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Nosferatu

Inspired by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*
TR Warszawa and Teatr Narodowy
Written and directed by Grzegorz Jarzyna

BAM Harvey Theater

Oct 30—Nov 2 at 7:30pm

Approximate running time: one hour and 50 minutes, no intermission

Set design and costumes by **Magdalena Maciejewska**

Lighting design by **Jacqueline Sobiszewski**

Video design by **Bartek Macias**

Music by **John Zorn**

Cast **Sandra Korzeniak, Katarzyna Warnke,
Wolfgang Michael, Jan Englert, Jan Frycz,
Krzysztof Franiczek, Marcin Hycnar,
Lech Łotocki, Adam Woronowicz**

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Premiere: November 12, 2011

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, one of the most important texts of the pop culture, has more than 10 screen versions and numerous references in feature films and cartoons, theater shows, arts, advertisements, and computer games. Pop culture feeds on vampirism, but its real message is lost somewhere along the way. Deeper meaning is valuable only if it can improve its attractiveness. The idea of the vampire was present in folklore, literature, and science many years before Stoker; arousing fear in the audience was just a part of the fascination.

The vampiric myth, consisting of belief in life after death and the regenerative power of blood, is one of the most consistent and popular. Philosophical and moral consequences of immortality, reflection on the phenomenon of life, the connection of love and death as deeply entrenched in the culture, the religious connotations of the motives of the undead—these are only a few of the topics inspired by vampirism.

The character of Dracula has always been scrutinized for contemporary metaphors. In Stoker's novel people saw a story about dark forces hidden underneath the Victorian prudery, as well as the conflict between the fear of the unknown entrenched in human nature and the fascination with the dark secrets of nature. Using this psychological and metaphysical thriller, Grzegorz Jarzyna shows how single fears and obsessions materialize in social life. However, this is mainly a show about the human need for transgression; attempts to cross material, social, or symbolic limits; the release from carnality and identity—a longing for the Different.



Photo: Stefan Okodowicz

GRZEGORZ JARZYNA

(general and artistic director of TR Warszawa)
 Theater director Grzegorz Jarzyna, born in 1968 in Chorzów, is one of the best known Polish stage directors who revolutionized Polish theater. He graduated in philosophy from the Jagiellonian University and in theater direction from the Ludwik Solski State Theatre School (PWST) in Krakow. Since 1998 he has been the artistic director of TR Warszawa (former Teatr Rozmaitosci)—one of the most innovative theater companies in Poland—and since 2006 he has served as its general director. Jarzyna is famous for his bold reinterpretations of classical plays (*Tropical Madness* based on Witkacy's dramas; *Magnetism of the Heart* based on the play *Maidens' Vows* by Aleksander Fredro); adaptations of great European novels (*Doctor Faustus* by Thomas Mann, *Prince Myshkin* based on Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*); provocative contemporary texts (*Unidentified Human Remains* by Brad Fraser, *4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane in Warsaw and Düsseldorf); and operas (*The Gambler* in Opera de

Lyon, *The Child and the Spells* by Maurice Ravel, and *Dwarf* by Alexander Zemlinsky with the Bavarian State Opera). He is fascinated with mixing and transgressing generic conventions, which can be best seen in productions such as *2007: Macbeth* based on Shakespeare's play (2005) played simultaneously on four different sets, or *Giovanni*, based on *Don Giovanni* by Mozart and *Don Juan* by Molière—an original combination of opera and dramatic theater. His worldwide reputation was established through performances in Avignon, Edinburgh, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Jerusalem, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Stockholm, Paris, London, Dublin, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, and Wellington. In 2008, *2007: Macbeth* was presented in New York under the Brooklyn Bridge, where a special stage was created for the production; the performance opened the Edinburgh International Festival in 2012. Jarzyna wrote several stage adaptations, two plays (*Medea Project* and *Areteia*), and two librettos for Zygmunt Krauze's operas (*Yvonne*, *Princess of Burgundy* and *The Trap*). He also



