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GENDER HYBRIDITY AND POWER IN ANGELA CARTER'S "THE LADY OF THE HOUSE OF LOVE" AND WERNER HERZOG'S *NOSFERATU: PHANTOM DER NACHT*

ABSTRACT

In this comparative study of Angela Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love" (1979) and Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht* (1979) eating habits, relation to the domestic and to (ir)rationality are examined in the female and male characters in both works to show how their authors create gender hybridity. Drawing upon Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), the article proposes that the hybridity reproduces patriarchal transfer of power.

KEYWORDS: gender, hybridity, power, homosocial desire, patriarchy

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł stanowiący stadium porównawcze opowiadania Angeli Carter "The Lady of the House of Love" (1979) i filmu Wernera Herzoga *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht* (1979), analizuje kreacje bohaterek i bohaterów w obu dziełach w odniesieniu do stereotypowych cech kobiecych (anoreksja, agorafobia i nieracjonalność). W oparciu o *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick artykuł pokazuje, w jaki sposób genderowa hybrydowość u Carter i Herzoga reprodukuje patriarchalny transfer władzy.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: gender, hybrydowość, władza, męskie pragnienie homospołeczne, patriarchy

BLOOD RELATIONS

Werner Herzog's 1979 film *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht* (*Nosferatu the Vampire*) and Angela Carter's short story "The Lady of the House of Love" from her 1979 collection *The Bloody Chamber* are not only peers but also blood relatives. Herzog's *Nosferatu* is a homage remake of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's 1922 classic silent film *Nosferatu*, based on Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, which had been partly inspired by Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871 *Carmilla*, as well as by innumerable orally transmitted folk tales. The same oral and written tradition, including fragments

from other tales, “Snow White” and “Sleeping Beauty,” informed Carter’s story as well as its earlier version, the BBC radio play “Vampirella,” first broadcast in 1976. In addition, the two works’ main characters are closely related: the Lady of the House of Love is Countess Nosferatu, the daughter of Count Dracula. My aim here will be to conduct a comparative study of the two works, focused on gender hybridity and power relations. On the basis of Susan Bordo’s discussion of anorexia, agoraphobia and hysteria in her *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), I will examine aspects of stereotypical femininity in the eating habits, the relation to the domestic and to (ir)rationality in both female and male characters in the analysed works. The aim of this study, drawing upon Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), will be to demonstrate that the construction of gender hybridity in both works reproduces the traditionally gendered distribution of power which helps preserve the patriarchal system.

“IT IS DINNER-TIME. IT IS BED-TIME”

(CARTER 1985: 104)

Laura Mulvey, the British feminist film theorist, author of the famous 1975 essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” observed in her essay “Cinema Magic and the Old Monsters: Angela Carter’s Cinema” that “images of the hybrid recur throughout Angela Carter’s writing, bearing witness to her preoccupation with dualisms, not binary oppositions but as either the merging of two differences into one, [...] or the separation of sameness into two, as in the mirror image” (2012: 244). The same preoccupation is visible in Herzog’s *Nosferatu*. The very opening scene of the film depicts a duality: a paradoxical state of being and not being. Herzog’s camera lingers over a number of mummies from the Mummies of Guanajuato Museum in Mexico, real victims of an 1833 cholera outbreak. The lifeless mummies are uncanny in their lifelikeness; they are also touching in their nakedness, with frozen gestures of lament and open mouths forever silently screaming. In the film they foreshadow the plague epidemic that will come to Wismar with Nosferatu and his rats. The mummies, keenly embodying the human condition, also suggest Nosferatu’s own condition: being *undead*, not living but existing unchanged forever. Their striking image and the sudden shot of a bat flying at night in slow motion connect Nosferatu with Lucy, the first character to appear on the screen. Lucy awakes from a nightmare screaming, as if giving a voice to the silent, or perhaps taking it from them. Her own appearance is also striking: her slim pale face, huge dark-rimmed eyes and long black hair make her look sickly, but still like a healthier-looking version of the Countess, whom Carter describes thus as seen through the male hero’s eyes: “With her stark white face,

