trope with elements of popular genres like fantasy, horror, Gothic and science fiction, here grouped together under the umbrella term of “fantastika”, a category promoted by writer and literary critic John Clute since 2007 to de-

scribe the fantastic (non-realist) as a whole in narrative media (Baker, 2015; Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, 2023).

In today's context of fluid and constantly evolving global narrative, the use of umbrella terms and macro-genres such as fantastika has been encouraged by several scholars, so as to enhance the similarities of the fantastic (or fantasy) and science fiction, with particular reference to their reception by readers (Bombara & Todesco, 2021), since "Fantastika consists of that wide range of fictional works whose contents are *understood* to be fantastic" (Clute, 2017, p. 16). Thus, even authors not traditionally associated with genre fiction such as Grazia Deledda and Ada Negri can be included in this conceptualisation (Bombara & Todesco, 2021, p. xvi).

The emergence and aftermath of the Decadent movement¹ between the 19th and the 20th centuries coincide, in fact, with the birth of a modern entertainment industry as we know it, where successful books and films often belong to the above-mentioned genres. In this context, it shall be noticed how much renowned authors took inspiration from fantastic imagery, with the most obvious example being Oscar Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

In this paper, three novels and three films will be taken into account, using a transmedia approach to highlight the relevance of the "fantastika isolation" formula not only when it actually started in the long 19th century, but also in contemporary cinema, as to encourage further analysis on its fate. The three novels are Huysmans's 1887 *En rade* [*Stranded*], M.P. Shiel's 1901 *The Purple Cloud*, Aldo Palazzeschi's 1908 *:riflessi* [*:reflections*]. The three films are Giovanni Pastrone's 1916 *Il fuoco* [*The Fire*], Lars von Trier's 2009 *Antichrist* and 2011 *Melancholia*.

The birth and development of genre fiction has historically been linked to countries with a flourishing publishing market, sustained by the demand of literate consumers, as in the case of Huysmans's France and Shiel's Great Britain, whose fantastika inspiration may have benefited from the success of Gothic and science fiction novels and stories in their languages. As for Pastrone's and Palazzeschi's Italy, this is a nation where genres in the strict sense of the word were established with some delay, due to the backwardness of the publishing market (de Turrís, 2014), nevertheless the influence of the fantastic on acclaimed or even avant-garde Italian authors has been verified (Weber, 2010, pp. 89-96). Finally, the cinema of Danish von Trier has been included in several studies on so-called contemporary Nordic or Scandinavian Gothic (Holmgren Troy et al., 2020). The notion of fantastika thus helps to bring out a unity in different times and geographical areas, consistent with the current direction of studies, whereas more restrictive and traditionally understood categories would tend to keep the various phenomena separate.

¹ The definition of "Decadent movement" is still controversial (Giovannetti, 2016). In this paper, it is meant to indicate a broad range of Western, mainly European, culture, spanning from the 1880s up until around World War One. In this sense, the Decadent movement shall include Symbolist art and literature, while also comprehending interior decoration, early cinema and lifestyle (Vergine, 2012).

While none of the above mentioned case studies can be regarded as popular – with the partial exception of *The Purple Cloud* –, they all in fact include imaginative elements inspired by fantastika (nightmares, visions, haunted houses, the last man on Earth, the end of the World). In doing so, distinguished authors seem to look for more entertaining ways to develop their otherwise static plots centered on one or two isolated characters. Yet, consistently with an elitist conceptualisation, their sociopolitical ideology appears to remain intact: accepting popular *clichés* does not translate into a more democratic literature or cinema.

Nightmares and Toxic Clouds in the Long 19th Century Literature

Huysmans's 1887 *En rade* is one of his lesser known novels². It tells the story of Jacques and Louise, a husband and a wife who seek refuge from their Parisian creditors in a *chateau* in the village of Longueville, in rural France. They both detest practical life, with Jacques being described as a pretentious intellectual and Louise as mentally ill and unable to housekeeping. Far from finding peace in an idyllic landscape, they soon realize how miserable their everyday life is in the castle. Furthermore, their much desired isolation is often interrupted by her vulgar peasant relatives.