Photo: Stefan Okolowicz

oversaw the television productions *Tropical Madness*, based on *Witkacy*; *The Story*, based on a work by Witold Gombrowicz; and a television version of his production *2007: Macbeth*. He received numerous awards and recognition for his work such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs Merit Award for exceptional international artistic merits (2002) and the Golden Order of St. Petersburg at the 300th anniversary celebration (2004). In 2007 he was awarded the prestigious Nestor-Preis for *Medea* staged at Burgtheater in Vienna (2006). He also received twice the Konrad Swinarski Award for Best Director (1999 and 2009). Jarzyna was one of six European artists invited to participate in the Odyssey Europa project, part of the European Capital of Culture RUHR.2010. His latest performances are: *T.E.O.R.E.M.A.T.* based on the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini, *No Matter How Hard We Tried* by Dorota Masłowska presented for the first time at Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin, and *Nosferatu* inspired by Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*.

TR WARSZAWA has been one of the best-known theaters in Poland for over 10 years. Open to new ideas, it is a modern theater that cultivates the best theatrical traditions. TR Warszawa is highly regarded among new European theater companies and has won numerous awards at international festivals. It attracts brilliant directors: Grzegorz Jarzyna (artistic director since 1998, and also general director since 2006), Krystian Lupa, Krzysztof Warlikowski, and René Pollesch, as well as representatives of a younger generation, such as Michał Borczuch. TR's actors are among the best regarded in Europe. The company's search for a new language of theatrical expression means not only reaching

for new, contemporary dramatic texts but also reinterpreting the classics. As a center for broadly defined artistic experiments, TR Warszawa has hosted a series of visual art and contemporary theater presentations since 2000. Following the success of *TEREN WARSZAWA* (Area Warsaw) in the 2003—04 season—initiated to explore the artistic potential of the city, as well as offering creative opportunities to young talent—several new productions have been presented in spaces outside the theater, from an old printing house to a modern office building. During the 2004—05 season, the company organized the TR/PL project in order to find a new dramatic form for contemporary Poland. More than 10 playwrights participated, exploring changes that have taken place in the country in recent years. Among the theater's latest projects are *T.E.O.R.E.M.A.T.* based on the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini, directed by Grzegorz Jarzyna; a co-production with Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz of Dorota Masłowska's *No Matter How Hard We Tried*; *Areteia* by Grzegorz Jarzyna, a co-production with Schauspiel Essen prepared as part of the program RUHR.2010; *Jackson Pollesch* by René Pollesch; *Nosferatu* by Grzegorz Jarzyna, inspired by Bram Stokers' *Dracula*; Kornel Munczuzo's *The Bat* based on *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss II; and *City of Dream* by Krystian Lupa, which premiered at Théâtre de la Ville in Paris. TR Warszawa has been invited to various festivals and stages in Europe and beyond, in Avignon, Edinburgh, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Jerusalem, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Stockholm, London, Dublin, Brussels, Minsk, Bucharest, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, Wellington, and Hong Kong.

Interview with Grzegorz Jarzyna

by Katarzyna Janowska, *PRZEKRÓJ*

We pass along the most important things without even being conscious of having lost something of great importance, says Grzegorz Jarzyna. He explains why *Nosferatu* looks the way it looks.

Q: Have you seen the film *Twilight* or the *True Blood* TV series? The world went crazy about vampires. Teenagers fall in love with actors in vampire sagas. Have you been bitten, too?

A: My brother's 12-year-old daughter had a poster of Robert Pattinson in her room. One afternoon, we went to the cinema to see *Twilight* with her and my mother. It turned out that both, my niece and my mother, liked the vampire played by Pattinson. This vampire is a sweet boy, a perfectly meaningless toy, which can appeal to everybody.

Q: The mass culture has chewed up a vampire and spit out a toy of little value, but that myth was studied by professor Maria Janion, author of *Vampire. A Symbolic Biography*.

A: The book written by Janion inspired me a few years back to make a play about *Dracula*. I was surprised that somebody approached this myth in such an academic way.

