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Dracula Meets the Music Video

Abstract

The following article will attempt to establish an intertextual link between one of the seminal examples of Gothic literature, i.e., Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and the still relatively new medium of music video. To narrow down the analysis, I aim to explore intertextual connections between a particular cinematic rendition of Stoker's novel, namely Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*), and three selected music videos. These are the Pet Shop Boys' "Heart" (1988, directed by Jack Bond), Myslovitz's "Dla ciebie" (2000, directed by Krzysztof Pawłowski) and Bad Bunny's "Baticano" (2023, directed by Stillz). Even though all three of them openly reference the aforementioned masterpiece of German Expressionism, they were created in three different decades (the 1980s, 2000s, 2020s), in three different countries (UK, Poland, Puerto Rico) and represent three different music genres (pop, rock, trap/reggaeton), thus demonstrating the enduring influence of Murnau's adaptation and, by extension, Stoker's source text. To sum up, my intention is to track the affinities between the film (and, vicariously, the novel) and the videos, with a particular focus on visual intertexts, to examine how Gothic tropes and motifs are rewritten and adjusted to modern contexts to form new meanings and a series of fruitful encounters.

Gothic novel; *Dracula*; *Nosferatu*; music video; intertextuality

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Dracula Meets the Music Video

Introduction

The year 2024 marked an important anniversary for Gothic scholars and aficionados: namely, 260 years since the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, "the first published work to call itself »A Gothic Story«" (Hogle 2002: 1). Initially released anonymously as a mere translation of an old manuscript dating back to the 16th century, the novel's later reprints admitted Walpole's authorship. The text was met with rather mixed reviews (see Clery 2002: 21–39). It took more than 25 years before a true "Gothic craze" took over Great Britain, mostly thanks to the works of Ann Radcliffe (e.g. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794, and *The Italian*, 1797) and Matthew Gregory Lewis (*The Monk*, 1796), which used *Otranto* as their template but, simultaneously, readjusted many of its elements to their own ends. Undoubtedly, thanks to Walpole, a model of a classic Gothic novel was born, with its action set in a remote past (usually the Middle Ages, to which the word "Gothic" initially exclusively referred), within the labyrinthine space of a gloomy castle or palace guaranteeing obscurity and thus terror,[1] frequently outside the British context (foreign, mostly Catholic countries such as France or Italy, to corroborate the effect of obscurity). The Gothic text would include supernatural elements (always logically explicated in Radcliffe's oeuvre), as well as a set of steady themes and plot elements (a hereditary curse, family secrets, incest, intertwined sex and violence) and characters — monks, nuns, valiant knights, banditti and, above all, a damsel in distress and her male oppressor, who usually dies at the end of the novel, punished by a brave hero of noble origin. Such was the popularity of Gothic fiction that it captured the attention of other writers of the era, ranging from Samuel Taylor Coleridge (see his critical overview of *The Monk*) to Jane Austen (who, in *Northanger Abbey*, completed in 1803 and released posthumously in 1818, satirically depicted a teenage character whose views on life and reality are shaped by "horrid

[1] In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, a 1757 treatise on aesthetics, Edmund Burke proposed that "to make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary" (1990: 34). Gothic authors of the late 18th century were influenced by Burkian concepts, Ann Radcliffe in particular.

