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Race, Empire, and the Horrors of a Hunnic Past in *Dracula* (1897)

Abstract
In this thesis, I seek to answer one of the central questions in Bram Stoker's Dracula: who is entitled to hold hegemony in Europe, and more importantly, based on what claim? The novel treats race as the primary decisive factor in answering this question, but also links race to policies of language, national identity, and civilizational progress. The novel approaches this question through a normative English subjectivity, such as that of Jonathan Harker's travel narrative, which juxtaposes English modernity and rationalism to the, supposedly, racially decadent Transylvanian locals. On the other hand, the novel presents Dracula as a cruel, authoritarian leader constructing an ideology of Székely (Sekler) racial purity based on militaristic achievements and an ancient Hunnic origin. The novel argues that these ideas are morally reprehensible, hence it deems these ideas a despicable, dangerous monster. Ultimately the novel is ideologically confused: it both positions the Dutch and America as potential leaders of a future of indefinite Western hegemony, and, strangely, appreciates some aspects of Dracula and his Transylvanian home. The first chapter deals with Harker's travel narrative and the English's claim to power based on modernity, while the second chapter analyzes its counter text, Dracula's lecture on Transylvanian history, a rhetorical speech promoting the racial status of his Hun-Székely background. Lastly, the third chapter elaborates on the novel's indecisiveness to the hegemony question and how its treatment of Dracula with both fear and fascination reflects tendencies in nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish Gothic literature.
Keywords: Dracula, Stoker, Transylvania, Székely, race, hegemony, language, national identity, modernity

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Introduction

Since the publication of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* in 1897 and its countless film adaptations, popular culture often associates Dracula with horror and blood-sucking, while in the Anglophone audience, "Dracula became synonymous with Transylvania … and later, after the

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province's transfer in 1918, with Romania as well" (Deletant, 2007: 225). Yet the novel, written and published while Transylvania was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, gives much room to contemporary debates surrounding multilingualism, race, the rise and fall of European empires, and Western hegemony, and subsequently invites a reading of the unnerving encounter of Jonathan Harker and his companions with Count Dracula as an allegorized political commentary. While the Hun-Székely Dracula's goal is to invade, terrorize and colonize the British Empire from within, Jonathan Harker's vampire-hunting fraternity, composed of English, Dutch, and American members, embarks on a quest to wipe Dracula from the earth. The novel, through the opposition of the vampire-hunting fraternity and Dracula, thus presents a clash of civilizations, of modern and ancient, of West and East, of rational Protestantism and superstitious Catholicism, of imperialism and ethno-nationalist anti-imperialism. The novel's strategy to depict these seemingly opposite forces as interlinked illuminates the ideological crossroads at which late nineteenth-century Europe found itself. *Dracula* as a Gothic novel and commentary on nineteenth-century politics surrounds race as a claim to hegemony with all things frightening, suggesting that the topic incited fear in the nineteenth-century Anglophone audience.

Several scholars have already discussed the topic of *Dracula* and its nineteenth-century context before, for example, Matthew Gibson in his article "*Dracula* and the East". Gibson (2017) argues that in Stoker's creation of Dracula, he rendered the Wallachian warlord Vlad Dracul Székely and separated the Székelys from the Hungarians, so that Dracula could function as both an anti-Habsburg and anti-Ottoman monster (101). Another scholar who has researched the novel's commentary on its contemporary geopolitical context is Stephen Arata (1990), who in his article "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" regards *Dracula* as a narrative of reverse colonization expressing "[t]he fear… that what has been represented as the 'civilized' world is on the point of being colonized by 'primitive' forces" (623). Both Gibson's idea of Dracula as an anti-Habsburg menace and Arata's view of *Dracula* as a narrative of reverse colonization push towards an in-depth analysis of Stoker's choice for Dracula as a Székely warrior descending from Attila the Hun, as European cultural discourse associates these ethnicities with struggles for self-determination and primitivism respectively. Ultimately, the question is why the novel chooses to depict specifically this set of ethnic affiliations as the ultimate threat to the British Empire.

This thesis argues that one of the central themes in *Dracula* is the struggle for hegemony in Europe, and that Dracula supporting his case for dominance by drawing on his ancient Hunnic roots, promoting racial purity and devolution, underlies the horror that the novel inspires. The novel struggles to provide a clear answer to this question. On the one hand, it participates in a well-known tendency of Anglophone Gothic writing to juxtapose Protestant rationalism and diligence with Catholic backwardness and superstition. On the other, the novel attests to a slight sympathy for the authoritarian, anti-imperialist ethno-nationalism the Count represents.