The *chataeu* itself soon becomes the setting of some potentially disturbing events. In Chapter 2, the realistic plot leaves place to the visionary story of a girl who is about to lose her virginity with the king of a fairy-tale palace, made of countless gemstones. But as soon as Jacques wakes up, the reader understands it was just a dream. The same happens with the description of the Moon as a mineral realm (Huysmans, 1887, Chapter 5), the possibility of marketing perfumes of dead people out of their corpses (Huysmans, 1887, Chapter 9), plus some incoherent horrific visions (Huysmans, 1887, Chapter 10). These dream sequences were highly regarded by Surrealism (Matthews, 1969, pp. 28-40), with André Breton going as far as including an excerpt of *En rade* in his 1940 *Anthologie de l'humour noir* [*Anthology of Black Humour*].

The setting of Huysmans's plot is immediately presented as the typical environment of a Gothic novel (Praz, 1968; Reim, 1993). In this run-down *chateau*, the imagination of the main protagonist runs free: Jacques's first dream is actually interrupted by mysterious noises, but turns out it was just an owl screeching; in order to escape from tedium, he even goes treasure hunting in the basement, finding nothing but dust. His decadent isolation is nor a relaxing vacation nor an exciting adventure, instead being just irritating and dull. At

² Only a handful of English translations have been made, titled: *Becalmed* (by Terry Hale, Atlas Press, 1992); *A Haven* (in *The Decadent Reader*, edited by Asti Hustvedt, Zone Press, 1998); *Stranded* (by Brendan King, Dedalus European Classics, 2010). An Italian translation by Stefano Brugnolo was published under the original title *En rade* by Piovani in 1990.

the end of the novel, while still incapable of facing their financial problems, Jacques and Louise go back to Paris: “canailles pour canailles” [“scoundrels for scoundrels”] (Huysmans, 1887, p. 318) he now prefers to engage with the sophisticated ones.

The pessimistic and sarcastic undertone confirms the novel’s belonging to the Decadent movement, together with its stylistic features. The extensive descriptions of Jacques’s dreams and the overall Gothic atmosphere enhance *En rade*’s aesthetical purposes, rather than acting as a form of advancement of the plot, whose captivating premises are completely disregarded.

Something similar happens in Shiel’s 1901 *The Purple Cloud*. The story focuses on Adam Jefferson, the presumed only survivor of a mass extermination caused by the titular mysterious cloud. The novel has achieved fair commercial success over the decades and today is considered a classic of post-apocalyptic science fiction. However, this should not eclipse its artistic ambitions (Morgan, 2009), to be traced back to a decadent *milieu*. Not only is the narrative explicitly set “In these days of ‘the corruption of the upper classes’, and Roman decadence of everything” (Shiel, 1977, p. 32), but many other clues can be found in the text.

In addition to being a doctor, Adam is an intellectual too, author of a treatise on science applied to art. Upon his return from a polar expedition, he comes across an endless trail of corpses, whose detailed description occupies most of the volume, according to a discursive strategy consisting of listing and accumulation. Corruption and decomposition are the true isotopes of the novel: decay is literal.

The pinnacle of this *décadence* is the monument that Adam decides to erect for himself, an enormous golden palace on the island of Imbros. The styles adopted here are said to be Egyptian, Homeric and Jewish, together with references to the museums of Paris and London, not to mention a lake filled with wine. He also has a preference for Orientalism, wearing Turkish attire. This variety of styles refers to the 19th-20th century eclecticism of interior decoration known as *bric-à-brac* (Praz, 1994, pp. 362-367). Italian readers could thus recognize in Adam’s palace a foreshadowing of the Vittoriale degli Italiani (Terraroli, 2001), the monumental complex of poet and war hero Gabriele d’Annunzio, started in 1921.

Unfortunately for Adam, his isolation will provide only temporary relief, turning out into an illusion of salvation or redemption. The meeting with Eva/Leda – a woman, the only other human being survived –, brings him back into caring for the outside world, while an earthquake destroys his palace, confirming its vanity.

