



IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Nosferatu

+ intro by Silent Film Curator Bryony Dixon and live piano accompaniment.
(Sunday 13 November only)

In this loose adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the film's antagonist, Count Orlock (Schreck), is a deviation from the seductive vampire, skulking around his castle like a rat. FW Murnau's masterpiece may be a hundred years old, but it has lost none of its bite, with stunning imagery and a performance whose influence over horror cinema is arguably greater than any other of its time.

Anna Bogutskaya

The question of how *Nosferatu* came to be made is still something of a mystery. Virtually the only film produced by Prana-Film – a financial sinking ship whose owners were subsequently taken to court for copyright violations by Bram Stoker's widow, despite having changed most of the characters' names – the project owed much to the enigmatic figure of Albin Grau, who signed for the decor and costumes but also seems to have been the driving force behind the production, both financially and artistically. Very little is known about Grau, though an article by Enno Patalas depicts him variously as a student of eastern philosophy, a freemason and master of the 'pansophic lodge of the light-seekers' in Berlin, a fan of Aleister Crowley, a friend of novelist-painter Alfred Kubin and the author of a pamphlet about the use of colour in décor and lighting in black-and-white films. More predictable collaborators were film industry professionals screenwriter Henrik Galeen (who co-wrote *The Golem*) and director of photography Fritz Arno Wagner, one of the three top cameramen at Ufa.

Germany in 1921-2 was recovering from the bloodletting of World War I. The spectres that haunted the new republic included the Spartacist uprisings in Berlin and Munich, based on the Soviet model and bloodily suppressed, raging inflation that bled the economy like an internal haemorrhage, and an army of horribly disfigured war cripples. But it was another memorable event that left its echo in *Nosferatu*: in the winter of 1919-20 a Spanish flu epidemic and famine hit Germany, ravaging the country and reportedly killing more civilians than the Great War itself. So the cholera, whose origins *Nosferatu* is supposed to record, is doubled by several successive disasters befalling a defeated Germany, during which public opinion only too readily blamed the victors of Versailles for not coming to the country's aid. Instead, the French, adding insult and humiliation to injury and penury, insisted on the prompt payment of war reparations and annexed the Rhineland, setting off a chain of events that gave the nationalist right its first electoral successes among the working class.

Most cultural-studies approaches to *Nosferatu* (or indeed to Stoker's *Dracula*) have little trouble relating the myth of the vampire to a historically new and politically troubling awareness of female sexuality. The somnambulist Mina and her friend Lucy have been compared to the hysterical females treated by Charcot in Paris at the Salpêtrière, where they were photographed by Albert Londe, thanks to his newly developed chronophotographic camera, while two young doctors from Germany and Austria, Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, looked on. (Stoker has van Helsing support his diagnosis of Lucy's symptoms with a pointed reference to having studied in Paris under Charcot.)

But Murnau's *Nosferatu* is open to another reading of its sexual pathology. Vampires in the movies are usually bisexual, often letting ambiguity hover over

the question of whether, say, Dracula's brides are for the Count ends in themselves, or merely means to an end (as Venus-traps, to attract young men to their rescue who then become the juicier victims). But Murnau's *Nosferatu* would seem to be the prototype of another gender, not least because of the vampire's many animal features, from his pointed ears and birdlike claws to his rodent teeth, rather than the more usual fangs suddenly bared on an otherwise impeccably gentleman-dandy face and physique (as with Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee).