her lovely death's head surrounded by long dark hair that fell down as straight as if it were soaking wet, she looked like a shipwrecked bride. Her huge dark eyes almost broke his heart with their waiflike, lost look" (1985: 101). The Countess is a more extreme version of Lucy, played by Isabelle Adjani: "she is so beautiful she is unnatural" (Carter 1985: 94). What is particularly more prominent in her appearance is her thinness; "with the hectic, unhealthy beauty of a consumptive" (Carter 1985: 101) she is "a girl with the fragility of the skeleton of a moth, so thin, so frail that her dress seemed (...) to hang suspended (...) in the dank air" (Carter 1985: 100). The almost fetishised anorectic look is completed by another erotically charged feature: "fingernails as long, and as finely pointed, as banjo picks" (Carter 1985: 101) as well as by "teeth as fine and white as spikes of spun sugar (...) sharpened on centuries of corpses" (Carter 1985: 94). In this aspect the Countess entirely differs from Lucy, as she does on account of "her extraordinarily fleshy mouth, a mouth with wide full prominent lips of a vibrant purplish-crimson, a morbid mouth" (Carter 1985: 101), whose sexual appeal needs no explanation. In fact, it could be said that if Lucy and Count Dracula had a daughter, she would look like the Countess. And if Lucy resembles the Countess, she also resembles the Count – and *vice versa*.

Nosferatu is not "fully" or only masculine, thus below he is discussed as "(predominantly) male." Nosferatu has some feminine features, which later on will become Lucy's husband's too, after Jonathan has turned into a vampire. Like Lucy and the Countess, Dracula is pale and frail, has large dark-rimmed eyes and his daughter's nails – impractical very long nails being a marker of both femininity and class status. In her classic book *Femininity*, Susan Brownmiller says:

On men and women the cared-for hand is a sign of vanity, money and social refinement, but modern feminine psychology goes further. Growing long nails is a proud achievement, proof that a woman has triumphed over her personal shortcomings and the realistic odds. Cultivating a uniform set of ten individual nails is a project akin to the propagation of tender seedlings. (1984: 179)

The Countess, a tender seedling herself ("pale as a plant that never sees the light" [Carter 1985: 104]), looks the most anorectic of the three, but, of course, Dracula is on the same liquid diet – and the association with both anorexia and blood are his further feminine features. As we learn from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "mapping of the 'feminine' onto the 'aristocratic'" was part of the "aristocratic stereotype, at least as viewed by the bourgeoisie" in the 18th and 19th century (1985: 93).

All the three characters look malnourished and hungry, but they don't all eat alike. In the first daytime scene in Herzog's film, after the night scene with Lucy's nightmare when she said "I see something horrible. I'm afraid," her first words in the morning, concerning something very mundane, again are tinged with anxiety. She says to her husband, hurrying off to work: "Jonathan, this eating on the run isn't good for you. It worries me." While at night Jonathan comforted Lucy like

a child, now Lucy is mothering her husband. Dressed in white, in this scene of domestic bliss, she is the 19th-century “angel in the house” – caring for others, making sure that her loved one eats well, while she is shown only taking a small sip from a cup. We will never see her eat or drink again. We will see her providing further nourishment, however.