Therefore, despite the captivating premise, *The Purple Cloud* should not be considered a properly popular narrative, due to its slow pace, the ambiguity and inconsistency of the protagonist, and the open ending, whose only certainty is that self-reclusion is not a solution to the struggles of humanity. While

considered a founder of modern post-apocalyptic fiction, nevertheless Shiel remains the author of a decadent novel.



Figure 1: *The Purple Cloud*, title illustration by J.J. Cameron for *The Royal Magazine*, depicting Adam in his Turkish attire.

As for Palazzeschi's 1908 *riflessi*³, the writer himself indirectly established its reliance on the Decadent movement when, years later, recalled it as his “liberty [i.e. Art Nouveau] novel” (Palazzeschi, 2004, p. 1396), reminding him of “those films starring Lida Borelli” (Palazzeschi, 2004, p. 1419). At the same time, he highlighted elements of popular fiction when calling it a detective story, while suggesting links with the fantastic when he added this piece in his 1943 collection of early works titled *Romanzi straordinari* [*Extraordinary Novels*].

The first part of the book presents the letters written by Valentino, a young and handsome man, to his lover Johnny. The former has retired in his manor in a fictional Tuscan countryside. In this lonely and abandoned place, Valentino has no social interactions, with the exception of few necessary contacts with two old housemaids, who supply him his food and take care of practical tasks. The action takes place in November, the month associated with the deaths in Catholic tradition: the novel, in fact, was re-titled *Allegoria di novembre* [*November Allegory*] since its second edition.

The manor is described as dusty and filled with shadows, while the weather is mostly rainy and foggy, perfectly fitting the melancholic temperament of the inhabitant, who finds himself hearing music from no apparent source and having visions of a beautiful woman. In a paranoia attack, Valentino even sets

³ Apparently, the novel is yet to be translated into English (“Aldo Palazzeschi”, 2022).

fire to some haystacks, calling them “conspirators”. The first part of the book abruptly ends when the protagonist announces Johnny a forthcoming party in his manor.

In the short second part, the reader is presented with newspaper clippings reporting contradictory news about the sudden disappearance of Valentino. We learn, however, not only that he was a prince, but also that the villa where he retired is the same where his mother committed suicide fifteen years before, while a party was taking place. Has the young man committed suicide too? Was the manor haunted by the ghost of his mother? Is it just a joke or the imagination of a disturbed personality? Palazzeschi left no answer, ending the narration with intentional mystery.

Once again, a distinguished author composed a work full of fantastic suggestions drawn from popular fiction, inserting them into a complex narrative. With its introspective tone and suggestive descriptions, without forgetting parallels and leitmotifs, Palazzeschi has created a novel where it is the atmosphere that stands out, rather than the plot. In doing so, he paved the way for avant-garde fiction (Weber, 2010, pp. 41-57), bending *fantastika* to his own personal expression.

Evilness and Colliding Planets, from “Cinema Dannunziano” to Contemporary Art Films

Il fuoco is a 1916 silent film directed by Giovanni Pastrone under the pseudonym of Piero Fosco, starring Febo Mari and Pina Menichelli⁴. This motion picture epitomizes many features of Italian “cinema dannunziano”, inspired by the sophisticated atmospheres of d’Annunzio’s theatrical and narrative works (Cherchi Usai, 1985, pp. 84-90; Verdone, 1963). The title itself derives from his novel *Il fuoco* (1900), even though the story is completely different. The film is divided into three acts, titled *La favilla* [*Sparkle*], *La vampa* [*Flame*] and *La cenere* [*Ashes*], symbolising the stages of love.

Mario Alberti, an unlucky painter, is invited by an owl-like poetess in her Gothic castle, furnished in a typical decadent fashion. While sharing days of passion in absolute privacy, Mario paints his first critical and commercial success. However one day, after waking up, he is informed that his lover left the castle to join her husband. Both he and the viewers ignored until then that she was married. Completely devastated and obsessed, the painter seeks for the woman, finally finding her in a classy gathering. She pretends not to recognize him, causing the man to lose control. The film ends with Mario being taken away, believed to be mad.