Q: And before that did you think that this was a folk tale without any deeper meaning?

A: I devoured films about *Dracula*. They impressed me a lot, even if I didn't know why. The film that I remember the most is the one made by Tod Browning with Bela Lugosi playing the main character, namely Bela Lugosi himself. A charismatic actor creates a character of a person lost between life and death. He looks like a man, speaks like a man, but is no longer a man. It sends the imagination reeling. Werewolves, zombies and other monsters amuse me, but the vampire intrigues me.

Q: But your *Nosferatu* is not free of absurdity. You wink at the audience knowingly, you don't

escape from kitsch, and from time to time even from literal meaning.

A: This is true especially for the first scene, when *Nosferatu* appears. The viewer knows that the play is a tale, something fictional, and this is a very suspicious thing in the theater. I thought that if I was going to see such a play, I would like to change my preconceived ideas about who *Dracula* is, make him more ordinary, funny, degrade him a little bit and, only then, start to create a character.

Q: In modern series and films which are so popular nowadays, vampires are a symbol of the dream about eternal youth. Still, your *Nosferatu* is old, tired, and embittered.

A: His is tired above all of the repetition. A vampire's attractiveness consists mainly of giving his potential victims immortality. This is the key element of the vampire myth. In one moment of our life, we become aware that death is inevitable. I'm at a half-way point of my life and I've come to the conclusion that we follow illusions very intensively in the name of killing the fear of death. Artists, politicians, scientists—all of them have a strong need of creating something special, above average, something that will be remembered by others. This is supposed to ensure an illusion of immortality, be a mark left after the end of our existence. And still, even if we succeed at achieving something exceptional, it will always be just a silent groan muffled by noises of others who also desire to leave something behind when they are gone.

This is a problem for all of us—an individual problem—but it is visible especially in a city like Warsaw, which for me is a mark of modern times. It is here, that, due to changes in Polish society during the last 20 years and the dynamics of aspirations, goals are a lot more intensive, more progressive compared to other European cities. In Warsaw we can feel a great hunger. Individual searches influence the whole community. We create new groups, manifest our differences, quickly achieve our goals. In turn, they become fashions or trends and lose their unique character so they can no longer give us unending gratification. So we immediately set new goals, again and again.

I used to call it creativity. Today, I think that it is a way to silence the fear of death. We are prisoners of time; we are subconsciously afraid of it. My vampire is tired mostly from being aware of the repetition.

Q: Your play is full of modern feelings and intuitions. The mix of science and the wish to cross the limits, to touch something mysterious, break with tradition in the world which surrounds us and objectifies us, is a mark of the times.

A: I tried to weave such a subtle tissue in the play as never before. I'm interested in what lies between an idea and the reality, between a conception and a creation, between the light and the shade. Everything that exists is in between. I intended to present the final experience by balancing between kitsch, boredom, and attractiveness. I tried to show the unexpressed, unknown, a kind of nonexistence, of stopping a moment in time, a slowdown. I wanted to avoid giving one interpretation. Personally I am fascinated by what I don't understand. I don't mean originality, but whether I can take part in the creation, in cogni-

tion. In *Dracula* I wanted viewers to create their own reality, their own interpretation of the play thanks to associations they have. I don't want them to identify with given characters, but to find new meanings thanks to their imagination. The play is a kind of a subtle draft that everyone who enters the story can fill with their own drawings.

Q: During the first shows not many viewers wanted to pick up the gauntlet and complete the draft. The audience laughs in the least appropriate moments. After the premiere, opinion prevailed that what you wanted to say is unclear, that you are lost and *Nosferatu* doesn't bring anything new apart from beautiful images.

A: At the beginning *T.E.O.R.E.M.A.T.* [a film by Pier Paolo Pasolini] according to Pasolini wasn't well received either. I was shocked when I heard the audience laugh in the most dramatic moments. When I first saw the play as a whole together with viewers, I introduced small changes, switches and finally achieved a better communication with the audience. Now, as far as I know, the play has a cult status. It had to



mature, just like the viewers. I switched a few accents, cancelled some pauses in a few places, and slowed down the action in others right after the premiere of *Nosferatu*. My dream is to make the play a hypnotizing performance for the viewer. What counts in the play is not the action, but the contemplation.