novels"). Quite unsurprisingly, the reproduction of stock elements "with uninspired regularity by the hack writers of the time" (Leeming 1982: 1) led to a major decrease in the genre's credibility and its temporary disappearance from the market in the early 19th century. Gothic fiction required the major reinvention that came at the end of the 1810s, with the publication of two texts composed simultaneously in 1816, i.e., Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (published in 1818) and John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (printed in 1819). The latter, considered the first modern vampire narrative, certainly contributed to the eventual publication of the canonical *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897), the eponymous character an upgraded rendition of Polidori's Lord Ruthven (himself inspired by Lord Byron). The story of an evil nobleman who feeds on the blood of his innocent victims first in Transylvania and then in the English town of Whitby became an instant hit among casual readers and contemporary critics alike.[2] Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Count Dracula would soon become a permanent fixture of the new medium of film. Indeed, the end of the 19th century not only signals new developments in Gothic fiction but also points to new possible outlets for the distribution of eerie stories, especially with the invention of the cinematograph and the subsequent emergence of the first horror films (George Méliès's 1896, *The Haunted Castle* its primary example). The 20th century further witnessed the smooth transition of Gothicism from the literary mode into the visual one, the earliest horror films drawing inspiration from literary works such as *Dracula*, as well as folk tales and legends. Several decades later, with the inception of a music video as more than just an illustration of a given song, Gothicism found yet another medium to reach out to a wider audience. Close intertextual ties between music videos and Gothic literature classics were established very quickly — already in 1978, Kate Bush premiered her debut song, "Wuthering Heights," lyrically and visually inspired by Emily Brontë's 1847 novel, a masterpiece of Victorian Gothic, and its 1967 BBC adaptation (dir. Peter Sasdy).[3] The rise of the Gothic in video clips was certainly aided by the growing popularity of Gothic rock. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to conclude that Gothic intertextuality in music videos is limited exclusively to one specific music genre, since Gothic intertexts permeate a large number of pop and rock clips from the 1980s onwards.[4]

At this point, let me briefly refer to the concept of intertextuality. The contentious term was coined by Julia Kristeva, herself inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin, and introduced in her 1969 *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Wolfreys,

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2 Among *Dracula* enthusiasts, one could find Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Anthony Hope Hawkins; see Snodgrass (2005: 86). In a recently rediscovered rare letter that was sent to a man named Williams, Stoker shared a few candid comments on his most recent work: "I send you *Dracula* & have honoured myself by writing your name in it… Lord forgive me. I am quite shameless"; for a more elaborate context, see Morris (2025).

3 The lyrics to "Wuthering Heights" reflect Catherine Earnshaw's (i.e., the female protagonist's) feelings towards the character of Heathcliff. Kate Bush went so far as to incorporate actual quotes from the novel (for instance, "I'm come home" or "Let me in" from chapter 3; 2000: 17). As far as the music video is concerned, the songstress's dance in a red dress "out on the wily, windy moors" encapsulates the haunting atmosphere of Brontë's work.

4 Maciej Świerkocki emphasizes the presence of Gothic not only in music videos but in music in general, generically ranging from the above-mentioned Gothic rock and pop through jazz and classical music (e.g. in works by Krzysztof Penderecki) (2003: 11).

Robbins and Womack, following Kristeva, explain that intertextuality "refers to the ways in which all utterances (whether written or spoken) necessarily refer to other utterances, since words and linguistic/grammatical structures pre-exist the individual speaker and the individual speech. Intertextuality can take place consciously, as when a writer sets out to quote from or allude to the works of another" (2006: 58). Although Kristeva did not intend it to signify the influence of one work upon another or one author upon another (see Roudiez's critical remarks in the introduction to *Desire in Language* 1980: 15), the scope of the term would soon expand to accommodate strong interlinks between different cultural texts (to the point of the appropriation of certain elements). For Dobrogoszcz, Handley and Fisiak, it seems logical that a concept initially applied in semiotics, "[developed] beyond the study of language and literature. Since the 1990s the intertextual approach has been employed in cultural studies to analyze film, photography, music, fine arts, architecture and other artistic productions" (2024: 7). As will be demonstrated later, music videos capably show the potential for intertextuality, understood in the post-Kristevan way, though. For the sake of clarity, my definition of intertextuality would follow Marta Kaźmierczak's interpretation, as "a relation of a given text with another text, a group of texts, or with texts of culture that precede it in time" (2019: 364). The following article will try to establish a link between a classic Gothic text (*Dracula*) and the still relatively new medium of music video. To narrow down the topic, I aim to focus on three music videos inspired by a particular cinematic rendition of Stoker's novel: Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*). The videos are the Pet Shop Boys' "Heart" (1988), "Dla ciebie" by Myslovitz (2000) and, finally, Bad Bunny's "Baticano" (2023). Although all three openly refer to the aforementioned masterpiece of German Expressionism, they were created in three different decades (the 1980s, 2000s, 2020s), in three different countries (UK, Poland, Puerto Rico) and represent three different music genres (pop, rock, trap/reggaeton), hence underscoring the universal potential of Murnau's film and, by extension, Stoker's novel.[5] To sum up, I intend to track the connections between the film (and, vicariously, the novel) and the videos, concentrating mostly on visual intertexts, to examine how Gothic tropes and motifs are rewritten and tailored to contemporary contexts to create new meanings and a series of fruitful encounters.