The last shot is a close-up of the evil laughter of the poetess. While in-

⁴ The film is available on the Internet Archive (Pastrone, 1916).



Figure 2: *Il fuoco*, film poster depicting Mario asking the poetess to “burn his soul”.

carnating the decadent stereotype of the *femme fatale*, Pastrone also made sure to characterize her appearance as some sort of wicked witch. *Il fuoco* is famous for Menichelli’s costumes, hairdressing and make up, resembling an actual owl shown in the Gothic castle. Furthermore the turning point of the picture, when the woman asks the painter to follow her, could be interpreted as a spell or even a curse. She breaks a lamp and starts a fire: comparing human emotions to flames, she urges Mario to choose between a dim but enduring love or a short but intense passion. “Burn my soul!” he answers.

This scene, along with the Gothic setting and Menichelli’s look, implies the possibility of a supernatural reading of a seemingly realistic story, as far as interpreting the painter selling his soul to an evil presence. In doing so, *Il fuoco* may add a pinch of fantasy in the “cinema dannunziano”.

Between 2009 and 2013, contemporary Danish director Lars von Trier released three films usually grouped together under an unofficial *Depression Trilogy*: 2009 *Antichrist*, 2011 *Melancholia*, 2013 *Nymphomaniac*. Apart from the main subject matter, they all share a reliance on some of the most popular genres in fiction and entertainment: respectively horror, sci-fi and porn. Although inspirations and references to genre fiction can be found in most of von Trier’s *oeuvre* (Badley, 2011; Badley, 2022), *Antichrist* and *Melancholia* stand out for their greater reliance to traditional genres, to the point of being included in some encyclopedic thematic volumes (Booker, 2020; Leffler, 2021; Power, 2018). By taking these two films into account, however, this paper does not mean to interpret them as part of the historical Decadent movement, instead to highlight their revival of decadent tropes and devices within a current *fantastika* setting.

It should be noted that in von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg’s Dogme 95 manifesto, the directors themselves criticized a perceived individualism and *décadence* of contemporary cinema, claiming that “the individual film will be decadent by definition” (von Trier & Vinterberg, 1995). After having distanced

himself from many of the rules established in this manifesto, it is legitimate to ask whether von Trier can now be considered a 21st-century decadent.

Antichrist stars Willem Defoe and Charlotte Gainsbourg as the unnamed protagonists, virtually the only two actors in the whole film. The plot of this highly stylized picture revolves around the couple's own therapy in a cabin in the woods named Eden. The action takes place after the death of their child, and explores the themes of sex, violence and satanism.

Just like in Huysmans's *En rade*, the two are a husband and a wife who retreat from society. Instead of a proper plot, *Antichrist* presents a disjointed narration, challenging the viewer's understanding of the events. Furthermore the film's aestheticism reveals itself in von Trier's trademark *tableaux vivants*, often reminiscent of Symbolist paintings (Titouan, 2017). In addition to that, it must be more than a coincidence the fact that the themes of *Antichrist* perfectly fit with the elements summarized in the Italian title of Mario Praz's 1930 classic study on the Decadent movement: *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica*, namely *Flesh, Death and the Devil in Romantic Literature*⁵.

This leads to von Trier's references to popular culture. While not a strictly genre film, still horror *clichés* are easily recognizable in *Antichrist*, starting from its setting reminiscent of the classic house from Sam Raimi's 1981 *The Evil Dead*. As for the visions experienced by the male character and the audience, they include an infamous talking fox, whose line "Chaos reigns" has inspired countless Internet memes. These circumstances suggest the opportunity to identify traces of fantastika entertainment in what most would call an art film.

The same formula applies to *Melancholia*. The title of the film alludes to a fictional planet that is about to collide with Earth. However the premise of a stereotypical science fiction narrative is transformed by von Trier into a film with clear artistic ambitions, unsurprisingly considered the peak of his career, if not one of the best films of all time (Metacritic, n.d.). While a Hollywood blockbuster would have shown the attempts made by astronauts to prevent the catastrophe (as in 1998 *Armageddon*, for example) or vice versa the disasters caused by the impact between planets, on the contrary *Melancholia* focuses on the psychology of the two protagonists, sisters Justine and Claire, played by Kirsten Dunst and Charlotte Gainsbourg.