Since the novel treats race as a fundamental factor influencing the development of its plot, the postcolonial concept of racialization will prove useful. Broadly speaking, I adhere to the definition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which states that to racialize means "to categorize or divide according to race" (Oxford, 2023). More concretely, however, I work with the term

as provided by Steve Martinot (2010) in his book *The Machinery of Whiteness*, in which he defines the structure of racialization as "a cultural structure, a structure of social categorizations of people. It has nothing to do with blood or the inheritance of appearance. It is social status that is imposed on people through political definition" (172). Race is thus a social category and racialization is the process that creates these categories and designates peoples to them. Harker's travel narrative about Transylvania describes Transylvania and its people by casting its people as racially inferior to himself and to the English. Harker's stay at Dracula's castle provides Dracula with chances to narrate his own view on Transylvania and how his history as a Hun-Székely leader would entitle him to power and authority over the region. While Harker racializes Transylvanians to denigrate them, Dracula embraces a rhetoric of racial purity, a view with which the novel sympathizes. These cracks in the novel's Gothic rhetoric call for scrutiny, especially in the light of Stoker's Anglo-Irish background and the situation of the British Empire vis-à-vis its own multinational population.

Harker's Travel Narrative: English Exceptionalism and Local Barbarians

In the first chapter of the novel, Harker's travel narrative provides the reader with an introduction to Transylvania and its people in which he racializes the locals based on comparing his own English experience with his new Transylvanian experience. His racialization of Transylvanians relies on their disorganized infrastructure, confusing culture and superstitious religion, ultimately arguing that the English model of rationalism and modernity is superior and should be normative. As Harker crosses the Danube, he is quick to divide Europe into two factions: the West and East, the latter he describes as the realm of "traditions of Turkish rule" (Stoker, 1897: 5). Typical of the Gothic genre, Harker finds the East increasingly unpleasant the deeper he travels into it, writing that "it seems to me that the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China?" (Stoker, 1897: 6). Here, Harker emphasizes how much more chaotic the travel experience is compared to what he is used to, considering that this perceived underdevelopment is the case anywhere in what he categorizes as "the East." Before departure, Harker tried to locate Castle Dracula on the map, but without success, "as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps" (Stoker, 1897: 5). Transylvania's lack of a developed infrastructure renders Harker's experience in the region unpredictable and chaotic, and the text's choice to narrate these events from Harker as the first-person subject dealing with these calamities suggests that these complaints are justified, and that consequently, the Transylvanian way of life should invoke feelings of discomfort and contempt. Conversely, these passages of English subjectivity projected on Transylvanian situations imply that the English experience is normative and superior. Therefore, the novel implies, the English have something to offer to the whole world, namely modernization in the form of punctual trains and detailed maps, supposedly thanks to their excellent organizational skills and pragmatic work ethics.

Since the novel narrates the entirety of Harker's travel narrative from his first-person subjectivity, the experience of Transylvania culture is likewise informed by what Englishness regards

as normal, which causes dissonance between the English Harker and the multilingual Transylvanians. This becomes apparent in Harker's encounter with the multilingual crowd fearing his departure to Dracula's castle:

> I could hear a lot of words often repeated, queer words, for there were many nationalities in the crowd; so I quietly got my polyglot dictionary from my bag and looked them out. I must say they were not cheering to me, for amongst them were 'Ordog'–Satan, 'pokol'–hell, 'stregoica'–witch, 'vrolok' and 'vlkoslak'–both of which mean the same thing, one being Slovak and the other Servian for something that is either were-wolf or vampire. (Stoker, 1897: 9)