[5] Certainly, my selection is not exhaustive because there are numerous vampire-themed music videos. Some examples include artists as generically and geographically varied as Meat Loaf ("If You Really Want To," dir. Stuart Orme, 1983), Scooter ("Rebel Yell," dir. Rainer Thieding, 1996), Backstreet Boys ("Everybody (Backstreet's Back)," dir. Joseph Kahn, 1997), Goldfrapp ("Alive," dir. Legs, 2010), The Tenors ft. Lindsey Stirling ("Who Wants To Live Forever," dir. Matěj Pichler, 2015), Muse ("Thought Contagion," dir. Lance Drake, 2018) and Lil Nas X ft. Nas ("Rodeo," dir. Bradley & Pablo, 2020). However, contrary to the Pet Shop Boys, Myslovitz or Bad Bunny, they do not explicitly refer to Murnau. Additionally, my analysis does not cover Saxon's "Nosferatu (The Vampire's Waltz)" (dir. Steph Byford, 2018), despite rather straightforward lyrical and visual affinities to Murnau. The official music video never really goes beyond putting the live-playing band against the original footage from Murnau's film and, as such, does not offer any new reading of the source material. I decided not to discuss the music video to "I Want You" by Cabaret Voltaire (dir. Peter Care, 1985) due to too many similarities shared with "Heart" (timeframe, genre, the band's country of origin, the representation of the Nosferatu character).

Before I look closely at the selected short clips, I would like to focus on their major source of inspiration: Murnau's *Nosferatu* that celebrated its centenary back in 2022. Although it has deservedly attained the status of a horror classic,[6] in 1922 it was generally overlooked or ignored because of legal issues. As it was an unauthorized adaptation of *Dracula*, "Stoker's widow successfully sued for plagiarism, and most copies of the movie were destroyed, with, however, a few surviving, fortunately for later vampire aficionados" (Carter 2006: 641).[7] This is unsurprising, for differences between *Dracula* and *Nosferatu* were thinly veiled and reduced mostly to alternative locations and character names. Murnau retained most of the plotline (a vampire count travels from his home in Transylvania to Central Europe to find new blood and spread the undead curse until he is defeated by a beautiful maiden who — in *Nosferatu*'s case — sacrifices her life for others' sake), yet he changed the primary location from English Whitby to German Wisborg. As for the characters, Count Dracula became Count Orlok (although he is commonly referred to as Nosferatu), Jonathan Harker — Thomas Hutter, his fiancée, Mina — Ellen. In the following analysis, the names of Murnau's characters will be used.