The entire picture is set in a single location, the castle owned by Claire's husband. In the first act, we witness Justine's wedding to Michael (Alexander Skarsgård). By the end of the second act, the two sisters and Leo, Claire's son, are isolated from the rest of humanity in the family castle. In the last scene the three await the end of the world inside a "magic cave" made out of branches.

The subversion of the sci-fi genre conveyed by *Melancholia* is remarkable. Von Trier has attributed the film's "romantic" aesthetic to his own depression (Von Trier, 2011). However, upon closer inspection, it is a Romanticism already

⁵ English translations are titled *The Romantic Agony* (Praz, 1956).

tending towards *décadance*, since the soundtrack consists of the prelude to Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1857-1859), while the visual component makes explicit references to the works of the Pre-Raphaelites⁶. During a scene in the first act, for instance, Justine replaces some art books open on pages reproducing abstract pictures with others dedicated to realist masterpieces, including some by the Brotherhood (Titouan, 2017). The film poster even recreates the painting *Ophelia* (1851-1852) by John Everett Millais. The aesthetic ideals of this missed disaster movie are therefore unmistakable.

Making Beauty out of a Mad World

The observed fantastika variations on the decadent trope of self-isolation lead to two final remarks, dealing with fiction and imagination on one hand, and with society on the other.

First of all, it is crucial to underline that none of the analyzed cultural artifacts can be regarded as popular in the strict sense, since both the three novels and the three films were targeted to a seemingly elite audience. Yet they all borrow elements from popular fiction, especially from fantastic and sci-fi genres, with architectural forms such as castles and cabins acting as the perfect conjunction between decadent and collective imagination. This combination does bring consequences on a formal and structural point of view. While not exactly fantasy adventures, yet *En rade*, *:riflessi* and *Il fuoco* show that adding a pinch of Gothic can make sophisticated literature and “cinema dannunziano” more amusing.

In addition to that, the intention of subtle parody inherent in these works shall not be underestimated, suggesting an ironic and tongue-in-cheek approach to popular fiction, whose tired *clichés* are redeemed thanks to conscious artistic choices⁷. This becomes clear in von Trier's *oeuvre*.

Finally, society. At first look, it seems that these individualistic stories have very little to do with collective issues. But if we interrogate the reasons why their characters avoid social interactions, by choice or circumstances, some deep connections may emerge. Huysmans's Jacques and Louise seem to escape from capitalism, while Palazzeschi's cryptic Valentino for sure is a gay man struggling to deal with the death of his mother. The trajectory of Shiel's Adam symbolizes the vanity of power and earthly goods. And who is Pastrone's unlucky painter, if not an artist incapable of succeeding in a material world? At last, von Trier's controversial female protagonists are women questioning gender roles, traditional science and medicine (Butler & Denny, 2016). Here lies the modernity of the *décadance* and its reliance to past and present crisis.

⁶ The continuity between the Pre-Raphaelite movement and the Symbolist-Decadent movement has been analysed in the essays collected in Benedetti (2012).

⁷ See Martín-Clavijo (2021), note 9, for a bibliography on the analogies between fantastic discourse and parodic discourse (pp. 102-103).

The world is a bad place to live in, Western society has no room for such eccentric personalities, these stories tell us. But is isolation the solution? Of course not, but never an alternative is presented as well. So even when revived by popular fiction, the decadent trope of self-reclusion stays true to its original pessimism and its aesthetic standards, being beauty the only thing worth of significance. Far from making these narrative works verbally or visually accessible, fantastika elements act as a pool to draw on, subject to exploitation. In the end, for our highbrow authors, dealing with popular *clichés* does not lead to a more democratic or constructive art. If one sets a sci-fi catastrophe in a “magnificent castle”, “it can hardly avoid becoming... beautiful” (von Trier, 2011). Hence, if literature and cinema will not save the world, at least they can make it a more tolerable place.

