

# Performing necrophilia: forms of female dominance in *Kissed* by Lynne Stopkewich, *Nekromantik* and *Nekromantik 2* by Jörg Buttgerreit

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study aims at analysing female necrophilia in relation to female dominance. In order to do so, the theory elaborated by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* on gender performativity and the studies by Harvey Sacks on Category-Bound Activities are herein employed and problematized. Therefore, the paper proposes to look at representations of female necrophilia as “cover-up” performances of gender supremacy. For the purpose of the analysis, three films that explicitly represent female necrophilia have been chosen and investigated: *Kissed* (1996) by Canadian director Lynne Stopkewich, *Nekromantik* (1987) and *Nekromantik 2* (1991) by German director Jörg Buttgerreit.

**KEYWORDS:** female necrophilia; female dominance; devirilization; performativity; Lynne Stopkewich; Jörg Buttgerreit.

This paper investigates the representations of female necrophilia in three thought-provoking films: *Kissed* (1996) by Lynne Stopkewich, *Nekromantik* (1987) and *Nekromantik 2* (1991), both directed by Jörg Buttgerreit. Before turning to the analysis of the above mentioned films, it seems necessary to introduce some key concepts that lay at the basis of the present study. Firstly, the meaning of the term “necrophilia” will be clarified by briefly outlining the history of its origin and usage. Secondly, we will focus on the specific and even more complex phenomenon of female necrophilia. Some light will be shed not only onto the reasons why necrophilia is broadly considered, among all sexual perversions and paraphilias,<sup>1</sup> one of the most revolting, but also on the similarities and differences between female necrophilia and male necrophilia. Thirdly, a section will be devoted to the

<sup>1</sup> According to the American Psychiatric Association (2000: 576), paraphilia is a medical term referencing sexual impulse disorders, or forms of sexual deviance, which include sexual attractions such as paedophilia (an attraction for children) (571), fetishism (an attraction for objects) (569), voyeurism (an attraction for watching sexual activity) (575), and necrophilia (576).

discussion of the proposed methodology which may be considered Butlerian to some extent, although it actually exceeds Butler's own framework. Lastly, a close examination of the three films will be provided.

## 1. INTRODUCTION. NECROPHILIAC WOMEN?

In *Sesso estremo. Pratiche senza limiti nell'epoca cyber* (COOPER 1995: 22-24), which may be considered as the *menabò* of perversions and an effort towards the liberation from cultural taboos, Rev. William Cooper classifies both necrophilia and paedophilia as unacceptable sexual perversions. Such a classification is due to the lack of two main conditions that should characterise any sexual practice, i.e. consent and mutual pleasure. It is difficult, though, to look at necrophilia and paedophilia by merely focusing on consent (or lack of) because of the obvious differences between the two phenomena. For instance, for what concerns paedophilia, minors *could* technically refuse to give consent, but they just do not do it, for many different reasons. In addition, necrophilia is treated as a psychological disorder and is considered by many a "horrible kind of sexual indulgence [that] is so monstrous that the presumption of a psychopathic state is, under all circumstances, justified" (KRAFFT-EBING 1889<sup>4</sup>: 223-224).<sup>2</sup> As suggested by Patricia MacCormack, this is due to the fact that the corpse is "territorialized by forensic medicine and religious ideology" (MACCORMACK 2005-2006). Moreover, "the pathologisation of necrophilia [...] is a Christian rather than a logical clinical one" (*ibid.*) Consequently, necrophilia is considered a taboo in a strictly socio-religious and cultural way, which makes it hard to understand and disentangle. Another aspect that makes the issue even more complicated is that necrophilia has long been thought of as a male-only perversion, specifically concerning neurotic men.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it has

<sup>2</sup> This position is still relevant today, see previous footnote.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'necrophilia' was first used by Joseph Guislain, a Belgian alienist, in a lecture delivered in 1850 and published two years later. He affirmed that "It is within the category of the destructive madmen [*aliénés destructeurs*] that one must situate certain patients to whom I would like to give the name necrophiliacs [*nécrophiles*]" (Cit. in DOWNING 2011: 210). It was only in 1901 that the first extensive forensic medical considerations on necrophilia as a treatable disease were elaborated by Alexis Épaulard, a student of French criminologist Alexandre Lacassagne. His thesis was a medical report of different cases of interactions with dead people: *Vampirisme: Nécrophilie, Nécosadisme, Nécrophagie*. The text is a nosography which catalogues and classifies, based on increasing gravity, cases of non-violent sexual activities with corpses (necrophilia/*la nécrophilie*); cases in which the victim is killed to be turned into the desired corpse and/or the corpse is violently mutilated (necrosadism/*le nécosadisme*); and cases in which parts of the mutilated corpse

been difficult to even talk about necrophiliac women.

Psychiatric treatises have long endorsed the theory that necrophilia is an exclusively male mental disease, and have morally condemned it *tout court*, as evident in Krafft-Ebing's definition. Such an approach can also be observed in psychoanalysis, although in a milder way. Freud, for example, did not categorise necrophiles as insane, since, in his perspective, perversions themselves are linked to a change in sexual object. However, he does deny the possibility of female necrophilia, his thought being a product of the late nineteenth-century imagination. In fact, he claimed that necrophilia is a form of perversion linked to fetishism and that it is consequently bound to an ideal castration of the mother's phallus in childhood (FREUD 1942<sup>2</sup>: 60). Erich Fromm, on the other hand, classified necrophiliac instincts as opposed to biophilia; for this reason he maintained that necrophilia cannot be related to women, since their actual goal is to give birth, which is the biophilic instinct *par excellence* (FROMM 1973).<sup>4</sup> Moving from and then overcoming Freud's theories of the death-drive, Fromm affirmed that necrophilia is a secondary and psychopathological alternative to biophilia, and that the former grows as the development of the latter is stunted.

According to the theoretical discussion, necrophilia indicates, as an umbrella-term, not only sexual intercourses with dead people, but, more in general, a psychological failure in the biologically given instinct of biophilia. In this paper, though, the term "necrophilia" is not used in reference to a general attraction for violence (i.e. the definition of necrophilous given by Erich Fromm); nor it is used to designate a desire for self-destruction (i.e. the idea of death-drive). On the contrary, the term "necrophilia" is herein used to mean "sexual and erotic desire for corpses". For the purpose of the analysis, what is proposed is also an understanding of the necrophilic desire as any kind of desire that implies the eroticization of a corpse,<sup>5</sup> as

are ingested (necrophagy/*la nécrophagie*) (DOWNING 2011: ivi). The book is articulated in general nosographic description-observations of single cases followed by psychological explanations. Epaluard reports eight cases of necrophilia and all of them are cases of male necrophilia.