The French surrealists admired *Nosferatu* mainly for its eroticism, contrasting the anodyne puppy love of Mina and Harker with Nosferatu's necrophiliac lust, musty and potent at once, exuding the aroma of dank crypts and leathery flesh. According to Robin Wood, on the other hand, sexuality is branded in Murnau's films as the source of evil: Nosferatu stands for raw carnal desire which must be kept in check in the interest of higher spiritual values, and so Mina, expressing that mixture of desire, curiosity and horror typical of patriarchal culture's depiction of female sexuality, must die along with the vampire. But the love triangles in the film also lend themselves to an interpretation that brings out a more layered structure of sexual attraction and ambivalence. For instance, underlying the secret heterosexual bond between Nosferatu and Mina is the Renfield-Harker-Nosferatu relation. The initial situation suggests that the film superimposes two plot-lines, one heterosexual, the other developed around the homosexual relationship between Nosferatu and Renfield doubled by the homosocial story of Harker being befriended by Renfield, whereupon the older man introduces his younger friend to a very 'experienced' queen. Likewise the protagonists of Murnau's *Faust* (1926) – Mephisto and the rejuvenated Faust – could be called a queer couple, especially on their travel adventures to that celebrated destination of homoerotic desire, the Mediterranean, thinly disguised by the excessively heterosexual story of Faust and Gretchen.

Siegfried Kracauer had argued that Weimar cinema obsessively staged anxieties about male self-images and male sexuality: his 1966 *From Caligari to Hitler* even ties the theme of damaged masculinity to the vanishing of paternal authority after a lost war. Certainly the preferred stories of Expressionist cinema focus on male identity crises – often signalled by the appearance of a double – and toy with bisexuality by featuring love triangles in which the two males are usually 'best friends' or business associates who show an obvious but rarely openly acknowledged attraction to each other. In this respect Murnau's films are neither an exception nor unusually explicit. Doubles abound in Murnau as they do in other directors, whether by way of disguise (*Tartuffe*, 1926) or across a split male character (Faust old and young). Likewise, there are several crucial films where a pure, almost asexual love is threatened or destroyed by the intrusion of another male's predatory attentions – to the man (Nosferatu/Harker, Mephisto/Faust, *Tartuffe*/Orgon, *Tabu*'s Hitu/Matahi).

For a novelist like Jim Shepard, Murnau's homosexuality is crucial to both his films and his life; sorrow and secrecy become the wellsprings of his creative drive, the motives behind a tale of love, longing, guilt and self-abjection. In his fictionalised 1998 biography of Murnau, *Nosferatu in Love*, Shepard makes the twin poles of self-deprecating humour and self-lacerating grief the protective armour behind which the director feeds on lascivious thoughts furtively indulged. For Shepard, the deepest wound the war inflicted on Murnau was the death on the Eastern Front of his intimate friend Hans Ehrenbaum-Degele, on whom he once recklessly cheated. Baffled and hurt, Hans voluntarily enlists and soon gets himself killed, to the undying shame and mortification of Murnau, at least according to Shepard.

Thomas Elsaesser, *Sight & Sound*, February 2001

NOSFERATU (NOSFERATU, EINE SYMPHONIE DES GRAUENS)

Director: F.W. Murnau
Production Company: Prana-Film
Producers: Albin Grau, Enrico Dieckmann
Screenplay: Henrik Galeen
Director of Photography: Fritz Arno Wagner
Camera Assistant: Günther Krampf
Art Director: Albin Grau
Costumes: Albin Grau
1922 Music for performance: Hans Erdmann

Cast

Max Schreck (Count Orlok)
Alexander Granach (Knock)
Gustav von Wangenheim (Hutter)
Greta Schröder (Ellen, Hutter’s wife)
Georg Heinrich Schnell (Harding)
Ruth Landshoff (Ruth)
John Gottowt (Professor Bulwer)
Gustav Botz (Professor Sievers)
Max Nemetz (Captain)
Wolfgang Heinz (1st sailor)
Albert Venohr (2nd sailor)
Guido Herzfeld (innkeeper)
Hardy von François (hospital doctor)
Heinrich Witte
Karl Etlinger

Germany 1922
96 mins

IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Nosferatu (Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens)
Mon 17 Oct 20:50; Sun 13 Nov 15:50 (+ intro by Silent Film Curator Bryony Dixon); Sat 19 Nov 14:10

Frankenstein
Tue 18 Oct 20:50; Fri 28 Oct 18:20; Tue 8 Nov 18:20; Sun 27 Nov 13:00