In spite of the differences between both female protagonists, ultimately a similar pattern can be attributed to the Countess. Carter, who herself suffered from anorexia nervosa as a teenager (Sage 1994: 4), devotes considerable attention to the Countess’s eating habits: “She loathes the food she eats” – whether it is rabbits or “shepherd boys and gypsy lads” – “but hunger always overcomes her. She sinks her teeth into the neck where the artery throbs with fear; she will drop the deflated skin [...] with a small cry of both pain and disgust” (Carter 1985: 96). Later on “[t]he blood on the Countess’s cheeks will be mixed with tears” (Carter 1985: 96). In Carter’s writing, eating and appetite are more explicitly associated with sexuality than in Herzog’s film, and the female character’s failure to control her hunger – her urges – is a cause for guilt and shame, which Lucy is never tormented by because she never eats. The Countess’s self-loathing mirrors the feelings of a lapsed anorectic or bulimic. Although the story is set in the summer of 1914, it also reflects the still valid Victorian female gender norm where, to quote from Helena Mitchie, “[d]elicate appetites are linked not only with femininity, but with virginity” (1989: 16), while indulging in eating by a woman, especially in public, is associated with “Eve’s desire for the apple” – symbolising knowledge and power – and the subsequent biblical Fall (Mitchie 1989: 28). As Nicola Humble and Kimberly Reynolds remind us, quoting an actual medical treatise, “the increasingly accepted nineteenth-century myth [was] that ‘normal’ women were passionless” (1993: 13). In contrast, as Christopher Craft tells us in his essay on Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, “conventional Victorian gender codes (...) accord[ed] to the more active male the right and the responsibility of vigorous appetite, while requiring the more passive female to ‘suffer and be still’” (1989: 217), since “appetite in a woman (...) is a diabolic (...) inversion of natural order” (1989: 229). In short, to refer to Mitchie again: “The aesthetic of weakness and hunger only thinly disguises an ideology of male dominance” (1989: 22).

Carter highlights rather than reverses this pattern in “The Lady of the House of Love,” while she more clearly reverses it in a few other stories from *The Bloody Chamber*, e.g. “The Tiger’s Bride,” “The Courtship of Mr Lyon” or “The Company of Wolves.” But, as Jerzy Kamionowski points out, she “remains in [an] intimate relationship with the discourse she attempts to overthrow” (2000: 44). In the story, unconventionally, the male hero is a desirable blond virgin, and is thus ascribed some feminine features, stereotypical in the fairy tale genre, but still the Countess traditionally offers him a hearty meal and then does not partake either of the meal or the man. In a curious role reversal, the non-vampire young soldier sucks the blood from the female vampire’s finger after she cuts it and sees her

own blood for the first time. Thus the soldier turns her human, by turning her mortal, and kills her. In this sense the Countess truly becomes “both death and the maiden” (Carter 1985: 93). As we can see, both Lucy and the Countess feed the male characters, but not themselves (the Countess is described as eating only in retrospect and only to be filled with self-disgust). Both women die as a result of “feeding” male figures, who eat (and also “feed upon” the women) without guilt. The male heroes do not feed them or anyone else – with the exception of reluctant Jonathan nourishing Nosferatu.

We first see Dracula devouring Jonathan with his eyes, watching him eat the supper the Count offers his late-night guest, not literally taking part in the meal – in a feminine fashion, yet consuming the scene with his (predominantly) male gaze. Jonathan, in turn, eats like a man, a hungry man’s meal of meat. He does not realise that he is about to become meat himself, being fattened up and salivated over. He is only somewhat alarmed when his Transylvanian host sucks his blood from a cut on his finger, charging the tension between them, which could be cut with a knife, with homoerotic energy. This scene is the first echo of many such scenes in Bram Stoker’s novel which, as we read in Craft’s essay “presents a characteristic, if hyperbolic, instance of Victorian anxiety over the potential fluidity of gender roles” (1989: 220, 231), a “fear of gender dissolution” (1989: 234) and homophobia. Even if in Herzog’s film such scenes are less numerous, the work still reproduces the same fear by replicating some of the novel’s patterns. This is best visible in the parallel instances of Dracula’s feeding upon first Jonathan and then Lucy.

The first time Dracula bites into Jonathan’s neck is omitted altogether. After the finger-sucking scene, Jonathan falls asleep in an armchair. The scene cuts to Lucy who wakes up and is frightened by a bat in her bedroom. We know what has happened to Jonathan not only from this substitute symbolic scene, but above all from the telltale two small holes on his neck the next morning, of which visibly paler Jonathan doesn’t seem to be aware. It is only during his second night in the castle that we see him in bed being visited by Dracula. Interestingly, however, this scene is interrupted with the shot of Lucy sleepwalking, then back in her bed, surrounded by concerned friends, whom, however, she does not see, having mentally sleepwalked to another bed, where she now recoils from a terrible danger, and cries out “Jonathan!” holding her apparently wounded neck. Her voice reaches Dracula himself, as he looks up from the man’s body. We are allowed to see his lips on the man’s neck merely for a split second, after which the vampire abandons the male body. The homoerotic act of the vampire’s sucking of Jonathan’s blood does take place, but offstage – the invisible obliterates the “unspeakable” and renders it obscene.