Q: The beginning of *Nosferatu* resembles *T.E.O.R.E.M.A.T.* A family submerged in a daily routine, boredom, and banality. And then, one day, a stranger appears and the world derails.

A: It's a kind of prelude. In the first scene, we can see people who have everything, but they are still missing something, they are waiting for something.

Q: The person who is waiting the most intensively is Lucy (Sandra Korzeniak)—for me, too ostentatious in her sexuality.

A: Lucy is surrounded by her friends, men adoring her, and the love of her fiancé who tries really hard to make her happy and who is a good person. She has everything that she could ever dream of. And this is when a yearning appears for something unnamed, irresponsible, something sweet and bitter at the same time. A desire that can't be defined and which doesn't have anything in common with facts, well-being, love, sex. It's a presentiment.

Q: This is why *Nosferatu* appears for the first time as a golden dust?

A: It appears as a fog which takes shape when it's confronted with its victim, with the victim's dreams.

Q: I enjoyed the slow rhythm of the play.

A: I wanted to achieve an effect of retardation, slowing down, stretching the time to show moments when nothing really happens. When I visualized the play, these slow-motion moments were the most important to me. I used to wake up at night, when everyone was asleep, and I could hear dogs barking from afar. I had the feeling to be out of time, that this was a moment of truth. I built my play in this way. *Nosferatu* begins with a suspension, a moment out of time, and then I add new scenes very slowly. Obviously, I am aware that I lose many viewers

because of such a beginning, but those who let me seduce them witness a bizarre, ambiguous performance.

Q: Van Helsing, a vampire slayer, becomes in your interpretation one of the most important characters of the drama. Maybe *Nosferatu* is his alter ego?

A: Van Helsing tracks vampires his whole life. He is convinced that they exist. This is the essence of his life. Thus, at the end he is not able to kill Dracula, since by killing his enemy, he would question the sense of his own existence. Van Helsing is possessed by the wish of cognition. Methods are of no importance, the only thing that matters is to discover what the Dracula phenomenon is. He is partly a scientist, partly a witch doctor, devoid of sensitivity to other people, because only his aim is important to

My dream is to make the play a hypnotizing performance for the viewer. What counts in the play is not the action, but the contemplation.

him. He will not hesitate to use people as tools, sacrifice them if only it would help him to possess the secret. He has something of Sherlock Holmes, a character typical for gothic horror novels, where unraveling of the mystery was important. The more terrible and bloody the truth was, the better. In the key scene of the play, he wants to discover *Nosferatu's* secret. But when the vampire tells him that they are similar and suggests he goes with him and tries immortality for himself, Van Helsing refuses. He realizes that *Nosferatu's* being in the non-being is driven by the desire, the thirst for something more. It is then imperfect, human. He reaches emptiness. The aim that he wanted to achieve his whole life became an illusion.

Also the theme of signs was important to me. Renfield, a scientist, can see signs, but he can't read them. He doesn't recognize *Nosferatu*,

when he comes to dinner. Such stories often happen in our lives. We pass next to something most important, without knowing that we have lost something of great value.

Q: Do you have a vampire inside?

A: Many people are called vampires; we say that they suck the energy, ideas, talents, from other people. However, everyone does this, to a smaller or larger extent. It is not only a privilege of artists, creators, despots. Everybody has a vampire element inside them. We draw the energy from others, this is a part of our nature. Nevertheless, by taking it, we also give something back. We replace the new energy with emptiness. We undergo changes and change others, but they also change us. Having worked on Pasolini's text, I understood that it is better to be sucked by a vampire than to live in an illusion, a delusion, in conventions. It is better to go down to the bottom, touch the emptiness, and then to bounce back, to get up and try to be oneself.

Q: And what if the vampire, whoever he was, took away the most personal thing from us, if he sucked away our being? Would we lose the chance to be ourselves?