Nosferatu was shot at the peak of the popularity of German Expressionism, an "artistic movement, which went on to heavily influence many of the horror films of the 1930s and the film noir genre that blossomed in the 1940s" ("13 Vampire Movies" 2023), which "allowed the filmmakers to experiment with filmic technology and special effects and to explore the twisted realm of repressed desires, unconscious fears, and deranged fixations" (Perry qtd. in Cherry 2009: 62). As a result, films such as Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *The Golem: How He Came into the World* (1920), directed by Paul Wegener and Carl Boese, were notable for a specific "chiaroscuro style of lighting that exploited extremes of light," as well as the "black and white of the sets, costume and make up," "extremely unnaturalistic angles of the sets and props" and "abstract quality" (Cherry 2009: 62). However, contrary to most filmmakers at that time, Murnau "[chose] to explore the supernatural and the uncanny using real locations set in Nature"[8] (Massaccesi 2015: 7), yet still incorporating Expressionistic style (evoked mostly through the dramatic use of shadow and light, especially in the presentation of Count Orlok and the interiors of his abode). The following music videos skillfully combine elements of German Expressionism with Murnau's alternative solutions, while availing of contemporary technological advances.

6 This is demonstrated by praise from such renowned critics as Roger Ebert ("I admire it more for its artistry and ideas, its atmosphere and images, than for its ability to manipulate my emotions like a skillful modern horror film"; 1997), Pauline Kael ("this first important film of the vampire genre has more spectral atmosphere, more ingenuity, and more imaginative ghoulish ghastliness than any of its successors"; n.d.) and, in the Polish context, Jerzy Toeplitz, who lauds the film for unique imagery and directorial creativity among other aspects (2024: 41). The lasting impact of the film has also been reflected in academia. The 100th anniversary of the release saw the publication of a special volume by Liverpool University Press, *Nosferatu in the 21st Century: A Critical Study*, edited by Simon Bacon.

7 It should be noted that one year before, in 1921, Károly Lajthay, a Hungarian director, premiered his *Drakula halála*, loosely based on Stoker's novel. Unfortunately, the film is now considered lost. See Rhodes (2010) for more information on the first film adaptation of *Dracula*.

8 Four German cities, Wismar, Rostock, Lübeck and Lauenberg, contributed to the screen depiction of Nosferatu's town of Wisborg (Eisner qtd. in Toeplitz 2024: 41). For details regarding the film, see, for instance, Kletowski (2010: 30–33).

Pet Shop Boys, "Heart" (1988), directed by Jack Bond

The first case study is "Heart," the fourth (and final) single released to promote the Pet Shop Boys' second album *Actually*. The song shot to number 1 in the UK in late March 1988. Its triumph was certainly helped by what critics such as Wayne Studer called the band's "most cinematic short-form video" (n.d.). According to the band members, Neil Tennant (who plays the character of Thomas in the video) and Chris Lowe (who has been assigned the role of a chauffeur), "Jack Bond… was very keen to do a video for us. It was totally his idea. He typed out a thing saying »this promo will be based on the classic 1926 [sic] film version of *Nosferatu*.« We were too embarrassed to say we didn't know what *Nosferatu* was about" (qtd. in Heath 1988: 48). Although the band might not have known the reference, the director consciously (and conscientiously) relied upon Murnau's classic, incorporating elements of the plotline, recreating certain scenes and camera angles. However, Bond decided not to shoot in black and white, which likened his production to Werner Herzog's 1979 color remake, *Nosferatu the Vampyre*. He also refrained from overusing typical German Expressionism techniques, prioritizing natural lighting and outdoor filming. What needs to be noted is that the Gothic intertexts (including the vampirical ones) are limited to the visual aspect of "Heart." Lyrically, it is an expression of joy of being attracted to someone, which is adequately complemented by an upbeat synth-pop beat, so characteristic of 1980s pop music. In the liner notes to the 2018 remastered reissue of *Actually*, Tennant honestly admitted that the "reason ["Heart"] was so successful was because it was a completely straightforward love song with a wacky video," adding that the song lyrics are "just ordinary" (2018: 10).