In contrast, the scene where Nosferatu feeds upon Lucy in her bed is profoundly, even if subtly, sexual. There are no interruptions and insertions of other bodies in between their bodies. Their contact is prolonged; the consumption is not only about the neck, about one hunger: Dracula’s palm rests firmly on Lucy’s breast.

Of course, this meal for the Count is like no other: Lucy offers herself to him, willingly, and – unlike her husband (as far as we can guess) – displays agency by holding Nosferatu to kill him and to be killed by him. There is a bond and reciprocity between them. But, importantly, no such bond is shown between the two men – to quote Craft: “only through women may men touch” (1989: 220).

However, just because the consummation of this bond between Nosferatu and Jonathan is not shown, does not mean that the bond does not exist; it only means that it has been culturally processed. The elaborateness of the bed scene with Dracula and Lucy may make us wonder all the more why: was the “deleted” scene even longer and more passionate, despite Jonathan’s initial reluctance and later forgetfulness, or does the reluctance together with his later missing memory of the event (due to repressed trauma?) suggest rape – as do Lucy’s words to Dracula: “Since he has been with you he is ruined”? One certain fact is the existence of an erotic triangle, and that it leads to a new life – or rather a new *un*-life. After Lucy’s death, exactly at the moment when Dr. Van Helsing drives a stake through Nosferatu’s heart, Jonathan feels the pain in his own heart and fully becomes undead. Jonathan, and not Lucy, becomes a new vampire. In this way Nosferatu does not die altogether, because he lives on in Jonathan, who has now assumed all his vampiric features. At the same time they are his new feminine features: to his paleness, seeming sickliness and sunken cheeks, now the long nails are added. Also added are hunger and the teeth for it – however, the difference between female and (predominantly) male hunger is that the latter is free from any constraint, including compunction.

“SHE HERSELF IS A HAUNTED HOUSE”

(CARTER 1985: 103)

This difference between gendered hunger is best symbolised by Herzog’s film’s final scene. A moment before it occurs, Jonathan says to a servant woman: “Seal the bedroom [with the two dead bodies: Lucy’s and Dracula’s] for the official investigation and bring me my horse. I have much to do! Now!” We last see him on a horse against a vast landscape, disappearing into the horizon, but of course the horizon is never finite, the sky is not the limit. At the same time Lucy is locked at home and dead. As Mary Ellmann said in *Thinking About Women*, where she went through a long catalogue of feminine stereotypes, “Range is masculine and confinement is feminine” (1968: 87).

The fact that in the end Lucy remains locked, as if imprisoned at home even after her death, is equally symbolic, highlighting the female character’s belonging to the domestic sphere. In a way, the story’s beginning is thus repeated, but hyperbolised: Jonathan sets off on a distant journey (this time without a limited

destination because of his limitless hunger), while Lucy stays at home (the inactivity of waiting now replaced by death). What is more, the entire story started with the idea of a house – in fact two houses: a house in Wismar for Nosferatu, but also a house in Wismar for Lucy. Jonathan's boss, insane Mr Renfield, Dracula's faithful servant, commissions Jonathan to travel to Transylvania to sell the Count the house he desires, presumably, as part of his desire to be human, and as part of his plan to spread the plague. Ignoring Renfield's comment that it might "cost him a little blood," Jonathan agrees, since with the earned money he could buy a "nicer house for Lucy," because "she deserves it." The nicer the "angel in the house," the nicer the "house" for the "angel."

Consequently, the two male figures engage in an exchange; in fact in two exchanges – under one: money for a house, there is another: Lucy from Jonathan to Dracula. The Count is in a hurry after seeing Jonathan's medallion with Lucy's image; she is symbolically objectified and clasped in the vampire's claw. Jonathan retrieves his medallion, but he will never have his wife back. The Count wants to sign the papers immediately, the price needs not be mentioned; it has been settled: it is Lucy.