A: No one can change or take away what makes us unique. People say that somebody used another person, destroyed them, took away something most important to them. In reality, we can only take away what is weak, what we want to be sucked out. The essence of a person cannot be changed. It resides in us as a core which, sometimes, we can't name, define, but it exists. It is modified by ourselves and by the reality. Every living being has its own code inscribed. A tree either grows high or has wide branches or tips to one side. A lot depends on the soil, insulation, humidity, but a certain type of development is recorded in genes.

With people, it's similar. We constantly look for space where we could express ourselves fully.

Only those who keep looking, trying, and falling can feel the essence and the secret of our being on Earth.

Q: The play doesn't have a happy end.

A: In the novel, there is a fight between the Prince of Darkness and the Prince of Brightness, between God and things pagan, between our lust, desires, and the established order of values. These antagonisms were the driving force for novels and films. Yet today they lost their importance. The differences are hidden in ourselves.

Q: Your Nosferatu dies?

A: The scene can be interpreted in different ways. Nosferatu says that he has always waited for a sunset and now he dreams of a sunrise. This is his forbidden fruit, this is what he cannot have. It would be a break, a crossing. It turns out that people always miss what they can't have. If a 400-year person says so, it means that this yearning is a part of our nature. In the last scene, Nosferatu goes towards the sun, because he believes that in this way he will achieve fulfillment. Maybe he becomes light, maybe dust? "For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return"—for me, this is one of important truths about the world which surrounds us.

Q: Are you afraid of that moment?

A: Less and less. I was definitely more afraid of death as a teenager. Then, the idea used to induce my panic. Religiousness of my parents, as well as my own one, helped me to master the fear of death.

Q: Are you still religious?

A: I believe in the Absolute. I can feel its existence in my body, in the constant expansion of the universe. I believe in the cosmos—that is, in an order inscribed in chaos.

Dracula's Biting Appeal

BY CLEMENS RUTHNER

"This is the textbook of vampirism, but the journalist Bram Stoker has turned it into a typewriter ad," wrote the Austrian Alfred Kubin, himself a master of uncanny art, in a letter full of contempt in 1915. He has not been the only critic since who tried to desecrate the tomb of the Anglo-Irish author. However, this has done little damage to the undead popularity of the literary work in question: *Dracula* (1897), apart from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) probably the most successful undead monster of world literature; a novel that has never been out of print in its more than 110 years on the book market.

Its ingredients are simple and fairly traditional: the Transylvanian nobleman Dracula first threatens the bourgeois British business traveler Jonathan Harker, and later the wife-to-be of the latter, Mina, until the vampire is eventually hunted down by male bonding. What is really new about this vampire villain from the depths of eastern Europe is that he does not only assault women, but covers all of Britain with a veritable undead D-day invasion: a (latently racist) horror scenario as a consequence of Darwin's "survival of the fittest." Whatever you may think about the political correctness of vampire tales, *Dracula* is pretty much written in the spirit of the English fin de siècle, insofar as the novel foreshadows the military confrontation with Germany and the multi-ethnic state of Austria-Hungary in World War One.

[...] If you believe Kittler, the novel thus deals, in addition to its own mediality, with the blessings of good office organization. It is an almost post-modern piece of auratic fiction of the file: "'We were,' said Jonathan Harker, 'subsequently struck by the fact that in the whole set of material from which the report is composed, is hardly an authentic document. Nothing but a mass of

typewritten sheets full, also notebooks [...] and a memorandum. [...] We need no proof. We ask anyone that he gives us faith.'" So, in a manner of speaking: in the end was the word...

However, in the 1890s, when Stoker's spooky bloodsucker slowly began to take shape, the vampires had already looked back over more than 250 years of (literary) history without having died from exhaustion. They had actually begun their career as text files processed, as it were, by Habsburg military officers as midwives. The undead writing started with cases of mass hysteria in parts of Serbia. Soon after, villagers started digging up their cemeteries to dispose of their walking dead following the classical method: stakes, beheading, and burning.