Shot in Slovenia,[9] the video opens with a frame of newlyweds Thomas and Ellen (the latter played by a Croatian actress, Daniela Čolić-Prizmić) being driven through a picturesque village located in the shadow of Count Orlok's castle. Similarly to Murnau, Bond creates a stark contrast, juxtaposing the imposing building with its idyllic surroundings and almost omnipresent sunshine. The peculiar atmosphere is enhanced by the flower decoration on the honeymooners' black limousine that bears an uncanny resemblance to the wreaths adorning the hearse. The camera then pans to a candle-lit chamber where Nosferatu (played by Sir Ian McKellen) slowly rises from his coffin and moves towards the window. His bent body casts a familiar shadow on the wall — here is where Bond introduces a direct visual quote from Murnau. Yet, unlike Murnau (and Stoker before him), the director does not hesitate to portray Nosferatu as both a tragic and a comical figure (see, for instance, the unexpected Monty Python-esque little dance the vampire performs before the seduction scene, itself quite grotesque thanks to McKellen's facial expressions).

A twist in the action comes with the realization that the newlyweds plan to celebrate their honeymoon at the vampire's castle. Greeted by a group of butlers and chambermaids, they are led towards their spacious bedroom. All events are carefully supervised by Nosferatu, who clearly intends to seduce and abscond with the bride. Soon, a perfect opportunity arises. Thomas and Ellen dance in their chamber. The man slowly

[9] "We went there because Jack Bond had been before, the technicians are good and it's quite cheap. The castle was a hotel — Marshal Tito had stayed in the room we were using as a dressing room" (Tennant qtd. in Heath 1988: 48).

undresses his wife when suddenly Nosferatu enters the room with a bunch of flowers. He mimes the song lyrics and hypnotizes the woman, who obediently follows. The action promptly shifts to a grand ballroom where Nosferatu beckons the girl to come closer and confesses his love. The two start to dance, accompanied by an orchestra whose members close their eyes in fear of what they are going to see next. The inevitable moment of doom eventually happens — Nosferatu tightens his embrace and bites his victim. However, another twist occurs and in no time Count Orlok and Ellen are seen departing the castle together, "leaving Neil, as he has put it, »bitter and twisted«" (Studer n.d.). The abandoned husband is seen at the window, just like Nosferatu at the beginning of the video. His face turns pale and livid. As he grinds his teeth in fury, it is no longer possible to distinguish between him and the "real" vampire. It is equally problematic to assess Ellen's fate — is her elopement with Orlok liberating or even more overpowering? The subservient kiss that she lays on the vampire's hand seems to point to the latter — Ellen remains in an unfavorable position within the Gothic binary of a damsel in distress and a tyrant, simply transitioning from one oppressive structure to another, from one antihero to another. At the same time, what merits attention is the fact that, contrary to Murnau's (and then Herzog's) production, but more like in Stoker's novel, Ellen does not die trying to save her husband (and the whole town) from a deadly vampirical influence. Moreover, against the convention, the vampire fearlessly ventures out into the sunlight and survives. What Bond does retain in "Heart" in line with Murnau's vision (and the Gothic tradition as such) is "a symbolic language of objects and settings that adds viewing layers to the experience" (Weisman 2021: 17): bats ominously hovering over the castle, creepy candle-lit interiors, slow-moving dark shadows, the figure of a pale-faced vampire rising from a coffin; all of them intertextually imply a strong relation with the preceding cultural artifacts, both textual and visual.

Myslovitz, "Dla ciebie" (2000), dir. Krzysztof Pawłowski

Nosferatu-inspired clichés can be found in the next example: "Dla ciebie" (2000) by Myslovitz. In 1999, Myslovitz, a well-known Polish indie-rock band, released its fourth album, *Miłość w czasach popkultury* (*Love in the Time of Pop Culture*). It turned out to be a spectacular commercial success, mainly thanks to a string of hits including "My" ("We") and "Długość dźwięku samotności" (released later in English as "Sound of Solitude"). The album's title references that of Gabriel García Márquez's celebrated 1985 novel *Love in the Time of Cholera* (even though, apparently, it was a matter of sheer coincidence; see Rojek qtd. in Ciura 2003: 109);[10] therefore, it comes as no surprise that the music videos promoting the album also form a string of interesting intertexts. The first one, to the above-mentioned "Długość dźwięku samotności," reveals an undeniable cinematic feel. It stars a professional actor, Robert Gonera, as a man

