

Unbridling the “Tamed Other”

Imagining “the Gypsy” in Late-Victorian Gothic Fiction

BORÓKA ANDL-BECK

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Abstract: This article investigates late-Victorian literary depictions of the imagined “Gypsy” by examining the “Szgany” of Bram Stoker’s novel Dracula. Contemporary ethnographic and legal sources are also employed to uncover Stoker’s reading of “the Gypsy” and the shift from domestic to recognisably foreign roles assumed in works of fiction. This discussion tackles the interaction of landscape and ideology, the historical and ethnographical context of the late nineteenth century, and the general significance of “the Gypsy” in these narratives. Building on the Gothic notion of the de-localised (Oriental) Other, this article introduces a new concept, the re-localisation of the de-localised Other, exemplified by the connection made between the “Szgany” of Stoker’s Transylvania and the “ordinary gipsies all the world over.” The re-localisation effort results in a shift in the layers of domestic Gypsies’ otherness and creates an atmosphere that is ripe for contagion and Oriental invasion, yet is rooted in the ordinary, the “real” that is recognisable to the Victorian middle-class reader. In this article, the relevant processes behind constructing the Gypsy—like gothicisation and orientalisation—are studied, employing a perspective that emphasises the interrelatedness of the Other and the landscape. Together, these aspects of the novel establish a “couleur locale” fitting for the sinister activities of Dracula. Additionally, Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Silver Blaze” and “The Speckled Band” serve as texts for comparison, as they showcase the domestic Other, notably in the role of the scapegoat, the petty, ordinary criminal.

In the 1890s, Bram Stoker lived and worked in London, which was then the greatest, most developed metropolis of the Western world. Middle-class Brits like him were animated by innovations and inventions that sought to make work easier

or provide entertainment: they travelled on electrified railways, diesel trains, and studied the rapidly expanding Ordnance Survey; used new communication technologies like the telegram; and recorded observations on a travelling typewriter or a phonograph. They witnessed watershed moments in scientific research, and they saw literature tackle these developments; psychology and ethnography entered public discourse and thus the creative agendas of authors like Arthur Conan Doyle or Bram Stoker. This article investigates late-Victorian imagination, including all the factors listed above, through focusing on one narrative entity as construed by Stoker: “the Gypsy.”

Previous studies of *Dracula* (1897) have given little attention to the imagined Gypsy, and even when they have considered it, they often omitted the landscape from the discussion. This article argues that the landscape seen in literary fiction and the way it interplays with the Gypsy is paramount to both *Dracula* and other works such as Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Silver Blaze” (1894). By re-localising the de-localised Oriental Other to Eastern Europe, Stoker manages to connect both the two geographical entities and the two readings of the ethnic group: the domestic and the foreign. The domestic, “tamed,” and the foreign, “unbridled” aspects of the figure are irreversibly linked in *Dracula* by Jonathan Harker, the first narrator of the novel: he claims that the “Szgany” of Transylvania, the wild East, are “allied to the ordinary Gypsies all the world over” (Stoker 50). Thus, the Gypsies seen in Great Britain are recognised as enemies rather than domestic Others; their subhuman quality, the result of simple othering, changes into something abhuman.¹

Catering to Victorian audiences was easy: the power of Orientalism was inimitable, both as a tool of the genre of Gothic fiction, as a form of exoticism, as well as the manifestation of Western, white domination. Combined with a general fascination with technological innovation, Orientalist views were abundant in ethnographical studies, journals, travelogues, and many other (pseudo-)scientific publications. The innately political Western view of the East also extended to Eastern Europe, thus to Transylvania, as it was a “whirlpool” (Stoker 2) of different nationalities, a quality that was observed by Jonathan Harker as unhealthy hybridity (Bardi 82). The intermingling of people perceived as ethno-culturally different captivated the imagination of many ethnographers and travel authors: some, like Heinrich Wlislöcki, Heinrich Grellmann, or Francis Hindes Groome were keen gypsylorists who studied Gypsy

1 “Abhuman” describes bodies that “have lost their claim to a discrete and integral identity, a fully human existence ... a Gothic body—admired, fluctuating, abominable” (Hurley 190).

folklore in different parts of Europe. These works should be considered as the foundation on which Stoker's Transylvania is built: an enormous body of work that contributed to the ideological and material landscape of the novel. This gothicised landscape is unique due to its overtly "foreign" inhabitants. The vilification of "the Gypsy," the attributes that this entity in this Eastern landscape may boast, and the significance of its presence suggest that the initial, familiar Other has ascended to a new level and has thus altered the domestic Gypsy, too.

LATE-VICTORIAN VIEWS ON NATION AND NATIONALITY

The late-Victorian society of Great Britain is seen by many scholars as one preoccupied with anxieties about its future. The Britons' image of their country rested on ideas brought about by the Industrial Revolution and rationalism, the latter of which, according to Said, is "undermined by Eastern excesses" (57). Britain was an industrial, rational, Protestant, modern country well-ahead of its competitors both in size and in political and economic power (Spencer 213); still, recent developments have eroded this confidence in the late nineteenth century (Arata 622). Importantly, this idealistic picture of Britain was homogeneous in ethnicity, and its efficacy relied on the hierarchy established along the lines of wealth and lineage—property and blood (Bardi 78). Thus, the commonplace paranoia of the most powerful player materialises by the end of the nineteenth century because of immigration that could disturb homogeneity, as well as due to political unrest in the colonies. Such uncertain times, according to Hurley, call for the re-emergence of Gothic fiction, as it is a medium that "negotiatie[s] anxieties ... by working through them in displaced form" (194). I would argue that "Gypsies" highlight this displacement by remaining in the shadows of national "normalcy," thereby constituting an asset for any Gothic narrative.