In 1732 the Austrian army surgeon John Flückinger documented the most famous case of Medvedja, a village south of Belgrade, where vampires became almost an epidemic. The "Heiduck Jowiza," for instance, reports to the authorities "that his daughter by the name of Stano(ica) went to bed 15 days ago, being fresh and healthy, however, around midnight she woke up screaming, shivering and frightened, saying that she had been throttled by a Heyduck's son who had been dead for nine weeks, after which event she finally died on the third day." This story and others can be found in Viennese archives and in the excellent text readers by Klaus Hamberger (*Mortuus non mordet*, 1991) and Dieter Sturm/Klaus Volker (*Von denen Vampiren und Menschengauern*, 1988), respectively.

At the time, Serbia obviously was a sort of (colonized) Empire of the Evil for the imperial center in Vienna. And much as in cases of "possession" by "evil spirits" in Africa, what appears in the vampire belief are precarious social dynamics rather than the hereafter. The Hungarian historian Gábor Klaniczay suggests a certain contemporary substrate from which the Serbian undead "grew": the aftermath of the Turkish wars, i.e. the religious conflict between Islam, Catholic, and Orthodox churches at the time, a kind of culture war between "liberated" Slavs and their new Austrian management, and last



but not least, unrecognized epidemics, as it was noted already by Gerard Van Swieten, personal physician to Maria Theresa. In their scapegoat function to explain the unexplained, the vampires for awhile replaced witchcraft, which had already been banned by early Enlightenment.

The folklore of the dead who return to haunt the bereaved and occasionally drink their blood has not died out since Antiquity, particularly in south-eastern and northern Europe. As late as in 1886, the Lithuanian landowner Robert von Gostovski dug out his deceased father in order to fulfill the latter's last will and threw his severed head into the bushes surrounding the graveyard. The court sentenced the son "due to lack of understanding of his guilt" not for desecration, but only for "mischief." The last reported case of vampire craze in a Romanian village, however, dates from as recently as 2004 (see *Independent*, October 28, 2007).

The vampire thus provides a perfect image for every enemy of the human race and even for closet identification.

But also as a leisure activity vampirism is sometimes dead serious: in December 1996 a bunch of US teenagers were accused of murder because they had impaled their parents during a role-play. The case went through the press, but neither fans nor vampirologists are easy to put off: they keep visiting Dracula's homepage (operated by the Stoker expert Elizabeth Miller) and many others like the social network Vampire Club; they watch *True Blood* and *Vampire Diaries*.

[...] The 1847-born Bram Stoker was a childhood friend of Oscar Wilde and his rival when it came to the future Mrs. Stoker. He was also a man "without a face in the mirror," as his biographer, Barbara Belford, puts it in a vampiristic

way: Stoker was talented, mediocre, a newcomer rather tolerated than accepted or wanted by the cultural scene of London. In 1876 namely, the young civil servant and amateur theater critic met the man of his life, whose manager he would remain until death: Henry Irving, one of the great actors of fin de siècle Britain, who mesmerized the crowds as Hamlet or Mephisto. He was the one who made Stoker disregard his own literary ambitions by sucking his labor and services out of him. Here probably lies one of the few biographical components of the Dracula novel, as far as it is about the confrontation of a great villain with a small office clerk by the name of Harker.

[...] However, it is undisputed that Stoker's demonic vampire count had a great historic role model about whom many academic and amateur authors have written and speculated extensively: the cruel Wallachian prince Vlad III Dracula (1431–76), a fierce Christian warrior against the Turks, who soon received his nickname Tsepesh ("the Impaler") because he had the cruel hobby of putting his opponents—prisoners of war, Transylvanian merchants and rebellious nobles, tens of thousands allegedly—on stakes where they died painfully. Contemporary pamphlets show him at a banquet, surrounded by almost a forest of impaled people. For the Romanians, nevertheless, he remains one of the great heroes of their cultural memory; the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu, for instance, had a monument built for Dracula in the ancient capital city of Tirgoviste on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of his death in 1976.