Therefore, all the characters in thus created erotic triangle are connected with the domestic, both in terms of a material house and an idea of a home, but in different ways. Of course, because of the historical period in which the film's story is set, the early 19th century, there is little question of Lucy owning a house. On the one hand, Jonathan wants to own a house *for* Lucy as the site for their future happiness, which despite outward appearances may be deficient at the moment: Łucja Demby sees Lucy as "terribly lonely" in a marriage between two people who don't really know each other and belong to different worlds (1994: 122). On the other hand, Dracula becomes particularly eager to own a house also for Lucy's sake – he is overcome with desire/hunger for her, and above all lonely, which is something they – oxymoronically separately – share.

Paradoxically, Jonathan becomes more like his wife in this one respect when the Count turns him into his own copy. In one of the most iconic scenes in the film, mimicking Murnau's ingenious use of light and shadow, Dracula's huge dark shape hovers over Jonathan and Lucy's house; but what Nosferatu spies on is a distant echo of domestic bliss. Lucy is surrounded by friends, including Dr. Van Helsing, who want to but can't help Jonathan. He is sitting separately, in an ambiguous state: both back and not, no longer human, not a vampire yet. Dracula's image symbolically replaces already very ill and lonely Jonathan in the picture of flawed at-homeness. Just as in the post-midnight scenes in the castle, the scene with sleepwalking Lucy reflected in the water of a canal, and with the coach carrying Jonathan back to Wismar mirrored in another body of water, the orderly and familiar world is split in two and turned upside down, never to be restored to its original state. What this reveals at the same time is how uncannily close the original always was and is to its reversal: the otherworldly. To quote

Craft referring to Freud's original German *das Unheimliche*, the "uncanny always comes home" (1989: 235), back to its etymological root (*das Heim*). As Sigmund Freud put it himself, "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar. (...) What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*" (2012: 139–140).

The question of (not-)at-homeness is also central in Carter's story and is visible already in the title. The eponymous "Lady of the House of Love," "incarcerate[d] in the castle of her inheritance" (Carter 1985: 95), a "place of annihilation" (Carter 1985: 93), "herself is a haunted house" (Carter 1985: 103). As the third-person narrator of this intertextual postmodernist story observes, "Everything about this beautiful and ghastly lady is as it should be, queen of night, queen of terror – except her horrible reluctance for the role" (Carter 1985: 95). She is equated with the house (where love equals death), which after Dracula's death now belongs to his daughter, yet "She does not possess herself" (Carter 1985: 103). There is a contradiction in her existence: "The carnival air of her white [her mother's wedding] dress emphasised her unreality" (Carter 1985: 102), the unreality of "her life or imitation of life" (Carter 1985: 95).

While Lucy suffers not so much from agoraphobia as a general phobia, which she calls "an inner, nameless deadly fear," Countess Nosferatu is positively agoraphobic, mainly because of her heliophobia. She barely leaves the château, only "on moonless nights, her keeper lets her out into the garden" (Carter 1985: 95), where she hunts on all fours. Like her father, she also wants to be human and is turned human by a man at the exact moment of her – but significantly not *his* – death. The Countess's story began with her in an apparent position of power: in contrast to Lucy, the Countess is the central character, superior in terms of class, as well as sexual experience to the marginal and virginal hero. In the end, however, like Lucy, she remains at home – dead. In the meantime, also by analogy to the film, the male character who survives her sets off on a distant journey – like Jonathan, to take part in one of the most manly and worldly enterprises of all time: World War I.

"WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN?!"