References

- Aldo Palazzeschi in altre lingue. (2022, February 10). *New Italian Books*. <https://www.newitalianbooks.it/it/aldo-palazzeschi-in-altre-lingue>
- Badley, L. (2011). *Lars von Trier*. University of Illinois Press.
- Badley, L. (2022). *Lars Von Trier Beyond Depression. Contexts and Collaborations*. Wallflower.
- Baker, B. (2015). Introduction. *The Luminary*, 6, 9-13.
- Benedetti, M.T. (2012). *Preraffaelliti*. De Luca.
- Bombara, D. & Todesco, S. (2021). Introduction. *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, 34(1), ix-xxiv.
- Booker, M.K. (2020). *Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction Cinema*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Butler, R. & Denny, D. (Eds.) (2016). *Lars von Trier's Women*. Bloomsbury.
- Cherchi Usai, P. (1985). *Giovanni Pastrone*. Il Castoro.
- Clute, J. (2017). Fantastika: Or, the Sacred Grove. *Fantastika Journal*, 1(1), 13-20.
- de Turrís, G. (2014). Per una storia della profantascienza italiana. *IF. Rivista dell'Insolito e del Fantastico*, 6(16), 39-46.
- Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (2023). Fantastika. In *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (4th ed.). <https://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/fantastika>
- Giovanetti, P. (2016). *Decadentismo* (2nd ed.). Editrice Bibliografica.
- Holmgren Troy, M. et al. (Eds) (2020). *Nordic Gothic*. Manchester University Press.
- Huysmans, J.K. (1887). *En rade*. Tresse & Stock.
- Leffler, Y. (2021), Global Gothic 3: Gothic in Modern Scandinavia. In Spooner, C. & Townshend, D. (Eds.). *Gothic in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*. Cambridge University Press, 424-443.
- Martín-Clavijo, M. (2021). Al di là della realtà. Paola Masino e la maternità in *Figlio*. *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, 34(1), 100-128.
- Matthews, J.H. (1969). *Surrealism and the Novel* (2nd ed.). The University of Michigan Press.

- Metacritic. (n.d.). *Melancholia*. <https://www.metacritic.com/movie/melancholia>
- Morgan, M.R. (2009). Unreliable Narration, and Genre in *The Purple Cloud*. *Science Fiction Studies*, 36(2), 266-283.
- Palazzeschi, A. (2004). *Tutti i romanzi. 1*. Mondadori.
- Pastrone, G. (1916). *Il fuoco* [Film]. Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/silent-il-fuoco-la-favilla-la-vampa-la-cenere-aka-the-fire>
- Power, A. (2018). *Contemporary European Science Fiction Cinemas*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Praz, M. (1956). *The Romantic Agony* (3rd ed.). Meridian Books.
- Praz, M. (1968). Introductory Essay. In Fairclough, P. (Ed.). *Three Gothic Novels*. Penguin, 7-34.
- Praz, M. (1994). *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration. From Pompeii to Art Nouveau* (3rd ed.). Thames and Hudson.
- Reim, R. (Ed.) (1993). *I grandi romanzi gotici*. Newton Compton.
- Shiel, M.P. (1977). *The Purple Cloud* (1901). Gregg Press.
- Terraroli, V. (2001). *Il Vittoriale. Percorsi simbolici e collezioni d'arte di Gabriele d'Annunzio*. Skira.
- Titouan, R. (2017). *The Museum of Lars Von Trier - Art References* [Video essay]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/226375386>
- Verdone, M. (1963). Gabriele d'Annunzio nel cinema italiano, *Bianco e nero*, 24(7-8), 1-21.
- Vergine, L. (Ed.) (2012). *Un altro tempo. Tra decadentismo e modern style*. Il Saggiatore.
- von Trier, L. & Vinterberg, T. (1995). Dogme 95. In Vanderbilt University. *College of Arts and Science*. https://as.vanderbilt.edu/koepnick/WorldCinema_f02/materials/Dogme_Manifesto.htm
- von Trier, L. (2011). Interview. *Melancholia*. Italian DVD [BIM Film].
- Weber, L. (2010). *Romanzi del movimento, romanzi in movimento. La narrativa del futurismo e dintorni*. Transeuropa.