The imagined Gypsy comes into play as a figure utterly out-of-sync with Western values and notions of space and time. Trumpener arrives at the conclusion that Gypsies are outside all Western constraints (843). The time observed by the imagined Gypsy does not align with the time Westerners keep to. Then, in terms of space, as they own no property and are not confined to any given geographical space because of their nomadic way of life, they could not be more different than the British who have seen themselves as the "hosts" of Gypsy communities for centuries. For example, in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*

(1892), the murderer, Dr. Grimesby Roylott, is one of those landowners who provide Gypsies with space for their encampments. In this short story, he is presented as eccentric as well as short-tempered, a man who rather belongs with the crowd he so readily embraces. This means that the British landowner might have the upper hand, but he must endure the encumbrance brought on by his tenants. Dracula, too, is a boyar whose name and land the “Szgany” parasitise—according to the book referenced by Jonathan Harker, the Szgany habitually take the name of the landowner they depend on and “attach” themselves to him (Stoker 50). Additionally, Jonathan’s notes comment upon Gypsies occupying the land of their superiors, not just their names. Gypsies are also depicted as amoral, “outside all law” (50); they are presented as immune to the laws that may bind other citizens. Quite like animals, too, they are “the insensitive, brutal Szgany,” as they continue singing cheerfully while completing heinous tasks for Dracula (Bardi 89).

In the same fashion, self-proclaimed experts of Eastern Europe and Gypsies, Heinrich Grellmann and William Wilkinson describe them as “roaming” about Europe without obvious purpose (Grellmann v), and the Egyptians Acts of 1530 and 1554 attempted to legally define the Gypsies as a problematic group who had to settle down or be deported at the pain of execution (Morgan 106). Thus, Gypsies, seemingly unconstrained by Western ideas of space and time, had to be regulated by law. Victorian lawmakers were deeply anxious about poverty, the conditions of the poor, and most importantly how their poverty affects the whole of British society. In the vein of later Victorian laws, the 1824 Vagrancy Act and other acts concerning highways, canals, and preferable lodgings sought to curtail the freedoms of vagrants and Gypsies (Mayall 147) similarly to how new housing and working arrangements targeted the poor a few decades later. Lucassen and Willems suggest that “with the emergence of dynastic states in Early Modern Europe rulers left less room for subjects who remained out of its reach” (309). This meant that rulers like Henry VIII already saw itinerancy as vastly different from the norm, and regarded any sort of vagrancy as a threat to a sedentary society precisely because of the disruption, and because Gypsies showed a disregard for the ways of the West. Finally, these three factors may be understood as the pillars of a nation: a space marked by borders, a history defined by events that relate to land-taking endeavours, and a social system built on wealth-based (and thus land-based) hierarchy and cemented by law. Gypsies are defined by non-synchronicity, as they exist without a nation state; and, in the nineteenth century, the idea of (homogeneous) nations being “the only

legitimate foundations” for building a state pervaded European minds (Brown 458). Trumpener argues that the Gypsy are excluded from these nation states—when a nation “take[s] stock of itself, it is only the ‘Gypsies’ who . . . persist as interlopers” as a people existing outside Western notions of space and time (846).

Stephen Arata and Abby Bardi both argue that *Dracula* is successful in tapping into the anxiety around protecting such nation states, but it is important to add here that there is a marked difference between continental European states and the “heart” of the Great British Empire. The latter, as it was made up of 68 countries and territories (Chalk), and thus considered itself on an *imperial* rather than on a *national* level, feared disintegration in a way that was dissimilar to continental nation states. An empire’s integrity depends on its dominance over its own dependents; hence, nationalism in the British psyche is somewhat more layered than in continental Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, often dubbed the century of the nation state (Brown 458). In Stoker’s time, the fear of reverse colonisation, the notion that those once colonised by the empire would come to the “motherland” emerged due to political problems in the colonies. Anxieties about the potential loss of property and purity that would result in a heterogenous Britain coalesce in *Dracula*, particularly in Jonathan Harker’s notes.

Narratives that rely on reverse colonisation as an underlying theme are “obsessed with the spectacle of the primitive and the atavistic” (Arata 624) and resemble the Orientalism of the period, capturing a sort of thrill derived from “those mysteriously attractive opposites to what seem to be normal values” (Said 57). The most evident manifestation of this fascination can be seen in travelogues and travel guides that, according to scholars like Burke and Light, influenced Stoker’s writing. Regarding “Gypsies,” Light does not attribute much responsibility to their role in the novel (43); Burke and Tchapravov, however, differ from Light on that point. Tchapravov argues that “Gypsies” underline the national anxiety of the period by acting as servants to “absolute evil,” helping Dracula colonise the West. In her study of Stoker’s potential sources, Burke emphasises that “Gypsies” were already being orientalistised in the British Isles, but this process accelerated and turned from bohemian depictions to vilification as the century wore on (58–60); Stoker’s narrative reflects this change aptly. “Gypsies,” as imagined by the West, are out-of-sync with Occidentals—the trains in the East are not punctual, and the local “Gypsies” are not trustworthy, according to Jonathan, who gives them money but is still betrayed by them. They have no lands, no property, but they could easily take some through

contamination, or more promptly, by immigration to the West. Like their master’s, Gypsies’ interests lie in movement: as an itinerant people, this imaginary group is able to transport both Dracula and themselves everywhere; only, they do not have to move quite as literally as the vampire does, as their allies are already present “all the world over” (Stoker 50).

Contamination in general was on British society’s radar at the time, and Stoker had personal interest in the topic, too, due to his mother’s experience with the cholera plague in Sligo (Kiberd 380). Moreover, social reformers at the time sought to help Gypsies move out of what were seen as unsuitable and unhygienic circumstances. The reforms George Smith of Coalville (*Gipsy Life*, 1880) advocated for and his efforts at improving the conditions of nomadic peoples like the Canal Boats Act Amendment Bill of 1884 attempted to move them out of their lodgings for both humanitarian and hygienic purposes. According to Kiberd, vampiric and parasitic entities raise the same concerns as any plague (380): contamination and immigration are often synonymous, and Dracula’s invasion represents this “double thrust—political and biological” (Arata 630). The scope of vampirism, then, expands from the individual body to that of the society, the body politic (Bardi 79).