[10] Since its inception, Myslovitz would eagerly include music, literature, and widely understood (pop) cultural intertexts in their oeuvre, which can be inferred from their song titles and lyrics: "Krótka piosenka o miłości" ("A Short Song About Love," bringing to mind Krzysztof Kieślowski's 1988 *A Short Film About Love*), "Funny Hill" (obviously inspired by John Cleland's controversial novel *Fanny Hill*, 1748–1749) or "James, radiogłowi i żuk z rewolwerem jadą do nikąd" ("James, the Radioheads and a Beetle with a Gun Ride No-where," referencing four favourite rock bands of the Myslovitz crew; the misspelling of "donikąd" and "nowhere" is intentional). For more on literary and cinematic allusions in Myslovitz, see Ciura (2003).

who meticulously packs his belongings before leaving his lover's house. Although there might be no references to a particular film here, the ambiance of the late 1990s slice-of-life cinema is strong. An even more tangible cinematic approach can be identified in a vampire-themed music video accompanying the fourth single, "Dla ciebie" ("For You"). It was directed by Krzysztof Pawłowski,[11] with whom the band had already collaborated before on "Scenariusz dla moich sąsiadów" ("A Script for My Neighbours").

Like "Heart," "Dla ciebie" playfully interacts with both *Nosferatu* and its literary predecessor, mixing Gothic gloom with comedic elements. Artur Rojek, the band's then lead vocalist and guitarist, assumes the part of Count Orlok, enamored with a beautiful woman played by a professional actress, Agnieszka Dygant. Out of desperate desire, Rojek/Nosferatu decides to abduct Dygant/Ellen, a fate she duly accepts. The remaining band members, one of them (Przemysław Myszor) in the role of Ellen's husband, plan to rescue her and rush towards Nosferatu's castle with a cross, a stake and a garlic wreath, "standard" tools necessary for vampire-slaying (as demonstrated by numerous vampire narratives, as well as vampire films, in particular those distributed by the notorious British studio, Hammer Film Productions). Even though the video ends before the audience has a chance to see their confrontation, the conclusion is far from uplifting and successfully recreates the atmosphere of impending doom. Nosferatu and Ellen are seen together, anxiously awaiting the sunrise. The vampire once again spares his victim's life, very much in contrast to the film. As Nosferatu squints in discomfort, Ellen looks at him, miming the concluding line of the song, "To koniec już" ("It's over now"). This scene underscores how radically dissimilar visions of love are presented by Myslovitz and the Pet Shop Boys. Contrary to "Heart," "Dla ciebie" covers the negative aspects of being in love (sacrifice, obsession, depression). Gloomy lyrics perfectly blend with the Gothic atmosphere of the music video. The dramatic use of guitars only strengthens the effect. However, at some point, the director decides to "explode" the Gothic convention, juxtaposing the images of Rojek's Buster-Keaton-like deadpan delivery and of his frolicking bandmates who cannot resist smiling. Such a contrast offers much-needed comic relief and introduces a new, more ambiguous reading of the source material.

"Dla ciebie" includes more equivocal moments. In one such, Ellen's husband offers her the flowers that the vampire had gathered for her in a field in the previous scene. Such a sequence of events provokes uncomfortable questions. Can we consider the vampire the husband's doppelgänger? Does he play Mr. Hyde to Dr. Jekyll? If so, then the husband's wincing at the sight of the stake and the lack of resolution at the end of the video seem to confirm the existence of a stereotypical Gothic opposition of a male tyrant and his submissive female victim. In this case, a vampirical husband is a toxic oppressor of his wife, who represents the passivity so typical of Gothic women in peril. Ellen hardly ever moves, except when showing fear. Her position, seated with embroidery in her lap, highlights the conventionalized image of a woman preoccupied with monotonous tasks and her attachment to a certain socially constructed role (in this case, she might symbolize the Coventry-Patmore-induced Victorian ideal of femininity, "the Angel in the House"). However, the fact that it is Ellen who mimes the ominous