<sup>4</sup> In *Anatomy of human destructiveness*, Erich Fromm describes necrophilia, in opposition to biophilia, as the life-thwarting syndrome, which refers to the lustful attraction for all that is destructive, mechanical, or dead, manifested in sadistic power operations, greed and total self-absorption.

<sup>5</sup> Here I partially agree with BHAGYASHREE ET. AL. 2015 on the definition of "necrophilia" as mutable situations and acts that range "from simply being in the presence of a corpse to kissing, fondling or performing sexual intercourse or [oral sex] on the body" (8). Yet, an even broader definition could be suggested, since most of the time we are dealing with a sexualization of bodies

well as a dialectical erotic dynamic between a subject and an object of desire. Although much more could be said about the limits and framework of sexual and non-sexual desires, this is an aspect that will not be further elaborated in this context.

While female necrophiles are gradually being included in the debate on necrophilia,<sup>6</sup> this “aberrant deviation” is still strongly attached to a male-centred viewpoint. Several reasons may be provided to explain why, but two of the them stand out as the most compelling. First of all, necrophilic intercourses imply a positional dialectics between object and subject, as Franzini and Grossberg suggest:

They [necrophiliacs] frequently mention the desirability of a partner who is helpless, unresistant, and completely at their mercy. The dead lover never rejects caresses and is always available when required; makes no demands, is never unfaithful, and never rejects you. This lover does not compare your love-making skills with others’, will go along with any sort of kinky sex, and, if things go too far, cannot be harmed and will never file a complaint against you. (FRANZINI, GROSSBERG 1995: 232)

Therefore, in a society that grants a dominant and active position to males and, as a consequence, a passive and sexualized position to females, it can be said that female necrophilia not only transgresses the tabooing boundary between life and death, but it may also be considered a sexual deviancy from the normative gender role dialectics.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, female necrophilia allows a sexual intercourse that does not (generally) imply penetration. Given to a male-oriented understanding of pleasure, in the western world the only sexual act that is considered

that goes far beyond sexual interactions, and includes some forms of voyeurism and scopophilia as well as phantasies.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that more recently, thanks to the access to databases and statistics, necrophilia is now progressively being associated with women too, even though it is still considered a predominantly male sexual deviancy. The male percentage of recorded practicing necrophiles far surpasses the cases of female necrophilia. Homicidal necrophiles (i.e. those who specifically murder to have sex with the dead victim) are still exclusively men. However, much of the available data is still based on a study by Jonathan P. Rosman and Phillip J. Resnick (1989). In his relatively new book, Anil Aggrawal (2011) confirms the male-centric position of the sexual deviancy, although including in his ten categories some additional aberrant female behaviours that may be associated with necrophilia.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. WÄNGGREN 2012: 71, “Female necrophilia then might be seen as not only transgressing boundaries of life and death...but also as transgressing prescribed gender roles”.

credible, valuable, desirable or acceptable is one that involves penetration. Seemingly, the most frequent query regarding female necrophilia is how it can actually be accomplished. In the heteronormative framework, passive or minor roles in sexual activities are hard to accept from a male point of view. Consequently, it also discourages intercourse between a passive male subject and an active female instigator, such as necrophilia, without questioning the subconscious root of this concern. Underlying this query is the assumption that penetration is necessary in order to make sexual intercourse possible. However, the absence of an erection does not mean the absence of sexual activity, as Karen Greenlee, who was convicted of necrophilia, explains:

It doesn't matter to me, but anyone adept sexually shouldn't have to ask. People have this misconception that there has to be penetration for sexual gratification, which is bull! The most sensitive part of a woman is the front area anyway and that is what needs to be stimulated. Besides, there are different aspects of sexual expression: touchy-feely, 69, even holding hands.<sup>8</sup> (MORTON 1990)

This testimony sheds light onto how other types of sexual intercourse that do not include penetration are still neglected. This is even more evident when dealing with sexual perversions that present a “double degree” of transgression, such as necrophilia. Since necrophilia is seen as a taboo and a perversion compared to normative gender positionality, explicit references to female necrophilia in literature and art are scarce. In light of this, when female necrophilia is made evident, it is peculiar and worth of analysis since these manifestations turn the “inexpressible” into something that is finally expressed, even more so than when male necrophilia is represented.

## 2. PERFORMING NECROPHILIA

According to Judith Butler,<sup>9</sup> gender identity can be regarded as a performative product embedded in a network of social interactions of actions. Within

<sup>8</sup> *The Unrepentant Necrophile*, Karen Greenlee's interview, published by Feral House and made by Jim Morton available online at <http://www.nokilli.com/sacto/karen-greenlee.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> In the preface to the second edition, Butler (1999<sup>2</sup>) states: “performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration [...] The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body” (16).

this framework, artistic performances of necrophilia can be seen under a different light. Masculinity and femininity are indeed performative: people enact a socially prescribed role built upon norms that follow a pre-existent ‘script’, since the very beginning of their lives. In *Undoing Gender*, Butler defines gender as follows:

Gender is not exactly what one “is” nor is it precisely what one “has.” Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes.[...] Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized. (BUTLER 2004: 44)

The naturalization of feminine and masculine categories within the performance involves, as a consequence, a role-play in which female subordination to male dominance is the *expected* way of performing the norm. In other words, the only acceptable way to perform gender, according to pre-existent social scripts, or what Butler calls the “norm”, is in the *male dominance – female passivity* positional order.