At this point, it is important to mention a theoretical approach to the topic of contamination that highlights a different aspect of Dracula’s Occidental project: Jacques Derrida’s theory of autoimmunity. Although that approach is not vital to this largely historical argument, it is nonetheless helpful in the attempt at understanding Western anxieties of reverse colonisation and immigration. The story of *Dracula’s* Britain is one of a country that lacks absolute immunity and is thus exposed “to the other, to what and who comes” and can thus expect that something will always happen, and someone, another, will always arrive (Timár 4). Derrida’s analogy establishes a parallel between biological and political, similarly to *Dracula’s* narration—thus, it may be hypothesised that the parallel between immigration and contagion is ingrained in the social psyche and has been for centuries. According to Derrida, what underlies the political notion of autoimmunity, then, is the “relationship between the politikon, physis, and bios or zoe, life-death” (qtd. in Timár 4), the very same connection that is fictionalised and gothicised by Stoker. On a slightly different note, however, this autoimmunity may be seen as a disease emanating from the self’s body, one that enables other diseases to penetrate the body’s immune system. Thus, it is this autoimmunity that political systems often try to eliminate as they attempt to institute a sort of immunity that shifts the immune system’s reaction, the confrontation

of the “other disease” outside the body (and thus the West). This is what happens in *Dracula*, at least; the Westerners’ group, those providing the immune reaction, displace their fight to the East. The state of Transylvania, at least in Stoker’s reading, a “whirlpool” (Stoker 2) of different nationalities and cultures, is an example of what happens when a country’s immunity is not perfected to a sufficient degree. The perceived hybridity and (racial and cultural) heterogeneity of Transylvania is seen as a dangerous outcome of vampirism and immigration; its Oriental chaos is what imperfect immunity may result in.

Stoker plays into the Gypso-phobia (Tchaprazov 524), the fear of migration and the Other within, and expands its significance by establishing a linear, evident bond between the exotic, the foreign, and the familiar Gypsy, and steers their existing representation to more xenophobic waters. For that, Jonathan’s accounts provide a quasi-scientific basis: by continually referencing his book in the vein of a rational middle-class Briton fascinated by travel and following the general view of Anglo-American gypsyism, namely, that the “mystery of the Romany may be penetrated by the appropriate reading material” (61), Jonathan legitimises his statements by drawing upon scientific material that would be recognised as a valid source by (Victorian) readers. This book could be E. C. Johnson’s *On the Track of the Crescent* (1885), Emily Gerard’s *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888), A. F. Crosse’s *Round About the Carpathians* (1878), or even Charles Boner’s *Transylvania: Its Products and its People* (1865), all popular travel books at the time; the main point is that Jonathan felt the need, as did Stoker, to share that it is a rational, accurate, objective account that he seeks to give the reader. The way the narrative strives for such a scientific argument highlights the plan that governs the whole novel, namely, that the reader must be able to believe in the existence of Stoker’s version of Transylvania—to further this aim, upon arrival, Mina Harker remarks that Jonathan’s accounts were accurate (Crişan 77).

All this preparation, also seen in Stoker’s working books that tell us about his research into “folklore, myth, armchair anthropology, medieval history and magic” (R. Foster 226), and his general “encyclopaedic appetite” (Crişan 66) helped propel the novel to great success upon its publication, for the writer understood his audience and their fears and fascinations very well. This appetite for scientific proof fits into Said’s Foucauldian argument offered in *Orientalism* (1978), according to which, sovereignty is not enough to rule over all men, instead, one must possess judgment “which means sizing up correctly the force of alien powers and expertly coming

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to terms with them” (57), an effort that is, of course, “profoundly anti-empirical” (70). Finally, Said argues that Western science’s objective is to “capture ..., treat ..., describe ..., improve ..., radically alter” the Orient (95). Thus, the Occidental author may construct a new identity for the Orient and any group perceived as Other through narratives, be they scientific, literary, or legal.

Jonathan Harker, like the novel’s writer, felt that he was able to penetrate the mystery of the East through books. According to Said, since the 1700s, there have been two main elements to the East–West relationship: constantly growing, systematic knowledge assembled by Orientalist scholars which was “reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history ... [and] a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travellers”; and the domination of Western, European ideas in any such discourse (39–40).

GYPSYLORISM AND ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Jonathan’s account of the “Szgany” and his general perspective throughout his travels resembles those of a folklore researcher; a white European man on a dangerous, enlightening journey, whose mission is to gather information about the nationalities of the region: their clothes, languages, superstitions, and customs. This essentialising effort, according to Burke, resembles the Anglo-American gypsylore tradition that can be seen in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, a circle of hobby ethnographers as well as genuine researchers of Gypsy folklore (61). The tone of naivety and curiosity conceals the pejorative views behind much of Jonathan’s descriptions, similarly to the tone of the *JGLS*. Thus, although these writings opened the door to serious research ventures, some works were, like phrenology, fashionable pseudo-scientific pastime for the white, academically-minded middle class and aristocracy.

Ethnographic publications guided their readership to believe that an ethnic group can be essentialised and then researched in a rational, empiric manner, by carefully assembling folk tales, studying their behaviour, and by immersing oneself in the group. In order to find this group, however, ethnographers had to ask for the location of the group, and that necessitated inquiries in the majority society (or at least in one that was willing to name the Other to an outsider). Without understanding who “the Gypsy” is, such efforts would have been in vain; thus, society

had to be able to recognise and name a “Gypsy” before it could be recognised as an authentic representative of the group and its culture. Csaba Dupcsik, a well-known historiographer of the Hungarian Roma and Gypsy society stipulates that there are multiple views on whether “the Gypsy” as such exists or can be named; thus, even in contemporary studies of the ethnic group, we see the question “who is the Gypsy?” appear at important crossroads. In his influential work, *A magyarországi cigányság története: Történelem a cigánykutatások tükrében, 1890–2008*, Dupcsik claims that the classification is dubious (274); still, he enumerates three readings. One prominent research tradition maintains that the classification of the social environment determines which persons are designated as “Gypsies”; another group acknowledges that classification is more important from the perspective of those who have the means to classify; and others think that, if the environment’s opinion is the deciding factor in this question, then we all operate on the level of social discrimination.