It is common sense that Vlad was a bloodthirsty leader with a Machiavellian *raison d'état*, though there is no indication that he was a vampire or undead, particularly after his own assassination. For Stoker, the ruler's first nickname probably served as a semantic link between the historic mass murderer and vampirism: "Dracula" means "dragon" in Romanian, but also "devil," and in a German folklore source from the 19th century, the D-word is also used for the blood-drinking dead. Stoker maybe learned about this from the German-born Oxford professor Max Müller, a spe-



cialist in mythology, who was sometimes a visitor at his Lyceum Theatre in London. This is a more likely version than the frequent rumors that the Hungarian Orient traveler Armin Vambery, British spy in Central Asia and professor at the University of Budapest, was the informant (although he is indeed mentioned in the novel).

Regardless, Stoker has proven to be a world champion in the cut-and-paste combination of travel literature and popular science. He was a sort of Irish Karl May, since he had never seen the locations in eastern Europe, which he would describe in his novel, with his own eyes. Under the impression of Transylvanian travelogues he changed the main setting of his novel; his original plans were to involve Styria, the province in southeastern Austria where Sheridan LeFanu's famous Lesbian vampire tale *Carmilla* (1872) is set.

All in all, *Dracula* is a clever recipe for success, the full flavor of which was only to be felt after Stoker's death.

A best-selling dramatized version of *Dracula* in London was exported promptly to New York's

Broadway, where an unknown actor took over the title part with a heavy Hungarian accent: Bela Lugosi, the man who in Tod Browning's film version of 1931 made the black cape finally a trademark and was buried in it himself. Ever since, the biting and impaling business has moved more and more from textual to cinematographic cemeteries in the aftermath of F.W. Murnau's legendary *Nosferatu* film from 1922—a German rip-off that led to a copyright lawsuit with Stoker's widow.

In any disguise, the vampire is not only an attractive villain, but also a willing victim. The reflection-free monster stands ready to absorb almost every interpretation into itself, as the German literary scholar Hans Richard Brittnacher has shown: "The vampire appears sometimes as the emblem of a disenfranchised and vengeful aristocracy, sometimes as the symbol of femininity, sometimes as that of an excessive Don Juanism, at times it is identified with Stalinism, at others with the Franco regime and at still others with the Jesuits, then again it is bureaucracy, venereal disease or the fear of newer scientific discoveries such as hypnosis and magnetism which find their likeness in the image of the vampire. Precisely this elasticity

prohibits a simple interpretation" (*Aesthetics of Horror*, 1991).

The vampire thus provides a perfect image for every enemy of the human race and even for closet identification. As a merchandise of symbolic trade in globalized cultures, s/he can be used equally to point at the shadowy existence of women in a patriarchal society, to serve as a propagandistic Western stereotype of the Balkans (see Tomislav Longinovic, *Vampires Like Us*, 2002), or to sell cereal to kids. Because of this complexity, the bloodsucker has helped to found a whole thriving "academic (interpretation) industry," as Ken Gelder stresses in *Reading the Vampire* (1995).

For Bram Stoker and his British contemporaries in the late 1800s, the vampire particularly made one thing possible: to speak about sexual and other taboos in disguise. Symptomatic is the scene where Dracula in the bedroom of Mina

Harker is caught in flagrante, "his right clutching her neck and pressed it with his face to his chest. Her nightshirt was spattered with blood, and blood flowed like a fine thread on the bare chest of the man." Violent Victorian fellatio fantasies, or the reversal of breast-feeding?

So is it that what's so fascinating about vampires? The anthropologist Norinne Dresser has written a whole book entitled *American Vampires* dedicated to popular culture and the human love for the blood-sucking undead. Her answer to why Dracula has become the mythical success story of the Millenium especially in the United States is that he is the all-American guy avant la lettre: "The three major attractions of the vampire are totally compatible with American ideals of power, sex, and immortality. [...] It appears that American vampires are perfectly suited to this culture. They reflect those values which many Americans hold dear. They like to succeed. And they always get the girl."