In order to elaborate this aspect further, some remarks from Harvey Sacks’ *Lectures on Conversation*, partially collected and posthumously edited by Gail Jefferson (SACKS 1992), should be taken into account. Sack’s main concern is related to the dynamics of social categories. His most significant contribution is the elaboration of a new methodology, later known as “Membership Categorization Analysis” (MCA).<sup>10</sup> According to Sacks, societies use categories in order to classify and assign specific identities to their members; these categories have a significant cognitive impact on the formation of the individuals, since they classify and generate information about society members (DELL’AVERSANO 2018: 52). Consequently, people are supposed to perform a limited range of socially understandable acts. Closely related to MCA is the concept of “Category-Bound Activities”

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion on this topic, see an article published by Carmen Dell’Aversano (2018) on the first issue of this journal. This is a key-notion for the already mentioned considerations offered by Judith Butler on gender performativity. Even though not explicitly mentioned in *Gender Trouble*, the notions of performativity and performance of social acts have their origins in the dramaturgical theory of social interactions proposed by Erving Goffman, Sack’s doctoral supervisor, cf. GOFFMAN 1963.

(CBA) (SACKS 1992: 1, 241), i.e. the activities that a member of a given category is assigned and supposed to do in order to be included in that category. In this perspective, an individual that is supposedly part of a given category and is found to be performing an activity which contradicts his/her own assigned CBAs will be automatically classified as strange, deviant from the norm and as an outsider.

Within this framework, female dominance is highly problematic. Along with race, class, nationality and other social constructs, gender identity is among the most relevant categories within a (western) social system. Male and female gender identities are bound to a set of CBAs revolving around the male dominance/female subservience pattern. In this positional order, female dominance negates the category of femininity and eradicates the complementary category of masculinity. The artistic expression of this problematic concept is filtered by the same reasons of its culturally disruptive and uncanny disposition.

An explanatory example can be the prototypical character of the *femme fatale*. The subjectification of the woman here intertwines with the objectification of the dominated man. The dynamics is expressed through a monstrous woman who deprives the man of his virility. From the character of Circe in the *Odissey*<sup>11</sup> onwards, common representations of the *femme fatale* (“fatal”, indeed!) as a monster have been used to express and normalize deviant female authoritative behaviours in literature. This camouflage is particularly interesting and evident in literary and cinematic representations of female necrophilia.

Artistic representations of perversions such as necrophilia, that positionally subjectify women in a usurped position (as a subject of erotic desire), share with the representations of the *femme fatale* the necessity to express in a controlled or neutralized form the reversed dynamic of female dominance. Therefore, just as the *noir* and dangerously romantic women of literary representation, female necrophiles can be seen as expressing the paradoxical, unutterable paradigm of female dominance. The necrophile is even more interesting than the *femme fatale*, though, since their representation links female dominance and the perverted dynamics of sexual and gender subversion. Necrophilia, as said earlier, is, *per se*, a taboo, a

<sup>11</sup> See GRILLI 2012: 171-183 for a detailed discussion on Circe as a *femme fatale* and on the relation between this character and female dominance.

practice that is seen as deviant and consequently pathologized and/or punished as a crime. A basic premise may be useful here: the arts in general are a fruitful site for taboo exploration and violation, since they are normally conceived as an acceptable venue for deviances, for example a place where taboos can be broken without any consequences. This is why necrophilia can be included in literary discourse, although it is widely considered a taboo. Depending on the perspective of the narrating voice, it can be represented in several and sometimes even contrasting ways.

The link between artistic representations of female necrophilia and female dominance may be exemplified by looking at how artistic representations of female necrophilia reinforce an understanding of female dominance as being deviant and express such a position to the extreme. In other words, whenever female necrophilia is represented in artistic performances as a taboo, another form of inexpression is hidden, that of female dominance. As a consequence, the necrophiliac performance, where the actors involved are the dead person and the living person, hides the less visible but still problematic perversion of normative gender positionality. Nevertheless, in the representations of female necrophilia the *impasse* created by female dominance is neutralized in different but complementary ways. This assumption is even more evident when dealing with two different representations of necrophilia as pure evil or 'softer' female necrophilia. However, the opposition is only apparent. As we will see, two are the strategies of normalization employed for representing female dominance hidden in female necrophilia.

We can now turn to the three necrophilic performances as visible in three art films, chosen for the analysis. In the discussed films, as we will see, two are the kinds of necrophilic women being represented. It is also interesting to notice that the films are directed by a woman and a man, and that the stories are narrated from the perspective of a woman and a man narrator/character. The directors' backgrounds have also clearly influenced the construction of their stories. It is crucial in our analysis that the point of view of the internal narrator is a female voice, in the first case, and a male voice in the second<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> The reference here is to the narratological categories of internal and external focalization as applied to the analysis of films, cf. GENETTE 1972, leaning in the direction of the Todorovian information-based model who describes internal focalization as the product of N=P in which "N" stands for the Narrator, "P" indicates the characters of the narration, and the symbol "=" indicates a variation in the amount of information known.



In the first case, there is a first-person narrator who tells her story from the very beginning. Therefore, the viewers are assured that their perspective overlaps with that of the narrator. In the other two films, there is no explicit internal focalization, although we are sure that the story is filtered through one of the protagonists' eyes and psychology, given the use of the camera and that of flashbacks and dialogues. The films, as mentioned, are *Kissed*, by Lynne Stopkewich and *Nekromantik* and *Nekromantik 2* by Jörg Buttgerit. These films were chosen because, contrary to other films on necrophilia, they do not include any moral condemnation. On the contrary, they provide a faithful representation of necrophilia's multiplicity. In fact, the three films represent both the complexities of necrophilia and its excesses. Indeed, they may be considered as a product of the "Cinema of Abjection", using a Kristevian concept, meaning that they make the audience feel disgusted and compelled<sup>13</sup> at the same time.

The works by the two directors are clearly different. First of all, they are not produced in the same country, but in Canada and Germany, also at different times. The cinematic influences and styles are clearly diverse too. The analysis that follows aims at highlighting two ways of problematizing female dominance and showing how representations of female necrophilia strategically cover and neutralize female dominance. However, in order to be analysed, the films cannot be seen as separate from the contexts in which they were born. As a matter of fact, before discussing the crucial narrative elements included in the films, it is necessary to briefly summarize their ideological and political contexts as well as provide some biographical information about the two directors.