Stoker was, in many respects via the figure of the Gypsy, able to conceive of his version of Transylvania as a “gateway between East and West, exotic and familiar ... through which ‘Oriental’ degeneration enters the Western European bloodstream” (Burke 60); and, in this process, the re-localisation of the Oriental Other, the de-localised “Gypsy,” was essential. Stoker’s construction of “the Gypsy” runs parallel with its creation in ethnographers’ circles, thus, the latter aspect must be examined first. The late nineteenth century’s fascination with nations and ethnicity may be evidenced by numerous historical books, like the series of *The Story of the Nations*, of which the volume *Vedic India* (written by Zénaïde A. Ragozin and published in 1895) may be seen as the capital example. Complete with maps, linguistic, historic, and ethnographic chapters, the first being entitled “The Wonderland of the East,” this book attempts to provide a sort of “synopsis at least of the great epics” (iii) of “Vedic India.” Such a work exposes the Orientalist tendencies that became somewhat synonymous with the work of any ethnographer while Occidental sources remained the only foundation for their claims. Gypsylogists were curiously silent on social inequality and discrimination when it came to their subjects of study, tackling topics like language and culture exclusively until the early twentieth century, finally realising that Gypsies “did not live in a social and political vacuum, immersed in strange taboos and ancient rites” (Mayall 5).

Longer works of an ethnographic nature, sometimes called “nation-characterology” in a Hungarian context, were scientific, often historiography-driven descriptions of a nation (Kovács 301). As the interest in nationalistic ideologies

grew in the nineteenth century, or the century of the nation in continental Europe (Brown 458), such works gained in popularity. The earliest example of a detailed dissertation on Gypsies as a distinct ethnic group, the *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner* by Heinrich Grellmann (1787) is a work that would later influence numerous ethnographers and travellers. In his account, the German author painted Gypsies in a negative light, regarding them as literal vermin or trash (“Auswurf der Menschheit”) who could be distinguished by their extremely strange customs (“durch die seltsamsten Sitten”) and their corrupt morals (“wegen eines unerhörten Grades von verderbter Moralität”)(v–vi). Despite the romanticised image of the Gypsy that can be found later in nineteenth-century literature (William Wordsworth’s 1815 *Gipsies*, Matthew Arnold’s 1853 *Scholar Gipsy*, or George Borrow’s 1857 *Romany Rye*), William Wilkinson’s *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820) takes on a tone similar to Grellmann’s. Wilkinson emphasises that Gypsies “appear little superior to the brute creation” (qtd. in Tchapravov 526), suggesting that their domestication as slaves is the only way they could be useful to Westerners. This is clearly echoed in Jonathan Harker’s description of the Szgany: he states that they “attach themselves” to any unsuspecting aristocrat and “call themselves by his name” (Stoker 50). As in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* where Gypsies live on the land of a murderous, once-wealthy aristocrat, imagined Gypsies are unruly tenants entirely dependent on the landowner’s will and largely immune to legal consequences. Therefore, for Victorian readers in Britain, the concept of the Gypsy as a parasite only needed Gothic exaggeration and blood-sucking colour to become not only bothersome but threatening.

Such a colour is present in *The Vampire: A Roumanian Gypsy Story*, published in English in the *JGLS* in 1890. Francis Hindes Groome, a well-known gypsy-ologist and ethnographer decided to publish and briefly compare it to similar stories as a basis for his hypothesis that there was a common ancestor for the folk stories. This attitude and the will to find common threads in folk tales and customs resemble historical linguists’ endeavours in tracing cognates and setting up proto languages, activities that were very popular at the time. Following Groome’s logic, there may be a link established between the *JGLS*’s publications and Stoker’s imagined Gypsies: it has not yet been proven that Stoker used the findings related to in the journal for his novel, but the fact of the publication highlights the fascination that his contemporaries felt about such folk tales. In another story explained in an article of the journal, Heinrich Wislocki’s “The Witches of the Gypsies” (1891), a bloodsucking incident

is explained. This article stipulates that Gypsy witches must always suck the blood of men with every increase of the moon in order to stay healthy (40), something that may be likened to how Dracula and his vampire cronies stay alive. The people they attack “fall into a kind of lycanthropy” and are reduced to animals, as they cannot even communicate anymore (40–41). In a way, the same fate awaits those touched by vampiric entities—monsters that prey on the innocent, much like Dracula himself. It is not difficult to see a parallel between the vampire and the immigrant: if Dracula embodies both in one person, the imagined Gypsies of the East embody these notions as a group of inferior creatures in the novel as well as in ethnographic writings. Some of these works are apologetic and seem to argue that Gypsies, even in their primitive ways, are similar to their civilised counterparts in the West (Wlislöcki, “Love Forecasts and Love Charms” 222). Nevertheless, the general tone of the *JGLS* texts recounting their folk tales steers the readers’ imagination towards the abhuman, something beyond the natural, not simply below the civilised.

TIME, SPACE, AND THE LAW: RE-LOCALISING THE DE-LOCALISED OTHER

How does the Gypsy, the de-localised Other of the British landscape change in the Transylvanian setting into a re-localised Other? The search for the answer must begin by examining the basic building blocks of the Oriental Gothic genre: the de-localised Other that is Richard Marsh’s monster in *The Beetle* (1897), and Stoker’s Dracula both exemplify movement from the Orient to the Occident. According to Bardi, the “delightfully exotic, albeit strange” Gypsies of the West are quite different from Stoker’s “sinister Szgany” (84), and Tchaprazov emphasises that this vilified image plays a crucial role in how the Count’s threat to the Western values of Victorian Britain is framed and understood by the readers. However, previous works on this subject omit to discuss how exactly the “Gypsy” are transformed into the “Szgany,” as well as the connection made between the two groups and the interaction between this shift in meaning and the change in landscape.

Taking the de-localised Other further, Stoker’s Dracula is presented as an abhuman vampiric figure who is capable of rational thinking to reach the Occident despite his “child brain” (Spencer 213). His masterplan, however, depends on other de-localised entities who are not capable of action without direction: Slovaks and Gypsies, sinister actors who act as his servants and are loyal to him, presumably because they are of the same “race”—Oriental. Still, whereas Slovaks are not an obvious part

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of Britain, ever-present, itinerant, and problematic, Gypsies constitute a sort of dormant threat within the Western realm too. By moving the de-localised Other “back” to the East, Stoker creates a clear bond between the familiar, domestic Other, and the sinister, foreign Other. This simple change is achieved through a process that declares every problematic aspect of the “Gypsies” as seen in Britain as something more than burdensome; the idleness and the omission of work becomes industrious servitude of the devil, the rural ways of the British “Gypsy” translate to something more than subhuman, and their connection to the wildlife gets more articulated, or, as Johnson put it in *On the Track of the Crescent* (1885), they are “wild beasts” who are “howling like wolves” (qtd. in Tchapravov 526). At the end of the novel, wolves follow in the wake of the Szgany, presenting the wild animals and the itinerant people as one unit (Stoker 453): both belong to nature, becoming something abhuman when associated with the Count.