[11] In March 2001, Pawłowski's creation received a Fryderyk Award for the Best Polish Music Video of 2000. See www.sfp.org.pl/osoba,0,1,185845,Krzysztof-Pawlowski.html.

concluding line seems to suggest that her confinement is partially over, at least as long as she is free from the vampire's influence.[12]

Let me now move to other aspects of the video's intertextuality. Contrary to *Nosferatu*, it does not use natural locations. Partially filmed in a Warsaw studio, partially created through special effects, the video expertly reenacts events from the film (and the novel it based upon). Rojek's Nosferatu is mostly seen inside his impressive Gothic castle, except for one scene in which he confesses his unrequited love from one of the castle towers. Rojek's dramatic monologue is set against an awe-inspiring (though obviously computer-generated) mountainous landscape and overcast sky lit by flashes of lightning, ironically accentuating the Gothic undertones (Pawłowski once again semi-mocks the Gothic tradition). Treating *Nosferatu* as a point of reference and ignoring the cinematic *Dracula* adaptations that would follow in the next few decades results in a fascinating take on a celebrated story, treated here both with respect and a refreshingly wry sense of humor. Although such a mixture of irony and admiration might initially seem incongruous, it slowly develops coherence. Undoubtedly, "Dla ciebie" is a unique video in the Polish context because Gothicism as a literary/cinematic mode never really gained wider recognition in Poland.[13]

Bad Bunny, "Baticano" (2023), dir. Stillz

The third example I want to bring attention to is "Baticano," a 2023 track by a Puerto Rican rapper, Bad Bunny (Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio), which promoted the artist's fifth solo studio album *Nadie Sabe Lo Que Va a Pasar Mañana* (*Nobody Knows What Will Happen Tomorrow*). In numerous ways, the song differs from the previously scrutinized two. Firstly, it is no longer a love song but a song of empowerment. "Powered by heavy synth riffs accompanying lyrics that address the double standards of institutions, this explicit trap song reinforces the message that no one is exempt from their own shortcomings. In other words, no human being has the right to judge others in the name of Christ" (Raygoza et al. 2023). Matthew Ismael Ruiz (2023) adds that "Baticano" "ruminates on religious hypocrisy and sexual liberation." The very title is "a Puerto Rican pronunciation of »Vaticano«" (Ish Ruiz 2023). The religious undertones are reinforced by a recurring motif of a puppet-shaped pastor who aggressively preaches that all our actions are closely inspected by God (see Ish Ruiz 2023 for details). Apart from the lyrical differences, the track deviates from the rock/pop canon represented by the Pet Shop Boys and Myslovitz, opting for a trap/reggaeton sound instead. Finally, out of the three music videos analyzed here, "Baticano" utilizes the largest number of Gothic intertexts, referring not just to *Nosferatu* but also to Robert Wiene's *Dr. Caligari*, as well as several other Gothic tropes and clichés.

Appropriately released on Halloween 2023, the music video directed by Stillz[14] abounds in Gothic references. The action starts with a scientist (played by the famous American actor Steve Buscemi), clearly modeled on Victor Frankenstein, who brings

[12] I would like to thank the late Professor Dorota Filipczak for her invaluable comments regarding "Dla ciebie."

[13] For more on Polish reception of Gothicism, see Łowczanin 2018.