### 3. LYNNE STOPKEWICH, *KISSED* (1996)

The first film considered for the analysis is *Kissed* by Lynne Stopkewich. Stopkewich is a Canadian director, born in 1964 in Montréal, Québec, also known for *Suspicious River* (2000) and *The Atwood Stories* (2003). Despite being her first feature film, dated 1996, *Kissed* is Stopkewich's most famous one. Initially conceived as Stopkewich's thesis feature at the University of British Columbia, started when the soon to become director was only 22 years old, the film was defined by Kalli Paakspuu (2007), in a book devoted to some great Canadian film directors, as "darkly feminist" (385). Her films

<sup>13</sup> See HALLE 2003 for this definition applied to Buttgerit's films.

were said to be influenced by Bergman's narrative experiments, Lynch's films and the Gothic novel, especially due to the fact that they "feature complex and contradictory female characters in narratives of psychological realism" (*ibid.*). However, Stopkewich's films appear to be a soft-core depiction of the tension between aggressive evil and female vulnerability. The influence of her predecessors, whose spirit is close to that of the third wave of Canadian feminism,<sup>14</sup> is evident. These influences do not make Stopkewich's film wholly revolutionary,<sup>15</sup> but one relevant aspect is that hers is the first attempt to represent female necrophilia in a way that does not frame this perversion as the result of women's evilness.

Stopkewich's encounter with feminism is indeed quite controversial, as pointed out by Linda Williams in her review of *Suspicious River*. Here she describes the unique quality of Stopkewich's films that is her cautious choice of women-centred stories,<sup>16</sup> although many critics judged her characters as being too weak. As for *Kissed*, for example, Stopkewich said that she was impressed by an extremely explicit interview with Karen Greenlee, an apprentice embalmer convicted of necrophilia in Sacramento in 1979.<sup>17</sup> She therefore thought of a possible adaptation after reading Barbara Gowdy's (1992) short novel *We So Seldom Look On Love*, based on Karen Greenlee's story.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the film's plot was inspired by Gowdy's novel, although it is also quite different and considered by some as a pale "transmutation". The opinion may be due to a late-nineties widespread tendency

<sup>14</sup> PINTERICS 2001 and SNYDER 2008 on the birth and spread of the third-wave feminism and specifically on Canadian feminism see NEWMAN 2012. To be remembered that in 1994 the Fifth Column, a Canadian all-female experimental post-punk band from Toronto, recorded the song *All women are bitches*, following the reclamation of derogatory terms, still used in television programs by English speakers, see MUSCIO 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia MacCormack (2005-2006) defines Stopkewich film as a mainstream example of necrophilia. However, it is hard to accept such a *tranchant* judgement, since the film seems to have many distinctive features. What is undoubtable, though, is that it depicts a soft form of necrophilia and has some evident *clichés* that are, nevertheless, a conscious choice forced by the hostile and male-centred industry of Canadian and American cinema.

<sup>16</sup> WILLIAMS 2001: 54. Stopkewich indeed was about to adapt many other feminist books, such as some stories by Patricia Highsmith and a short novel by Alice Munro for Shaftesbury Film's planned anthology series *The Munro Stories* (PARPART 2010: 60n3).

<sup>17</sup> See PAAKSPUU 2007, 385ss, and in Karen Greenlee's interview (MORTON 1990), she described her preference for younger men, what sexual acts she would perform with their bodies, as well as her attraction for the smells of blood and death. She described herself as a 'morgue rat' and considered necrophilia an addiction.

<sup>18</sup> In addition, the title of the novel is taken from a verse of the *Ode on necrophilia* written by Frank O'Hara, cf. O'HARA 1974: 122.

to point out all the shortcomings in the book-to-film adaptation efforts.<sup>19</sup> However, we cannot but agree with Lee Parpart (2010) when she argues that *Kissed* is a “mix of mainstream delivery and subversive subject matter, even if Stopkewich’s portrayal of Sandra arguably dilutes certain aspects of Gowdy’s source text” (51). It may be argued that what is overly weak is not Sandra’s representation as a pleasant female character,<sup>20</sup> but her being in a monogamous relationship. Such a choice, made for narrative closure and normalization, is overall inconsistent with the spirit of the film and the general topic.

### 3.1 PLOT AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

*Kissed* (1:05’45”) stars Molly Parker as Sandra Larson, a young woman whose obsession with death leads her to study embalming at a mortuary school. There she starts to have sexual intercourse with human bodies. Peter Outerbridge stars as Matt, a medicine student who develops romantic feelings for Sandra and must learn to accept her sexual tastes. In the end, he decides to kill himself in order to be “truly loved by her”.

Sandra Larson is portrayed as fascinated by the entire sensory experience surrounding death: its touch, smell and look. The film opens with a flashforward to the end scene, showing Sandra while accompanying Matt’s dead body into the ambulance. It is then followed by a flashback of Sandra as a child, looking for dead animals in the woods and performing ritualistic burials. We can see Sandra smelling and feeling the body of the animals and performing funeral rituals, in a way that may recall some Dionysian habits. The flashback shapes Sandra’s sexual and gendered identity as that of a necrophile since a very young age. Moreover, through internal focalization, we know that the protagonist and the narrator of the story are the same person. We do see Sandra’s life through Sandra’s eyes. This choice is extremely important, since it presents the deviant condition of necrophilia

<sup>19</sup> The theory of adaptation as “repetition without replication” has only recently been used in film studies, especially thanks to the work by Linda Hutcheon. She offered a theory of adaptation freed from all the prejudices of both cinema and literary critics, by pointing out that in the intermediary passage there is and will always be a “double process of interpreting and creating something new”, cf. HUTCHEON 2006: 20.

<sup>20</sup> Explicitly stated by Stopkewich in an interview in which she says: “Reading a story about a girl who has sex with dead bodies is one thing; watching her climb up on a gurney and do the deed is something totally different. The audience had to like Sandra enough to stay with her for 90 minutes. They had to care enough about her to go on this journey with her” (quoted in PARPART 2010: 49).

as normality, thus subverting the paradigm of normality itself and questioning the heteronormative order. Apparently, the archaeological flashback on Sandra's childhood is both linked to the building of her sexuality and to the reconstruction of a typological psychiatric *iter*, that of a necrophile-type, observed since its beginning (in fact, Sandra *has always been* a necrophile). Paakspuu (2007) writes that "the internal voice is used to draw us with gravitational force into a psychological realism that is deviant, and which forces the audience to negotiate the subject matter carefully" (387). In one of the first scenes from her youth, Sandra is at a party. She looks clearly bored while other girls are playing the spin the bottle game. This scene signifies a fracture between what is and what is not considered normal. In fact, not only Sandra refuses to join the classic *rite de passage* contrary to the other young ladies at the party, but she is also seen sitting in a corner, drinking from a bottle, in a proper but different way compared to her female friends. It is at this point that she meets Carol, a new friend who apparently shares the same perversion of death. However, she does not go as far as accepting Sandra's necrophilic attitudes towards animals. So much so that, during the celebration of a ritual for a dead animal at which she partakes, Carol ends up running away when she sees Sandra rubbing some blood on herself, mistakenly thinking that it is the animal's blood, although it is actually menstrual blood. This results in a *mélange* of the two notions of blood, seen both as a symbol of procreation and a symbol of death.