The liminal state of “the Gypsy” and the uncertainty it represents is a crucial part of Stoker’s characterisation: as Iulia Hasdeu puts it, Gypsies “belong to an organic space-time out of line with normality” (qtd. in Gay y Blasco 300). “The Gypsy” is liminal: it functions as a sort of transitional state between human and animal as well as human and monster—it embodies subhuman and abhuman qualities and is recognised as a sort of “gateway between East and West, exotic and familiar,” similarly to Transylvania itself (Burke 60). The transitory modes of existence that the Gypsy embodies, which include itinerancy and a position apparently outside the constraints of law and civilisation, provides fertile ground for speculation about their origins and behaviour. As the Gypsy cannot be confined to Western values and ideals of time and space, they are perceived as less than human—they are, like many Gothic subjects, dehumanised in order to enhance the sinister atmosphere of a work of fiction; subhuman entities who exist on the brink of society, almost exclusively as part of the “*couleur locale*”.² The latter is also true for *Dracula*’s narrative, but it is a completely different “*couleur locale*,” a heterogeneous and barbaric, Eastern landscape that they help shape. As a result of gothicisation, these burdensome nomads develop into interlopers within the nation state, more bluntly put, leeches, unwanted aliens in their non-humanity. Gypsies inhabit liminal spaces and liminal bodies: they are part of the familiar, rural British landscape, but they also represent

2 “*Couleur locale*”: seen in lengthy, detailed descriptions of a rural locality to produce an authentic narrative, e.g. in Mór Jókai’s works (Fried 213).

anxiety-inducing Oriental otherness. This liminality facilitates dehumanisation, transforming the Gypsies into something beyond, rather than simply below, human.

Abhuman creatures are the central figures of Gothic fiction, and, as such, they must be built up from both human and monstrous qualities. According to Hurley, the liminality of such entities, especially that of their body, is inevitable for Gothic narratives: these creatures constitute a threat to the integrity of the human form itself due to their liminality (190), and, by extension, they endanger the body politic. This is clearly connected to the paranoia that exists around immigration and contamination, and the anxiety around reverse colonisation. Liminal bodies lack a clear identity and are, by definition, not homogeneous—thus, the rules of nation states cannot be enforced upon them. By extension, this means that Gypsies, as imagined by majority society, are “the avatar of an alien cultural movement whose characteristics threaten Western ideology and English domestic space” and are thus *Dracula by association* (Goodson 21): they abuse the integrity of the nation as well as its citizens’ bodies; they are degenerate, criminal entities making their way Westward. Contamination and transformation are, however, only possible if humans already possess the potential to become abhuman, just as the immodest Lucy Westenra is transformed by *Dracula* through blood contamination. Therein lies the key to the success of Gothic fiction: the idea of the “modern abhuman subject” (Hurley 192) arouses interest and thrill and builds on the fear of the unknown. Like the fascination with Oriental Others, it is also based on ideas of Western superiority and an anxiety about liminality and instability.

There is a further unique aspect of “the Gypsy” in literary fiction that is worth discussing. Trumpener’s study suggests that the time frame of any story featuring the figure is affected by the presence of the imagined Gypsies, because their ahistoricity can break the temporality of the narrative. “The Gypsy” exists outside the Western constraints of space and time, and, as such, the time frame of *Dracula* is broken when Gypsies come into view. While Jonathan is trapped in the Count’s castle, he cannot keep track of time, and his correspondence with civilised society halts: he enters a space-time continuum markedly different from what he deems normal. Moreover, “Gypsies” deliberately hinder his efforts at communication. The progress of time is adjourned, similarly to how trains become gradually less punctual as Jonathan reaches deeper into Eastern Europe. Technical progress is also thwarted: the superstitions of the East and the lack of proper means of transportation all point to the fact that this part of the world never entered the modernity that the British characters

so readily rely on (e.g. Dr. Seward’s phonograph, Mina Harker’s Traveller’s typewriter). On the one hand, it may be suggested that it is the so-called “up-to-date-ness” of the novel (*The Spectator* qtd. in Arata 622) that is jeopardised by “the Gypsy”; on the other hand, Gypsies help juxtapose the modernity of the West, thereby highlighting the backwardness and barbarity of the East. In effect, this helps “erode Victorian confidence in the inevitability” (Arata 622) of the progress they see at home, resulting in a novel that depicts instability and the fear of decline and degeneracy on multiple levels—time and space, society and the law, sub- and abhuman entities, as well as the foreign and the domestic.

Gypsies mark the departure from Western temporality and, essentially, reality: their presence signals that all Western laws that Jonathan would keep to are useless in the East. Following Trumpener’s argument, it may be concluded that they shift “the tale itself into the different generic mode of the fairy tale” (869), corresponding with the general shift in landscape that is essential for the premise of the novel. Gypsies, then, “bring a magical timelessness ... into the narrative” (869), thereby producing a unique atmosphere ripe for the supernatural and the abhuman monster. I do not claim that it is only the figure of the Gypsy that facilitates this; nonetheless, their role in the narrative is defined by their obstruction of time, space, as well as morals, all of which are vital to the success of the novel. Their dubious moral position is evident in their refusal to help Jonathan even when he offers them money (50), and their industriousness while digging up Transylvanian soil to be transported alongside their master (53). They seem oblivious to the villainy of the Count at first, but, as Jonathan’s stay progresses, he sees them more and more as genuine accomplices and servants to Dracula: they are loyal to him because of something more than riches, as evidenced by their betrayal of Jonathan.³ Like the wolves, then, they are connected to him on a deeper, supernatural level, their bond being their abhuman, amoral, beastly existence.