The Skeleton Key
Wed 19 Oct 18:00; Mon 14 Nov 20:45

Meet the Monsters: A Season Introduction
Thu 20 Oct 19:30 BFI YouTube

I Walked With a Zombie
Thu 20 Oct 20:40; Tue 1 Nov 18:10

Creature from the Black Lagoon (3D) *
Sat 22 Oct 18:15 (+ pre-recorded intro by Mallory O’Meara, award winning and bestselling author of ‘The Lady from the Black Lagoon’); Sat 29 Oct 11:40; Tue 1 Nov 20:50

In Dreams Are Monsters Quiz
Sun 23 Oct 19:00-22:00 Blue Room

Kuroneko (Yabu no naka no kuroneko)
Tue 25 Oct 20:45; Mon 31 Oct 21:00; Fri 18 Nov 18:15

The Fly
Wed 26 Oct 21:00

La Llorona
Thu 27 Oct 20:30; Mon 7 Nov 21:00

Celluloid Screams and Live Cinema UK presents: Ghostwatch + Q&A
Fri 28 Oct 20:20

Viy
Fri 28 Oct 20:45; Tue 8 Nov 20:50

A Nightmare on Elm Street
Sat 29 Oct 18:30; Wed 30 Nov 20:50

Candyman
Sat 29 Oct 20:45; Thu 17 Nov 20:50 (+ intro)

Nightbreed – Director’s Cut
Sun 30 Oct 15:10 (+ intro); Sat 12 Nov 20:35

28 Days Later
Mon 31 Oct 18:00 (+ Q&A with director Danny Boyle); Sat 26 Nov 20:45

Us
Tue 1 Nov 20:40; Sat 19 Nov 15:10; Tue 29 Nov 20:40

The Autopsy of Jane Doe
Wed 2 Nov 18:10; Sat 26 Nov 20:40

Let’s Scare Jessica to Death
Wed 2 Nov 20:45; Sat 19 Nov 20:45

Blacula
Thu 3 Nov 20:55; Sat 26 Nov 13:00

Cronos
Fri 4 Nov 18:30; Sat 19 Nov 12:10; Sun 20 Nov 18:30

Fright Night
Fri 4 Nov 20:50; Tue 22 Nov 20:40 (+ intro)

Possession
Sat 5 Nov 20:20 (+ intro by author Kier-La Janisse); Sun 27 Nov 15:30

Ganja & Hess
Mon 7 Nov 18:00; Sat 26 Nov 15:20

Inferno
Wed 9 Nov 20:40; Sat 26 Nov 18:20

The Entity
Fri 11 Nov 17:55; Tue 15 Nov 20:30

Def by Temptation
Wed 16 Nov 18:10 (+ intro); Sat 26 Nov 18:10

Jennifer’s Body
Sun 20 Nov 15:15; Mon 21 Nov 18:00; Fri 25 Nov 20:45

Pontypool
Mon 21 Nov 20:30; Sun 27 Nov 12:20

Under the Shadow
Wed 23 Nov 20:40; Tue 29 Nov 18:10

Ouija: Origin of Evil
Thu 24 Nov 20:40; Mon 28 Nov 18:10

Pet Sematary
Fri 25 Nov 18:15; Mon 28 Nov 20:40

Good Manners (As Boas Maneiras)
Sun 27 Nov 18:10; Wed 30 Nov 20:25

IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS EVENTS

City Lit at BFI: Screen Horrors – Screen Monsters
Thu 20 Oct – Thu 15 Dec 18:30-20:30

Beyond Nollywood World Premiere: Inside Life + Q&A with director Clarence A Peters
Sat 29 Oct 14:00

Matchbox Cine presents House of Psychotic Women
Sat 5 Nov 17:50

Son of Ingagi + Panel Discussion
Wed 9 Nov 18:10

Live Commentary with Evolution of Horror, Brain Rot and The Final Girls
Sat 19 Nov 18:00

Big Monster Energy
Tue 22 Nov 18:30

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