Sandra's role may be understood as anti-Snowwhite because of her physical appearance, and as reminiscent of the great Goddesses from Greek mythology. Her childhood spent in the woods at night reminds us of Artemis hunting in the forest. This element is crucial in the construction of her character, that, from beginning to end, makes the equation between female dominance and ancestral deity quite clear. Her relationship with Matt also resonates with the relationships that the ancient goddesses had with *pare-droi* in Greek mythology. In fact, Sandra's necrophilia is strictly linked to a vision of the primordial superiority of women, who have the power to give birth, and, most importantly, to lead to death.

As a young woman, Sandra gets a job at Wallis Funeral Home, first as a general assistant, then progressing to become an embalmer. During her studies, we further understand Sandra's infatuation with the integrity of the body. It must be noted that such an obsession with integrity is one of the main features differentiating this film from *Nekromantik*, as later

discussed. The protagonist is obsessed with the body in its entirety, as visible in a scene where she reassembles a dead mouse and then smells it. The body is indeed considered by Sandra as quasi-divine.

While studying at university to become an embalmer, she has with Matt her first heteronormative relationship. Sandra does not hide her necrophilia and Matt finds it compelling. The first time they meet at his apartment, he compares Sandra to the protagonist of *Wild Destiny*, some sort of a Wonder Woman, which is certainly in line with Sandra's dominant personality. We do not know much about Matt, aside from the fact that he took a gap year from university, due to a personal crisis. His character is quite pale and completely dependent on Sandra's point of view.

Crucial to the understanding of the film is the scene where Matt and Sandra have a sexual intercourse (40'30"-44'26"), especially if we compare it to the scene when Sandra has sex with a dead body (45'15"-48'49"). One main difference can be noticed if we look at the colours: Matt's yellow smoky and claustrophobic apartment contrasts with the bright, blue and white, crematory room. Stopkewich (1996) herself describes the use of light as follows:

Darkness too, plays a part if only to differentiate from the 'light' of Sandra's experience. Due to societal tendencies to view the subject as morbid, and to avoid heavy gothic overtones, we approached the character of Sandra as a child of light (and by association) of goodness (12).



FIGURES 1 and 2. Frames from Lynne Stopkewich, *Kissed*, 1996, 43'20" and 48'30".

Sandra's expressions of pleasure (or lack of) are quite significant too. Her bored and embarrassed face during Matt's cunnilingus is juxtaposed with her joyful expression of pleasure when having sex with corpses at the funeral home. The look on her face clearly shows which one she prefers.

Moreover, by experiencing the film through Sandra's perspective, we perceive the heteronormative sex with Matt as disturbing and disgusting. Conversely, the necrophilic intercourse looks pleasant. This use of necrophilia, as Lisa Downing (2017) states, "is itself a powerful strategy for refusing positivistic model of sexual identity and heteronormative intercourse, and moreover is a transgressive twist on the cliché of the dowdy woman who transforms herself into a vamp" (21-22).

In using necrophilia, Stopkewich tries to disrupt the traditional gendering of desire. She therefore perverts mainstream heterosexual norms that confine women to passive roles and positions while disentangling necrophilia and perversions in general (fetishism in particular) from the durable psychoanalytical assumption that these are exclusively male peculiarities. In Lisa Downing's (2017) words, "Stopkewich's film innovates by casting a queer eye on heterosexual ambition perverting socially meaningful sexed relations as conventional gender positions" (23).

Downing's statement is questionable. If, on the one hand, through internal focalization, Stopkewich manages to destabilize the point of view of the spectator and avoids that the viewer experiences the necrophile act from a judgmental position of aberration, on the other hand she does not subvert conventional gender positions. The internal focalization on necrophilia and Stopkewich's soft depiction of Sandra's character is apparently mild. In so doing, female dominance is still represented as deviance from the norm. Female dominance is conceptualized as a form of divinization of the woman, depicted as a goddess from the very beginning of her life. As mentioned earlier, Sandra is made similar to young Artemis in her childhood and to a modern goddess of light (as proposed by Stopkewich herself) when she turns into an adult. The equivalence (woman as goddess) is apparently positive, but it actually hides the crucial negation of the category of femininity. In Stopkewich's film, female necrophilia is not framed as evilness, but equates to deity, which is nonetheless a non-human condition. Stopkewich's filmic necrophilia stands out as an expression of the inexpressible, i.e. of female dominance, which is neutralized and conceptualized as a form of divinity. For this reason, female necrophilia functions to both cover and express female dominance. It is represented and performed by an actress, the necrophile, that is not characterized as a pervert because of her sexual goal, but because of her superiority which is built, in this case, as that of a deity.

#### 4. JÖRG BUTTGEREIT, *NEKROMANTIK* AND *NEKROMANTIK 2*

The films analysed in this section are two works by experimental and political German film director Jörg Buttgereit: *Nekromantik* (1987) and its sequel *Nekromantik 2* (1991). The two works share the artistic and ideological concerns usually associated with the auteurs of the Young German Cinema and the New German Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s: more specifically, Volker Schlöndorff and Hans Jürgen Syberberg in the first generation and Werner Herzog and Rainer Werner Fassbinder in the second generation. However, Buttgereit's films are also in line with the "New Wave of horror production" (HALLE 2003: 282),<sup>21</sup> well-known in Germany in the 1980s and 1990s,<sup>22</sup> following the opalescence of horror production during the Second World War and the immediate Post-War period, and revitalized thanks to Andreas Schnaas, Olaf Ittenbach and Jörg Buttgereit himself. Buttgereit's early film career ranged across genres, from parody monster and super-hero shorts to mock-rockumentaries set in the West Berlin punk scene. He is celebrated both in and outside Germany as the king of the German splatter film.<sup>23</sup> The political climate at the time when *Nekromantik* was released in West Germany was an extremely conservative one. *Nekromantik* was produced on a low budget and shot entirely on Super-8mm. The two films are sensibly different since they were made before and after the fallen of the Wall, a moment that marked significant political transformation, and inevitably influenced the spirit of the films. *Nekromantik 2* is indeed much less conservative than its predecessor and it is filmed in a noticeably vivid Berlin. The first film privileges dark colours and little lighting in the main sexual scenes, also through allusions, and underlines this by the strident usage of classical music, composed by Hermann Kopp. In both films, the choice of colours is extremely relevant. As Buttgereit himself described his films in an interview, the first *Nekromantik* plays with all the nuances of green while *Nekromantik 2* uses