As the Count is de-localised as he arrives in the Occident (an “Occidental tourist” in urban Britain [Arata 621]), so are the Gypsies in Victorian Britain: they are perceived as Oriental Others, alien bodies in a Western land, even though they have been present for centuries. Statutes issued by Tudor monarchs, like the 1530 Egyptians Act mentioned above, serve as evidence for the centuries-long presence of Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma people on the British Isles; still, this group has

3 A folk tale published in 1936 recounts a story that suggests that vampires provide Gypsies with a sort of immunity: “the gypsy did exactly as the vampire had told him, and remained alive” (F. Foster 289).

always subsisted on the margins of British society. It is not surprising, then, that their orientalised status leads to gothicisation in Stoker's narrative in a century that is so pre-occupied with nationalistic ideologies. Stoker employs "the Gypsy" as a marker of contamination and Oriental barbarity, but they can bear many other meanings and functions, too. Their vilification in a Gothic narrative helps the reader understand the threat they may pose and highlights their inherent otherness, not just as a foil to the Western norm, but also as a danger to it. De-localisation is a standard element of Gothic fiction, but the re-localisation of the de-localised Other, the Gypsy, lends itself to a connection between two geographical spaces, two imagined landscapes.

THE INTERPLAY OF THE "GYPSY" AND THE IMAGINED LANDSCAPE

The change of landscape and geographical space undoubtedly alters the domestic Gypsy within the book's realm and presumably the reader's imagination, too. As the re-localisation of the de-localised Oriental Other from the Occident to the Orient occurs, the meaning of "the Gypsy" changes: instead of the idle, petty criminals and freeloaders of the British landscape, they become industrious servants of Dracula, the abominable monster, thereby "maturing" into the villainous, Gothic role intended by Stoker. Their minor misdemeanours on British soil, one of which is the often-mentioned horse theft that came to characterise them in the minds of society (for instance, in "The Adventure of the Silver Blaze"), are indeed insignificant compared to the crimes of the Count. In Transylvania, these Gypsies, so tame and generally harmless in Britain, are *unbridled*. This process can be attributed to the re-localisation effort, and the way the preconceptions of the British public intermingle with the imagined Transylvanian landscape; one that, like all other landscapes, is shaped by the dominant ideologies of its time (J. Duncan and N. Duncan 117). Additionally, Said's term "imaginative geography," a key component of Orientalism, offers a fitting description for the narrative processes, as it features an active construction of an Oriental landscape based on prejudice. This employs the arbitrary binary of "our land—barbarian land" (54); it is the "barbarian" landscape that interacts with the figure of the Gypsy in *Dracula*, both marking a divorce from civilised society.

Jonathan Harker and the other narrators discuss the "Gypsies" of Transylvania a number of times, but the most significant and most descriptive passage is the following:

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These Szgany are gipsies; I have notes of them in my *book*. They are peculiar to this part of the world, though *allied to the ordinary gipsies all the world over*. There are thousands of them in Hungary and Transylvania, who are almost *outside all law*. They *attach themselves* as a rule to some great noble or boyar, and call themselves by his name. They are *fearless and without religion*, save superstition, and they talk only their own varieties of the Romany tongue. (Stoker 50, emphases added)

The motivation behind this brief description of the Szgany resembles that behind Jonathan's accounts of the Transylvanian landscape: it aims to paint a picture that is threatening yet captivating. Referencing a book that exists in the “real world” is important because it legitimises Jonathan's perspective and lends an air of objectivity to his observations. That the Szgany are “fearless and without religion” implies that they can be considered the enemies of the Westerners, a group who will put up a fight and will not abandon their master. This alludes to the last fight between the Easterners and the Westerners in the novel, for it is only the Szgany, Dracula's most loyal servants, who will fight for him in the end. Transylvania is a world that is devoid of “proper” faith and relies on fear: it houses objects that betray superstitious (Catholic) beliefs like crucifixes, and even the placenames (“Istenszék,” a Hungarian placename that may be translated as “God's seat”) signal that Transylvania is different from the West in terms of religion. Interestingly, the Szgany are not portrayed as particularly superstitious in the novel, and they are willing to work with Dracula—a sign that, in a way, they belong to his “race” more than to Eastern Europe. The topic of religion was not unfamiliar to Stoker: his Irish heritage contributed to a complex perspective on the debates between Protestants and Catholics. Stoker was of loyalist Protestant circles but obviously felt connected to the Irish Catholic tradition and at the very least was fascinated by their seemingly (from a Protestant perspective) superstitious customs (Kiberd 383). Still, although Western notions of religion, morality and law are all challenged in *Dracula*, it is the latter two that are the most relevant to the discussion of Gypsies in the novel.

Legality plays a crucial role in the narrative: Dracula is clearly acting criminally, the Szgany are aiding him through potentially illegal means, and Westerners can break any law whenever deemed necessary in their fight against evil. They break into Dracula's house in London (ch. 22), and they murder what is left of Lucy Westenra (ch. 16), all to save her from the indignity of vampirism. “Gypsies” are

quite different, however, as they are neither Westerners nor supernatural beings in the same fashion as Dracula is, and they are imagined by Jonathan as lowly people outside law and without principle. It has already been ascertained when studying the 1824 Vagrancy Act, the 1884 Canal Boats Act Amendment Bill or the Egyptians Acts that Gypsies had been considered immoral trespassers, thieves, and scroungers for centuries; in *Dracula*, their collaboration with the vampire Count elevates their existence into the realm of amorality. Being *outside* law, being amoral, is more threatening than being against or at odds with the police, a position that British, domestic Gypsies often occupy in fiction. These two iterations of “Gypsy” criminality, the unbridled and the tamed, are inextricably linked: the Szgany are “allied to the ordinary gipsies all the world over” (Stoker 50). This apparently evident bond makes a connection between the two landscapes appear just as natural, indicating that the gruesome, criminal events that happen in the Orient are just as likely to happen in the Occident if a state of perfect immunity to outsiders, even the tamed ones, is not attained.