Guido Almansi calls Carter's "link between vampirism and war" "historically fascinating" (2012: 237). The link is much more highlighted in "Vampirella," where in the finale Dracula's voice pronounces: "The shadow of the fatal Count rises over every bloody battlefield. Everywhere I am struck down, everywhere I celebrate my perennial resurrection" (Carter 1976). In Herzog's film, a link between Nosferatu and war can be seen when he commands Renfield to "Go now to Riga. The army of rats and the black death are with you." The vampire is presented as both a general of an ever-growing army, and a god, as Renfield, laughing maniacally,

responds to him: "Thy will be done! Amen! Amen!" In the final scene the godly status and thus omnipotence of Jonathan, as if resurrected Nosferatu, and at the same time his "son" and heir, is established by the monumental sound of Charles Gounod's "Sanctus" from *Messe solennelle à Sainte Cécile*. Jonathan is now the carrier of the plague, but also the chaos that spreads in its wake, just as it does after an imperialist mission, or an outbreak of a world war.

Ironically, when Jonathan first learnt about "Nosferatu, the Undead" and his "curse" which "will last until the end of time" – from the book he received from the Polish-speaking wife of the innkeeper in the Carpathians, he laughed and made a snide comment about it. Demby stresses his sense of superiority, and yet his weakness in comparison to his wife's "inner strength" (1994: 122–124). The same dichotomy is even more visible when Lucy talks to Dr. Van Helsing, after reading the same book. Demby points out that Herzog's film replicates a popular stereotype of "women's wisdom," which in contrast to "men's wisdom" is based not on reason, but on intuition (1994: 124). The stereotype is supported by the transfer of knowledge from one woman, a Catholic peasant woman who believes in vampires, to another woman – a middle-class lady from Northern Germany. Clearly, the geographical, national, linguistic, and class differences do not affect their essential similarity in terms of a feminine way of thinking. Lucy reads from the book about the vampire: "And should a woman pure of heart make him forget the cry of the cock, the first light of day will destroy him" – and immediately knows what needs to be done. She approaches a procession of men carrying coffins, and tells them that she wants to go to the town council. However, she is told that "it exists no more." The top-hatted pallbearers ignore her exhortations: "I know the reason for all this evil. I know the reason for all this. Why don't you listen?!"

Neither does Dr. Van Helsing heed Lucy's arguments, responding: "But my child, these are products of your imagination. (...) We live in the most enlightened era. Superstitions such as you have mentioned have been refuted by science." Lucy's insistence on immediate action based on her "faith" is perceived as hysterical, judging by the "rest cure" prescribed by the doctor. During this short conversation, she is called "my child" three times, and her position is further undermined by a negative comparison to an uneducated man of low social status ("Even a farmer knows..."). Resigned, Lucy responds: "I see I have to do this alone." The declaration sounds very different from her husband's later assertion "I have much to do!" Judging by Nosferatu's fatal effectiveness, we can be sure of the success of Jonathan's mission. Lucy's mission, on the other hand, fails to fully succeed, since it requires Van Helsing's helping hand.

The same infantilisation and helpless frustration can be ascribed to Carter's Countess. If Lucy has a lot in common with Nosferatu, she shares even more qualities with his daughter. Both Lucy and the Countess are somnambulists; both are treated like hysterics. Lucy constantly talks about being afraid and worried. The Countess "shakes" and "trembles" with cold, but also nervousness, with her

“nervously fluttering eyelids” (Carter 1985: 97); she also sobs – especially in the radio version of the story. She is superstitious, too, looking for predictions of her future in Tarot cards.

In contrast to the Countess’s feminine irrationality and immobility, Carter’s male hero is virginal, blond, and effeminate-looking, but otherwise stereotypically “masculine”: “Although so young, he is also rational,” travelling round the Carpathians on a bicycle – “the most rational mode of transport in the world” (Carter 1985: 97). On the morning after his night at the castle, “his mind is busy with plans”:

We shall take her to Zurich, to a clinic; she will be treated for nervous hysteria. Then to an eye specialist, for her photophobia, and to a dentist to put her teeth into a better shape. Any competent manicurist will deal with her claws. We shall turn her into the lovely girl she is; I shall cure her of all these nightmares. (Carter 1985: 107)

His modernity, optimism and confidence in science and progress are approached with visible irony in “The Lady of the House of Love,” especially in the reference to Carl Gustav Jung’s clinic, where the female character is to be handed from one male to a group of male psychoanalysts and other doctors (any question of her consent or opinion is brushed aside by all the “shalls” and “wills”). In addition, the hero is a low-ranking soldier, who will soon be in need of a clinic himself: “the Countess cannot make him shudder,” but “[h]e will learn to shudder in the trenches” (Carter 1985: 104), which may prefigure shell shock, if the soldier survives at all. The resolute and rational planning and trust in technology are given an ironic twist at the end of the story, as it was these factors that helped produce the mass deaths of WWI, not to mention WWII only two decades later.