<sup>21</sup> All these directors have many elements in common: they are all self-taught, they shoot on super 8, with low budgets, and are supported by a leftist cultural milieu. They are based in Berlin, Munich and Hamburg.

<sup>22</sup> This opinion is actually debated. Kris Vander Lugt (2013) affirms that the lack of horror production in German Cinema may be linked to the fact that "Horror was not so much *absent* in the period between 1945 and 1989 as it was *rendered* absent in film criticism" (161).

<sup>23</sup> It must be added that Buttgereit does not define his films as horror films but as splatter films. In *Corpse fucking art*, the making-of documentary of *Nekromantik*, *Der Tödesking* and *Nekromantik 2*, he asserts that his film could not be defined as horror because in horror films "es gibt keine Romantischen Szenen" ("there are no romantic scenes").

much more yellow; as a consequence, the impact of the two films is antipodal. While *Nekromantik* is darker and allusive, *Nekromantik 2* seems more explicit and loose. We cannot but agree with Kris Vander Lugt (2013) when she describes *Nekromantiks* as “less a horror film than a bizarre twist on splatter, schlock, or exploitation, with some elements of soft-core porn” (166). Buttgerreit himself retrospectively coined the phrase “corpse-fucking art”<sup>24</sup> to describe his production, whose evident goal is to “construct itself as the other—and perhaps the antidote—to bourgeois sensibility” (167).

#### 4.1 PLOT AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Since the two plots are considerably dense, this first section includes an analytical and quite schematic summary, while the second part focuses on the analysis and discussion of some scenes.

*Nekromantik* (1:11’16”) concentrates on Rob Schmadtke, a man who works for “Joe Säuberungsaktion”, a company that removes bodies from public areas and cleans up after traffic accidents. This job gives him the opportunity to pursue his full-time hobby, necrophilia, together with his girlfriend Betty. One day Rob comes back home with a gift for his partner, i.e. the corpse of an unnamed gardener, found rotting in a pond, that will soon become his new obsession. Rob and Betty engage in a *ménage à trois* with the dead body. However, Rob’s incapability to keep his job is a pivotal point towards the second part of the narrative. The day he gets fired, he informs Betty of his termination. After criticising him for his failure, as well as for his inability to stand up for himself, she leaves and takes the corpse with her. Rob attempts suicide with pills and whiskey. He then begins to drift into a dream in which he emerges from a garbage bag in a partially decayed state. When he wakes up, he tries to have sex with a prostitute in a cemetery but fails to perform sexually. In response to the prostitute laughing at him, he kills her and has sex with her dead body. The film ends with Rob’s grisly suicide, in which he stabs himself while ejaculating. In the closing scene, a foot in stockings and high heels, belonging to a mysterious character seen digging up Rob’s grave, alludes to the film’s sequel featuring a female necrophile.

In *Nekromantik 2* (1:42’41”), Monika, a nurse, exhumes Rob’s body, brings it home and starts a relationship with his corpse. Not long after that she

<sup>24</sup> Cf. note 43.



meets Mark, a porn film dubber, with whom she tries to have an ordinary romantic relationship. Because of her new relationship with Mark, Monika decides to get rid of Rob's body. She therefore cuts him into pieces to throw him out, but saves his head and genitals in the refrigerator. In another scene, while having sex with Mark, whose hands are bound to the bed, she cuts his head and replaces it with Rob's. Monika is finally shown climaxing, which clears out any ambiguity about her sexual identity. In the last scene, a doctor congratulates Monika on her pregnancy.

Before analysing the filmographic elements of these two films, it must be clarified that the necrophilic performance changes depending on the viewpoint of the narrator. It could be argued that in *Nekromantik 2* the voice narrating the story is Monika's, because of her being the necrophilic protagonist. Technically, though, there is no first-person narrator nor a focalization on Monika's viewpoint is offered. The two points of view, Monika's and Mark's, are indeed intertwined and almost equally represented. Despite Monika's central role, long scenes are dedicated to Mark's fears, perplexities and dreams. For this reason, it is safe to say that the movie does not provide a unique internal focalizer. Therefore, in the present discussion of female necrophilia, the scenes where Mark expresses his opinions are used for the purpose of the analysis.

Patricia MacCormack (2007) states that both *Nekromantik* films present "complex and intriguing examples of a variety of forms of necrophilia" (208), in strong contrast with the domestic environment. In this particular setting they "introduce practicalities of death and necrophilia, such as preservation, decomposition and abject fluid byproducts" (MacCormack 2007: 201). This creates a win-win situation, since the deviation from ordinary life is perceived both in comparison with the setting, and at the basic ideological level of necrophilic perversion. Conversely, in *Kissed* there is no "normal" domestic reality, because the social background is perceived only through Sandra's eyes, as hers would be the norm; in fact, in *Kissed*, the social context is made of her necrophilic friends (Mr. Wallis and Jan, the mortuary janitor) and Matt. Emblematically, we can compare such a representation to a scene in *Nekromantik 2*, in which Buttgerit, on the contrary, tries to represent a society made of necrophiles that are detached from social norms. In this scene, we see Monika and her friends having a sleepover party, where they watch a fierce documentary of a butchered seal. The viewers face the contrast between everyday life and

necrophilic perversion when Marks appears unannouncedly and tries to sit with Monika and her friends. Soon the group leaves, since they recognize Mark as an outsider. In so doing, Buttgereit intensifies the hiatus between “normal and perverted” societies, with an evident voyeuristic self-satisfaction.