The change in landscapes accompanies the change of the Gypsy. Put differently, the two imagined entities affect one another during their shared effort of orientalisation and gothicisation within the novel, both of which are not only furthered by the two entities, but also affect the two in separate ways. The Transylvanian landscape immerses the Gypsy, with the sound of the Szgany contributing to the sinister atmosphere. Jonathan writes that “in the courtyard and down the rocky way the roll of heavy wheels, the crack of whips, and the chorus of the Szgany as they pass into the distance” (Stoker 63) can be heard, with all the sounds mentioned having a violent, barbaric undertone. The presence of Gypsies helps the reader grasp just how backward Transylvania is, and, as they are creeping and roaming within the natural landscape like animals, their voices combine with the howling of the mysterious, aggressive Transylvanian wolves (Johnson qtd. in Tchapravov 526).

Already in A. F. Crosse’s 1878 account of the Carpathians and the people of the region there is a clear indication of Gypsies being different from their counterparts in the British Isles. Crosse writes that this group behaved similarly to those in England, but in the same sentence, he points out that “here they were far less civilised than with us” (143). This implies that there is a connection between the two groups that are otherwise quite different. As the region is less civilised than Britain, the barbarian character of Gypsies can be more overt in the Orient. Once they are re-localised closer to their “origins,” they become less disciplined: the society

in which they are still only marginal players is itself less policed than Britain is, and hence it is more corrupt, giving the Gypsies more freedom and even some power.

Crosse’s observations and Jonathan’s initial description of the Szgany tell a similar tale of the group’s position in the region. Crosse claims that Gypsies are “legally free, but they attach themselves peculiarly to the Magyars, from a profound respect they have for everything that is aristocratic” (147), a notion mirrored in British society (e.g. in Doyle’s *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*). Their attachment alludes to the vampiric sense of the word—Dracula attaches himself to Jonathan, using his professional abilities to move to the Occident. He acquires estates in England to attach himself to the land and brings his own Transylvanian soil; he enlists Lucy Westenra as one of his vampire gang after attaching himself to her through blood contamination; and he also succeeds in attaching himself to Mina Harker who gives birth to a child after she has become related to Dracula by blood: “flesh of [his] flesh; blood of [his] blood; kin of [his] kin” (Stoker 306). The same contamination is raised as a possibility with Gypsies: not only do they inhabit both landscapes, they also always carry their otherness in their blood, as if importing the Oriental evil to Britain. Their parasitic qualities are, however, not limited to their Occidental existence—they also latch onto the noblemen of the East.

The Szgany, in addition to becoming more barbaric, are also different in terms of activity: they are industrious and more involved in serious criminality than their British counterparts. Contemporary crime fiction, particularly Sherlock Holmes stories, dismiss any suggestion that Gypsies could be serious suspects in complex cases: they are unable to hatch criminal conspiracies worthy of Holmes’ deductive powers. In Transylvania, they may be accomplices rather than masterminds, nevertheless, they are neither idle nor petty criminals. The Eastern Gypsy does not seem selfish or hungry for riches: their only objective is to aid Dracula until his eventual demise and afterwards to flee as quickly as possible, disappearing into the Transylvanian landscape. Gypsies, according to Bardi, function as “a frame for the novel’s transactions,” “conduits,” and “catalysts” for action (90–91); therefore, their significance as labourers in the plot extends to narrative functions as well. By “transactions,” Bardi means both that of the soil and that of lives; however, the transfer of Dracula and the essential mobility that the Gypsies lend him exemplify this role the best. The “merry voices” of the Gypsies who sing while working for the absolute evil showcase their insensitivity as well as the contradiction that is at the core of their constructed identity, evident especially when the Eastern and Western characteristics

are compared. Laborious, life-threatening, parasitic, overtly evil in the East, idle, bothersome, marginal, and petty in the West, “the Gypsy” has a unique quality as an Other in both literary and ethnographic fiction. Crosse, for instance, claims that Gypsies have “an incurable habit of pilfering here as elsewhere; yet they can be trusted as messengers and carriers” (147), a statement that points to the heart of this contradiction. Despite their diligence as messengers, the Szgany of *Dracula* do not help Jonathan with taking his letters; instead, they serve the monster they depend upon, easily betraying Jonathan even though he paid for their services. Crosse also depicts Gypsies as petty intruders and thieves as he summarises the *status quo* of Eastern Europe: “never is a door left unlocked but a gipsy will steal in, to your cost” (147).

One might say that the process described in this article is a simple projection of all the prejudices that already exist, an extreme example of Orientalism, or misreading by ethnographers, travel writers, even by Stoker. All of these claims are true, of course, but “the Gypsy” is interesting because of its layers, and it is these layers that shift completely when it interacts with a similarly gothicised and orientalist landscape. Landscapes can be seen as texts, narratives that are transformations of ideologies into a concrete form (J. Duncan and N. Duncan 118); a landscape change, then, enables a change in ideology to become material. In the case of *Dracula*, the ideologically loaded East–West opposition that is translated into the depiction of Gypsies is also seen in the Transylvanian landscape which endures the same violation to its idyllic identity. What is more, the actual Transylvania, a landscape that has been written about and thus written *over* by the West, is irreversibly transformed. As opposed to the wilderness of rural Britain that the “roaming gypsies” inhabit in Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Silver Blaze,” Transylvania is foreign, and is a setting for “fairytale” (Crişan 73) rather than a space of nostalgia for pre-industrialisation Britain.

A nation-positive nostalgia is key to several Sherlock Holmes stories that take place in the countryside; Gypsies are depicted in at least four such stories: “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (1892), “The Silver Blaze” (1894), “The Hound of the Baskervilles” (1902), and “The Priory School” (1904). In these works, Gypsies are curiously represented in a more favourable, less derogatory light than in other nineteenth-century texts (Goodson 17). Thus, there is a marked difference between a depiction of the Gypsy in a domestic setting and in *Dracula*’s Transylvania, a fact that may be accounted for by a nostalgic view of the British countryside. Consequently,

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it could be supposed that landscapes determine (or at least influence) the representation of the Gypsy: although both Doyle and Stoker paint pictures of the rural Gothic in their works, only the latter can be classified as Orientalist Gothic, as the landscapes of *Dracula* and Doyle's stories have dissimilar effects on the “*couleur locale*” and thus the Gypsy, too. In Doyle's short stories, the reader does not confront the Orient through “the Gypsy” because readerly prejudice operates within a British landscape that is clearly dominated and understood by Westerners; “the Gypsy” remains a de-localised Other whose otherness in this setting is somewhat softened, tamed. The Gypsies are still confined to the margins of society, but they have their assigned place, mostly out of sight of the white British population.