The passage's transcription of the "queer words" and their English translations illustrate the linguistic storm Harker finds himself in; the challenge of not only having to interpret one foreign language, but many, including the nuances between similar sounding ones. The words are linguistically different, but they all point to the monstrous. In this way, the text endangers Harker in two ways: it foreshadows the doom that awaits him at Dracula's castle, but also generates fear for the unknown Other. The latter comes to Harker in the form of foreign languages and the practice of multilingualism: a practice he is not used to, but somewhat prepared for by relying on his multilingual dictionary and his "smattering of German" (Stoker, 1897: 5). The narrative's fear of the unknown is what makes it so adamant in gaining an understanding of Transylvania, which emerges in how Harker informed himself on the region, noting that "there are four distinct nationalities: Saxons in the south, and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are the descendants of the Dacians; Magyars in the west; and Szekelys in the east and north" (Stoker, 1897: 6). Yet while Harker attempts to keep Transylvanian culture under his control by understanding it, categorizing the region in separate nation-states, his real-life experiences complicate his attempt. His encounter with the multilingual crowd, the presence of various Slavic minorities such as "the Cszeks with their white, and the Slovaks with their colored, sheepskins" (Stoker, 1897: 11) and later the introduction of the Roma, who "talk only their own varieties of the Romany tongue" (Stoker, 1897: 42) indicate that Transylvania is home to a wide linguistic palette and thus perhaps does not even qualify to be a nation-state.[2] Furthermore, the lack of a lingua franca and the different languages spoken in the same place seem to segregate the locals living next to each other. This linguistic disintegration leaves Transylvania without a defined national identity and renders the country culturally hard to grasp for an outsider such as the English Harker. In turn, the novel's encounter with Transylvania's fractured culture with the English confidence of Harker opens the door to racialization.

The novel's racialization of Central Europeans intensifies when Harker shifts his focus from language to the physical appearances of the locals, as "some of them were just like the peasants at home or those I saw coming through France and Germany, with short jackets and round hats and home-made trousers; but others were very picturesque" (Stoker, 1897: 6). Harker is

2 For a discussion of late nineteenth-century conceptions of nations, see Leerssen (2007: 379).

keen to note in detail the clothing of the people he sees, especially those of the Slovaks, whom Harker finds "more barbarian than the rest" (Stoker, 1897: 7) and only marginally describes their physiognomy, noting their "long black hair and heavy black moustaches" (Stoker, 1897: 7). The text's choice to emphasize clothing implies that anthropologically defining people from an English subjectivity such as that of Harker is more effective than relying on language. It also highlights that material culture is a more reliable marker of social status and ethnic affiliation than biological qualities such as facial features or body proportions are. Apparently, materiality is what anthropologically colors people: from a modern imperial English point of view, it is decisive in deciding whether a particular people pass as Western or ought to be seen as "picturesque" or "barbarian". According to the novel's English subjectivity, locals behaving like Western peasants are still deemed acceptable, but those whose material culture deviates apparently deserve to be designated as barbaric. In this way, the novel illustrates that Englishness has its own conceptions of normality and barbarianism and remains suspicious of what it perceives as extravagant and unknown.

Typical of the Gothic genre's contempt for Continental Catholic religious practices, Harker's quest to sort people into ethnic categories extends itself into the realm of religion. Regarding the locals' behavior, Harker notes that they are superstitiously religious and fervently pray "in the self-surrender of devotion to have neither eyes nor ears for the outer world" (Stoker, 1897: 11). Harker, however, distances himself from such irrational behavior when an old lady hysterically approaches him when he is about to travel to the Count's castle, noting in his journal that "it was all very ridiculous, but I did not feel comfortable. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it" (Stoker, 1897: 8). Indeed, Harker posits himself as the down-to-earth, diligent English businessman, unfettered by the superstitious silliness of local Central Europeans. This is another example of Harker's taxonomizing impulse: by sorting everything and everyone strange he encounters into their respective ethnic boxes, he creates a rubric of peoples, categories to which one, based on their looks, behaviors, or languages, simply belongs or does not. In this way, everything that happens in Transylvania is a result of predictable cultural constructs, embodied by people who can only look and behave in stereotypical "barbaric" and "superstitious" ways. Here, Harker applies a colonial mentality to the region and its people, namely that, as Frantz Fanon (1963) writes in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, "the colonial world is a world divided into compartments" (37) and that "what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species" (40). Harker, a solicitor specializing in English common law, is not traveling to Transylvania to colonize, plunder, or exploit the region, so in the traditional sense, he is not a colonizer, nor has Transylvania ever been an English colony. Yet Harker represents the archetype of the enterprising businessman who ventures into the wide world to do business, to make England richer, in this case by selling English property to foreign investors such as the Count. Typically, transnational business comes about through intercultural communication and requires some sort of knowledge of the target culture to be successful. The novel colors Harker's approach to Transylvania with the nineteenth-century imperialist context of the British empire, which explains why he designates others as "barbaric". The novel equips him with anthropological instincts that push him to first simplify Transylvania by compartmentalizing it, chopping

lands up into national regions, and when that fails, creating clear ethnic categories that differ from each other, but collectively differ even more from that of his Englishness.