[14] He is "Bad Bunny's long-time collaborator and one of the most prolific music video directors working in reggaeton today" (Loreto 2023).

his creature to life. However, the revived monster is Count Orlok (Bad Bunny himself). From the outset, Stillz mixes the aesthetics of two canonical Gothic texts (and their future cinematic adaptations): Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. What follows is a recreation of the familiar scene in which Nosferatu casts an eerie shadow on the wall before he accosts his female victim. The location of the next shots switches between the lab, the Gothic castle with pointed arches, a cemetery infested by a group of dancers in skull-shaped masks, as well as the interior of a regular home that turns out to be the scariest setting of all. The domestic space witnesses scenes of violence and abuse (a man beating his wife in front of a painting of Jesus Christ) and utmost hypocrisy (the father covers his son's eyes when two kissing men are shown on TV[15]; however, he fails to do so a few moments earlier when the TV broadcasts a scene of a murder, very much reminiscent of the once-shocking shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, 1960). As locations keep changing, so does Bad Bunny, who undergoes a visual transformation from Count Orlok into Cesare, the somnambulist antagonist of Wiene's *Dr. Caligari*.[16]

Contrary to Bond and more comparably to Pawłowski, Stillz's work relies mostly on interior shots, green-screen compositing and CGI. Nevertheless, advanced technologies are used to faithfully recreate characteristics of the German Expressionist style: "sharp and minimalistic architecture, oblique lines, surreal imagery, and shadow work" (Hernandez 2023). The terrifying, oppressive atmosphere is enhanced by the superimposed images of skulls and all-seeing eyes. Stillz also uses the stock filmic motif of a hand coming out of the grave, typical of the widely understood horror cinema (from vampire- and zombie-themed productions to supernatural dramas such as Brian De Palma's memorable adaptation of Stephen King's *Carrie*, 1976). It is thus even more surprising that all of these Gothic elements are juxtaposed with the heartfelt conclusion in which the Victor Frankenstein character warns his Count Orlok-shaped creature against the cruelty of the outside world and offers him a few words of comfort and reassurance. The Gothic convention is "exploded" again, offering the viewers a semblance of a happy ending (which was not entirely applicable in "Heart" and "Dla ciebie," both music videos trapping their female characters in oppressive Gothic structures and, in Myslovitz's case, leaving the audience uncertain regarding Nosferatu's fate).

Concluding remarks

Obviously, "Heart," "Dla ciebie" and "Baticano" constitute just a fraction of vampire-themed or, more generally, Gothic-oriented music videos, which demonstrates the high Gothic intertextual potential of the form. Simultaneously, they indicate the enduring

[15] Bad Bunny is a well-known ally of the LGBTQ+ community (for more on elements of queer performativity in the rapper's repertoire, see Daniel J. Vázquez Sanabria and Dozandri C. Mendoza 2024). However, using (any) queer motifs in a *Nosferatu*-themed music video should come as no surprise, for Stoker's novel (and numerous other vampire narratives, from Polidori's *The Vampyre*, through Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla," 1872, to Anne Rice's 1976 *Interview with the Vampire*) have been frequently associated with encoded queer messages, the very figure of a vampire considered a queer outsider. Such an analysis remains beyond the scope of the present article. For more on the topic, see, for example, the 2023 collection edited by Amanda Hobson and U. Melissa Anyiwo.

[16] The plot of Wiene's horror centers around the eponymous character and his slave-like servant, Cesare, who commits murders on his behalf.

influence of Bram Stoker's novel, filtered later through the Expressionist sensitivity of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. *Nosferatu*'s legacy lives on; initial controversies notwithstanding, it has become a source of lasting inspiration, as proven not only by Herzog's late 1970s remake but also by the two most recent adaptations, by David Lee Fisher and Robert Eggers, released in 2023 and 2024, respectively. *Nosferatu*-themed music videos show that strong connections between different art forms allow for the continuous expansion or transformation of well-known concepts, which is demonstrated by playing with the Gothic clichés, reinventing the damsel in distress/tyrant binary, adding comicality and mixing elements taken from diverse cultural texts. Therefore, based on the analyzed case studies, it seems justified to claim that the format of music video, being "the amalgam of word, sound, and image," not only enables intertextual analysis but also "initiates innovative readings of familiar motifs" and "transforms the understanding of literature, music, film, and fine arts" (Dobrogoszcz, Handley and Fisiak 2024: 17).

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