The abhuman character that is added through their re-localisation to the East is significant because it shows poignantly what changes: Doyle's Gypsy is utterly domestic, a petty criminal and a scapegoat who helps define the norm through its otherness; it is quaint, idyllic, and constitutes what is known as the “*couleur locale*,” making the landscape appear both realistic and mysterious. Stoker's Gypsy, on the other hand, has a name that underlines its foreignness (Szgany), is wolf-like, industrious, allied to the absolute, supernatural evil, and presents a serious threat to the Western norm, symbolising lost control as well as contamination. This imaginary contamination comes alive in the Transylvanian region due to its ethnic heterogeneity and its corrupted landscape in which Gypsies are free to roam about. When Jonathan exclaims, “away from this cursed spot, from this cursed land, where the devil and his children still walk with earthly feet!” (Stoker 63), his words betray his emotions and prejudices. It is the *land and its people* that threaten the West: the Szgany, sometimes called “the children of Cain,”⁴ just as much as *Dracula* himself, are the devil, and it is Transylvania where they “still walk with earthly feet.”

CONCLUSION

“Gypsies” as itinerant people have been present in Britain for centuries, but their reputation as petty criminals and subhuman Others excluded them from the realm of Gothic monstrosity and confined them to the “*couleur locale*.” Through a change

4 One of the first written accounts of Gypsies, penned by an Irish monk visiting the island of Crete, Symon Semeonis, uses negative, religiously loaded expressions like Jonathan's: “[they] assert themselves to be of the race of Cain ... as if cursed by God ... they wander ... from cave to cave” (Semeonis qtd. in Murphy 61).

in landscape, they became abhuman creatures and have thus ascended to the level of the Oriental Gothic. As such, their presence in Stoker's Transylvania is paramount to the apparent danger of the region and its Oriental ways: Gypsies in the Orient come to embody Westerners' fears of contamination, especially because of their involvement with the absolute evil of the novel, Count Dracula. Their newly-assumed abhuman character, their association with Dracula and the near-supernatural wolves, and their industriousness enhance the threat they pose to Western society, especially when their potential movement is considered. Even worse for the Victorian anxieties about reverse colonisation, the Szgany do not even have to move; on the one hand, their objective is to provide Dracula with the appropriate means of transport and to move his boxes of soil within Transylvania, thus, they contribute to an essential phase of Dracula's invasion of the Occident. On the other hand, and arguably more frighteningly, they are already present in the British Isles in an equally problematic, albeit less threatening form. Jonathan Harker's notes connect the recognisably foreign Others to the domestic Gypsies of the West by stating that the Szgany are "allied to the ordinary gipsies all the world over" (Stoker 50).

Gypsies have already been orientalised Others in the British landscape, "roaming" (Doyle, *The Silver Blaze* 9) in the British moorland in *The Adventure of the Silver Blaze* or misbehaving on the land of impoverished aristocrats in *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*. However, their Oriental quality becomes more distinct as soon as they are re-localised to an Eastern European landscape. As de-localised Others, Gypsies wreak havoc in the Occident; still, without their Oriental, abhuman, devilish characteristics assumed in Transylvania, they appear tame, idle, and bothersome rather than threatening. The re-localisation of the de-localised Other, then, is the key to how "the Gypsy" is altered in Victorian imagination: through this effort, Gypsies are transformed into villains appropriate for Gothic fiction. The origins of the versatility of Gypsies can be found in their alleged non-synchronicity with Western ideals of time, space, and law, for they exist on the margins, in the shadows of normalcy within the Occidental realm. They are a "people without history" (Trumpener 843), a blank space that may be filled with both domestic, familiar, and foreign, threatening qualities, depending on which side of the "our land—barbarian land" (Said 54) binary they are located on.

Ethnographers and travel writers have long been fascinated by Gypsies, and their interest in the ethnic group coincided with the increasing appeal of the concept of the nation state. Authors like Wilkinson, Johnson, or Crosse visited Transylvania

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and reported on what they identified as local Gypsies, a group that they observed with a rather xenophobic lens, inspiring authors of fiction like Stoker. As the Victorian national anxiety became more prominent in the nineteenth century, so did the field of ethnography; the public wanted to know more about the Orient and its people and describe them accurately, but they were also frightened of the unknown. Therefore, it may be established that the same paradox of Gothic fiction, the combination of thrill and horror governed both the public and the ethnographic discourse. Both ethnographers and authors of fiction were eager to “capture ..., describe ..., radically alter” the Orient and the Oriental Other (Said 95); hence, “Gypsies” and the “Szgany” are virtually voiceless in both fictional and (pseudo-)scientific texts. In addition, gypsylorists, like Wislocki or Groome, provided the public with Gypsy folk tales and reports on the customs of Gypsies, thereby reinforcing the power of the category “Gypsy” itself and the foreignness of the ethnic group.

As Gypsies are re-localised to the Orient, their abhuman characters emerge. Connected by Jonathan to their “allies” in the West, their threat becomes evident: they might contaminate and weaken the nation, a very concerning thought in an era of political upheaval in the colonies. In Eastern Europe, “the Gypsy” becomes unbridled, and the tamed Other of the West develops into the enemy within, the first step in the effort of reverse colonisation.

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Boróka Andl-Beck is an alumna of the University of Vienna and received her Master's degree in English literature from ELTE Eötvös Loránd University Budapest. Currently, she is a PhD student in the Modern English and American Literature and Culture doctoral programme at ELTE. Her scholarly work so far has considered the concept of the "imagined Gypsy" and the Western gaze in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary fiction, ethnographical works, and newspaper articles. More generally, she is interested in the representation of marginalised groups in Britain and the arbitrary categorisation of humans from the Early Romantics to the Victorian era.