Similarly, in Herzog’s film masculine reason is ironically undermined. The orderly city of Wismar, with its rational canals and the bourgeois city council, proves defenceless in the face of irrational forces – which do not come only from the outside: Lucy senses them around her, but so does Renfield, who is also of this town. Therefore, in both works and their worlds, the rational and the irrational coexist side by side, the latter being predominantly and stereotypically associated with the feminine, while the former with the masculine.

“SHE IS A SYSTEM OF REPETITIONS, SHE IS A CLOSED CIRCUIT”
(CARTER 1985: 93)

In her *Unbearable Weight*, Susan Bordo analysed hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia as “exaggerated (...) caricatured presentations of the ruling feminine mystique” (2001: 2365), which “peaked during historical periods of cultural backlash against attempts at reorganization (...) of male and female roles” (2001: 2371), respectively in the Victorian period, in the 1950s–1960s and in the 1980s. Both

discussed works, set in the early 19th century and the early 20th century, were released in 1979, and they reproduce all the three exaggerated ideals of femininity, thus reflecting in terms of gender both the period they depict and the period in which the depictions were made, as well as the period in between. But since the story and the film are themselves versions of older versions of older versions, etc., it can be concluded that the three exaggerated ideals of femininity repeated in them date back to before the Victorian period.

The above comparative analysis of these three enduring aspects of stereotypical femininity in Carter's and Herzog's female and male characters has shown that the characters' construction is based on various degrees of gender hybridity, which, however, has different consequences for the two groups of characters. It is noticeable that the feminine features acquired by the male figures (effeminate and anorectic appearance, belonging to the irrational sphere) do them no harm: they remain active and mobile agents with ambitions for both themselves and others. Even Dracula's death can be seen as his willed liberation from pain, and, besides, he lives on in Jonathan, to whom he passes on his seeming omnipotence, which the new vampire also appears to enjoy (judging by his farewell smile).

In contrast, the masculine features which the female characters either have from the beginning or gain – do not benefit them, and even eventually harm them. The Countess is “indifferent to her own weird authority” (Carter 1985: 95), which is not boundless, as she needs her keeper to survive in her claustrophobic surroundings, while her father managed on his own, even traversing vast distances. She is not at-home in her own home, which consequently she owns and does not own at the same time. The power she has over the men she kills causes her pain and guilt. One of such men she almost kills in effect kills her. The female Nosferatu's death is a dead end: she has no heir. She gets what she wanted – being human – exactly by losing it. The same can be said about Lucy's agency. While passive and physically frail for most of the time, she has a strong character and an intuition, but no voice. She acquires brief power, control, and confidence – but her newly-acquired agency almost immediately leads to her death, the ultimate absence of agency. She wants nothing for herself; she cares for others, especially her husband. In addition, the male intervention which she enables (Dr. Van Helsing's final killing of Dracula) and which completes the only goal she has, inspiring her only action: self-sacrifice,¹ ironically emphasises her restricted and short-lived power.

In this sense, rather than undermining the binary construction of gender and the patriarchal system it serves, the way in which gender hybridity operates in both works reproduces the patriarchal circulation of power. This is best visible in Herzog's film, whose erotic triangle involving an exchange of a woman between

¹ Łucja Demby suspects that perhaps Lucy wasn't so pure of heart, after all, if her sacrifice failed to work (1994: 127). Her smile at the moment of her death is ambiguous: it may express her (ironically, mistaken) satisfaction at having killed Dracula and saved the city, or an altogether different kind of satisfaction – or both.

two men matches exactly Kosofsky Sedgwick's study of "the traffic in women: (...) the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (1985: 25–26).