Let us now focus on Betty, the co-protagonist in *Nekromantik*. The character is entirely built on the *femme fatale* – that is to say the dowdy woman prototype. This is the main difference between her and Sandra in *Kissed*. The first time the audience meets her is while she is bathing in a bathtub full of water and blood, while singing and caressing her body. In the meanwhile, Rob is watching a documentary on arachnophobia and how to fight phobias in general.<sup>25</sup> If we analyse this scene and decode the embedded message, we could firstly deduce that the whole film deals with phobias as well. Secondly, the scene seems to allude to the fact that psychoanalysis is referenced throughout the film. This is evident, for instance, at the beginning of the sex scene, when Betty and Rob cut a steel pipe, attach it to the corpse and put a condom over it, so that Betty can be penetrated by an erected penis during the *ménage à trois*. Phallic penetration and the idea of castration seem to be the subtext underpinning the whole film. Both lead us back to the Freudian idea of necrophilia as fetishism and as the result of the maternal phallus’s castration.

It is important to underline that in the two *Nekromantik* films, the two women protagonists are the subjects who play an active role in the sexual intercourse with the dead body. In the first film, we see Rob licking the eyes of the cadaver and sexualizing parts of the corpse. Later on, though, he takes a more passive role in the threesome compared to Betty, who seems to be the active subject. This is also true for *Nekromantik 2*, where Monika is the only character having sexual intercourses with the cadaver and with Mark as a dominant mistress. This is evident in the photos on the films’ posters, both featuring the two dominant women (Betty in the first case and Monika in the second) and the cadaver, thus excluding the male characters altogether.

Another worth noticing aspect is that the corpses in the films are rotting and decaying, which points to the lack of potential identity. Their identities

<sup>25</sup> We may add that the subtitle of the film is another element of interest: “Ein Film über die Liebe zum Menschen, und was für ihm übrig bleibt”, a film on human’s love and on its remains.

are only hinted at by means of flashbacks, suggesting the idea that death is linked to de-subjectification. Well displayed in the house where part of the action in *Nekromantik* takes place are lines of (unspecified) jars containing organs in formaldehyde, in a necro-sadistic spirit that is perceivable in both *Nekromantiks*. It can be argued, then, that the focus on dismembered parts of the body is strongly linked to a voyeuristic spirit, that does not envision the integrity of the body as vehicle of identity and desire.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, by sexualizing body parts, the idea of de-subjectification is further suggested.

In his films, Buttgereit included butchered and dismembered animals. The point of view from which they are seen is voyeuristic and coincides with that of the protagonists. Consequently, they are seen in the same way by the audience. Some explicit images in this sense include Rob's dissection of Betty's cat and the memory of his father butchering a rabbit in *Nekromantik*; the butchered-seal film that Monika and her friends watch at the sleepover party in *Nekromantik 2*. Conversely, in *Kissed*, Sandra is obsessed with the integrity of the body since her youth. In one scene, she brings home a dead mouse and reassembles it after a classroom dissection. In the German films, necrophilia is strictly connected to a form of necro-sadism, used to forecast and symbolize, both implicitly and explicitly, the female protagonists' lust crimes against their male counterparts. Thus, the implicit message embedded in the films is that necrophilia is not limited to the necrophilic act but goes far beyond it. It is therefore conceived as monstrosity.

The perceived castration anxiety<sup>27</sup> and the objectification of male bodies, embedded in female necrophilia and female dominance overall, in a male-oriented perspective, creates an explicit connection between a man's impotence and his de-subjectification, equating the good man to the dead man. Rob himself seems to embody the fear of castration, de-subjectification and consequent objectification, through his pale and

<sup>26</sup> Cf. "This is the first signifier that the pleasure these two achieve from corpses is not altogether contingent on mimicry of banal sexual acts with a perverse object choice, but rather perversion which celebrates the body as dis- or re-organised, a body beyond traditional organisation. but rather perversion which celebrates the body as dis- or re-organised, a body beyond traditional organisation." MACCORMACK 2007: 210.

<sup>27</sup> The concept of "castration anxiety" was first theorized by Freud and then integrated by Jacques Lacan. The concept refers to the fear of loss or damage to their genitalia that boys between the ages of 3 and 5 experience as the threat of a punishment coming from the father for incestuous sexual feelings toward the mother cf. FREUD 1923; LACAN 1956-1957.

fearful role in the entire film. This is also evident from the story seemingly being constructed as a Girardian mimetic desire (the internal one, GIRARD 1961), in which the dead body is the internal mediator, Betty is the object of desire and Rob is the subject. Indeed, positing the body as the mediator gives us the opportunity to easily foresee the outcome of the story, in which Rob decides to kill himself in order to gain Betty's attention and love. Therefore Betty, who is the agent in this love triangle, acts as the object of desire and the indirect agent of Rob's murder at once. The film ends with what the audience might think is Betty's foot digging into Rob's grave in the last frame, thus proving her success as a dominant, although dangerous, female character. The epilogue is not too far from what is seen in *Kissed*, where Matt decides to kill himself in order to be truly loved by Sandra. Male suicide seems to be the basic condition for dominance in both films. Nevertheless, in Sandra's case, her desire is linked to a strictly necrophilic behaviour. She therefore takes no conscious responsibility for Matt's death.

In *Nekromantik 2* such a mimetic desire disappears. It is, in fact, replaced by Monika's lust murder of Mark. The audience therefore faces two different representations of female necrophilia and female dominance in general. While, in *Nekromantik*, necrophilia is filtered through Rob's point of view, in *Nekromantik 2*, it is explicitly brought to the screen through Monika's acts. In both cases, though, dominance is presented as a scary condition not only for its deviancy, but also due to its possible outcomes. Female dominance is problematized in Buttgereit's films as women's superiority over men and, overall, as a condition that scares and pushes them towards death. As a matter of fact, Kris Vander Lugt describes Rob as "soft-spoken and cowardly, sexually dysfunctional, scrawny, and weak—a real loser" (VANDER LUGT 2013: 169). The idea of male de-virilization is pretty clear in Betty's words, when Rob tells her that he lost his job (38'17"-39'25"):

R: They've thrown me out.

B: Thrown you out? Fired? What for? Why?

R: Trouble with Bruno.

B: Trouble with Bruno, and they simply threw you out? Why didn't you stand up for yourself? Ah? Don't just hang in there like a wet blanket? I bet you stood there in front of your boss, staring at your feet, you wimp! Answer me!

R: I cannot say anything.

B: No, God, you're unbelievable. Do you want me to go out and work for you?

Shall I go searching for corpses? How long do you think that's going to last [the corpse of the ménage à trois]? Look at his present state! I'll tell you something, if I meet a guy with money, then you won't see me around here anymore. I am not going to waste the best time of my life here, with you, in this hole.

R: Stop it!

B: Not, not at all!<sup>28</sup>



FIGURE 3. Frame from Jörg Buttgerreit, *Nekromantik*, 1987, 38'46", (screenshot is mine).

Betty classifies Rob's behaviour as unmanly, his passivity as "unglaublich". Her conclusion is that he cannot stand up for himself and give her what she needs. She cannot play the role of the man for him. The consequence of this pivotal twist is that Betty leaves Rob's house while he is away. Upon his return, he finds a letter from her in which she once again underlines how she cannot spend the best years of her life with him. Rob spirals into depression and kills himself.

In *Nekromantik 2*, the feeling of lack in manly power is embodied by Monika, who embodies the *femme fatale* prototype. A tragic irony pervades the whole film since the beginning. First, Mark finds Rob's penis in Monika's refrigerator and then they engage in bondage so that she can take pictures of him tied upside down. Such a "humiliation" lets the audience predict the outcome and foresee Mark's death in the last scene. Mark

<sup>28</sup> The translation of the dialogues from German into English is mine.

himself has a strange feeling about Monika, as the dialogue with his former girlfriend shows (1:12'16"-1:14'24"):

E: How are you?

M: I don't know, that's why I wanted to talk with you. I met a girl a short time ago, and people in love are supposed to be happy, but somehow, she bewilders me.

E: That's part of the game, isn't it?

M: Well, not quite. She's really nice but... I think she's somehow perverse.

E: You, of all people, you call somebody perverse. I thought that in your job one gets used to seeing everything.

M: Nothing like her. She doesn't want me to move while having sex and takes strange pictures of me.

After this scene, Mark gets drunk with a male friend, a stereotypical type of male bonding. He then falls asleep and dreams of Monika kissing his head from his half-buried body, thus prophesying his death. As mentioned before, Rob too dreams of being partially decomposed and dancing with a living woman. In both cases, dreams signify prophetic imagery and personal fears.



FIGURE 4. Frame from Jörg Buttgerit, *Nekromantik 2*, 1991, 01:12'00" (screenshot is mine)

In addition, a metaphorical connection can be drawn between the two semantic forms of the verb “to die”. While the first refers to the literal meaning of the verb, the second holds a sexual overtone, and points to the *little death* metaphor – used to symbolize the orgasm – which comes from the French expression *la petite mort*. This is evident in the last scenes of both *Nekromantiks*, even though they are apparently antithetical. In the first film, Rob kills himself while ejaculating, making this connection explicit through the mixture of sperm and blood coming out of his penis. In *Nekromantik 2*, right before the final scene, Monika takes a knife from behind the bed where she is having sex with Mark and cuts his head. Then she replaces it with Rob’s. The replacement of one head with the other can be understood as a substitution of identity, consequently confirming Monika’s necrophilic perversion. Despite her attempt to have a normal relationship, she is undoubtedly unable to accomplish that. Mark’s head being replaced with Rob’s is also the climax of the process of de-subjectification of Mark’s body and its re-semantisation. Finally, what points to the idea of the *petite mort* is that, in the very last scene, Monika is at the hospital, being informed of her pregnancy, which advances the idea that Mark’s death produced a new life. The symbolic end of the first *Nekromantik*, where the orgasm is represented as a form of fear of castration overlapping with the desire to ejaculate, becomes explicit in its sequel, with Mark dying while ejaculating but still creating a new life. In both movies, necrophilia is strictly linked to female dominance which is, though, problematized and seen in a negative light as an unsettling condition. Thus, necrophilia seems to be built on the preconceived notion that female dominance is an evil condition. As a consequence, the necrophilic performance is rooted in the problematization of female dominance. Contrary to *Kissed*, where the point of view of the narrator is shifted, female necrophilia is here linked to a conceptualization of female supremacy as a monstrous, unwilling condition. Female dominance, seen as a negation of femininity, is therefore neutralized and hidden behind the story of a dangerous woman who deprives a man of his virility. Interestingly, in both *Nekromantik 2* and *Kissed*, where more space is given to the female character, the directors attempt a “resolving end” to fix the unwilling and monstrous condition by seemingly reintegrate their characters to fit within a stereotyped femininity. In fact, Monika will deliver a baby, conceived with Mark who is now dead, and Sandra will continue to see Matt in other necrophilic intercourses. These strategies serve to

reintegrate the two necrophiles in a “normatively organized” horizon of femininity. The necessity is related to the fact that the representation of female necrophilia deals with the de-normativization and de-feminilisation embedded in female dominance.

## 5. CONCLUSION

When dealing with necrophilia, what can be detected is an intrinsic connection with dominance, since it consists of a living person engaging in intercourse with a non-resisting dead body. We can therefore conceptualize it as a relationship between an object and a subject, even though the object used to be a subject before dying. Furthermore, necrophilia has always been considered a taboo, because of its hybrid nature, which brings together life and death. In female necrophilia the mechanism of objectification clearly favours the female subject over the male subject. Thus, it can be argued that female necrophiles are subjectified women, holding a position of dominance that not only contradicts the CBAs of the normative category of femininity, but that also stands out as a radical negation of the category of femininity as a whole. The deviance creates eccentric dynamics of representation in performances of necrophilia. The two different and opposite expressions of female necrophilia in the films must be linked to two different but complementary perspectives on female dominance. The negative display of female necrophilia in *Nekromantik* and *Nekromantik 2* can be explained as a response to the deviance represented by a woman who holds a dominant position and is conceptualized as a monster. The softer and apparently more positive display of female necrophilia in *Kissed* is linked to Stopkewich’s representation of female dominance through a salvific and divine character that is, nonetheless, conceived as not entirely human. To conclude, based on the above considerations, it can be said that the portrayals of female necrophilia can be considered as expressions that are directly linked to the problematization of female dominance as a radically eccentric dynamic compared to the stereotypical category of femininity.

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