In *Between Men*, Kosofsky Sedgwick examines male homosocial desire – "homosocial" meaning "social bonds between persons of the same sex" (1985: 1). The author demonstrates how "in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power" (1985: 25). The author analyses this mechanism in the context of the significant development of European capitalism in the 18th and 19th century. Discussing "the class-marked family of industrial capitalism" (1895: 136), Kosofsky Sedgwick points to a "pattern by which wage work came to take place at a distance from the home, by which men were paid a 'family' wage and women a 'supplementary' wage for what might be the same work, by which women became a reserve labor force and at the same time had almost sole responsibility at home" (136). It is striking how, in Marxist terms, this change in the economic base and the resultant gendered "differentials of salary, occupation, and often even of food consumption" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1895: 137) was reflected in the cultural superstructure – and how persistent this reflection, and the base, remain even today. True to the time in which *Nosferatu* is set, Jonathan sets out on a business trip to earn money for a new house, while anorectic Lucy – a non-working middle-class woman – engages in the womanly (in)activity of waiting, which Kosofsky Sedgwick compares to a "canine posture (...): poised on the threshold of a house, straining her eyes out to catch the first possible glimpse of a returning [significant man]" (1985: 143).

The economic and social changes taking place, including also "the transfer of power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1985: 146), were a source of great uncertainty. In terms of class, Dracula's near destruction of the city of Wismar may be seen as an expression of the bourgeoisie's anxiety – "a fundamental insecurity: that of a newly established class, not quite at home in its own home" yet (Vidler 1992: 142), which explains the popularity of the Gothic (inseparably set in haunted domestic spaces) in the same period (*ibid.*). In *Nosferatu*, the representative of the decadent and moribund aristocracy has his last revenge before being replaced by his middle-class successor, who will now continue his global imperialistic project. Spreading his influence globally was the Count's reason for looking for a house in Wismar; the arrangements had been initiated by his devoted servant, Renfield, long before Dracula saw and was enchanted by Lucy's image. Lucy becomes useful, because she is necessary: as Kosofsky Sedgwick proposes, modern European society requires a "compulsory routing of homosocial desire through heterosexual love" (1985: 160). But the strongest connection that is established is between Dracula and Lucy's husband. It is Renfield who sends his employee, Jonathan, to *Nosferatu* to offer him a home – but what Jonathan does not realise is that perhaps from the beginning the new home for the Count

was Jonathan's own body, that he was to become a new host for the vampire, his reincarnation. Jonathan travels a great distance to be with Dracula, in fact twice, because even if he sets out from the Transylvanian castle to save Lucy, somewhere on the way he loses this purpose and never really returns home, to his wife, whom he does not even recognise. He follows Dracula back to Wismar, his future self, the omnipotent heir to the aristocrat.

However, as was shown above, Jonathan's upward mobility comes at a price: his wife. Kosofsky Sedgwick addresses exactly this "triangular path of circulation that enforces patriarchal power as being routed through [middle-class women], but never ending in them" (1985: 179). Thus Lucy is "transferred" to Dracula – or even "transfers herself," because the culture around her inculcates in her the idea that self-sacrifice is rewarding. For the Count the "transfer" means only sexual enjoyment without serving any other purpose. Lucy is bypassed in terms of reproduction, as Dracula "impregnates" Jonathan instead – with his own power. This fruitful fulfilment of the homosocial desire is "a necessary, noncontingent element in the structure of social continuity" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1985: 85–86) – in the preservation of the patriarchal system.

In contrast, in "The Lady of the House of Love," there is no such triangle, and no transfer (even the young soldier's imaginary transfer of the Countess to the male-dominated medical profession does not take place, since the patient dies prematurely). Countess Nosferatu had almost nothing to pass on – and there was no one to pass it on to. She had practically no power capital to begin with: in accordance with the patriarchal law, it had never been transferred to her by her father.

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