In short, Harker racializes peoples whom he deems Other so that a complex world becomes predictable and by extension more readily exploitable. In that world, the novel implies, it is the English who are racially superior due to their excellent work ethic and rational religion, offering the world similarly excellent infrastructure and emancipating economic opportunities, while Central Europeans are racially decadent, causing cultural confusion and infrastructural misery by wasting their time worrying about things that do not really exist.

Dracula's Lecture: Hun-Székely Continuity and Racial Purity

Count Dracula, however, challenges the right of the English to European hegemony and does so by constructing a narrative based on Hun-Székely racial purity. In hindsight, Dracula is an ethnically obscure figure, "clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere" (Stoker, 1897: 18), and speaks "excellent English, but with a strange intonation" (Stoker, 1897: 18). Since Harker fails to racialize Dracula on the basis of language and clothing, he turns to his physiognomy, which Harker finds to be "very marked" (Stoker, 1897: 20). Harker observes: "his face was a strong–a very strong–aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils" (Stoker, 1897: 20). Dracula's "eyebrows were very massive" (Stoker, 1897: 20) and he had a "heavy moustache … with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years" (Stoker, 1897: 20). In addition, his pale ears were "at the tops extremely pointed" (Stoker, 1897: 20). Using degree adverbs such as "very", "peculiarly" and "extremely", the text illustrates the extent of Dracula's physiognomic monstrosity; the physical presence of Dracula is strangely enthralling and yet unbearable, causing Harker himself to experience "a horrible feeling of nausea" (Stoker, 1897: 20). In these passages, the text generates fear and disgust for Dracula to signal that some aspects of his being, his racial nature and the convictions he carries are of a despicable nature.

Yet for Harker, Dracula's facial features, although frightening, fail to provide him with clear racial cues. These cues eventually come from Dracula himself, in a lengthy speech about why his race possesses the ultimate right to wield power; "whenever he spoke of his house he always said 'we,' and spoke almost in the plural, like a king speaking" (Stoker, 1897: 30). Indeed, the personal pronoun 'we' in speeches invites scrutiny; who is the orator speaking for, and who do they represent? Dracula speaks for his house, but also for his race: "We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship" (Stoker, 1897: 30). These passages illustrate that Dracula's blood is of a royal nature, a status earned by fighting for victory like an animal. By invoking the image of the lion, the passage approaches the question of human race as a biological matter instead of a social construct, a hierarchy supposedly brought about organically such as in the animal world. Dracula's ideas are, from the perspective of the nineteenth century, alike *ancien regime* conceptions of how royalty is a separate bloodline rightfully wielding power over their subjects, well reflected in his rhetorically formulated question "what good are peasants without a leader?" (Stoker,

1897: 31). Ironically, however, Dracula feeds off the blood of others and therefore is more reminiscent of a parasite than the lion he compares himself with. Through this paradox, the novel suggests that ideas of racial purity spread easily but are undesirable for human society as they result in violence and death.

An alternate reading of Dracula's claim on blood is by redirecting the focus from his royal status to his Székely ethnicity, an identity that in nineteenth-century Hungarian discourse is similarly rooted in notions of "noble blood". The opening passage of Harker's account of Dracula's speech, namely: "we Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship" (Stoker, 1897: 30), echo the words of Hungarian national poet and anti-Habsburg revolutionary Sándor Petőfi. In his poem "The Székelys" (1849), Petőfi romanticizes the Székelys' battle lust and celebrates their blood of which "every small drop is worth an expensive pearl" (Appendix 1). Here the "we" in Dracula's speech is an ethnic-political "we". In nineteenth-century Hungarian discourse, Hungarianness was a matter of political alliance and not of ethnic origin: Petőfi himself was of Slovak descent but spoke and wrote in Hungarian and promoted Hungarian independence from the Habsburg Empire. In Petőfi's poem "To the Székelys" (1848), the Hungarian narrator regards the Székelys as fellow Hungarians and calls on them to fight the Austrians, the common oppressor, by appealing to their special Hunnic origins, their descent from Attila (Appendix 2). In his speech, Dracula makes a similar appeal to his Hunnic origin, holding up his arms and asking rhetorically "What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins?" (Stoker, 1897: 30). From a Petőfian perspective, the Székelys earned their greatness from their military culture and their Hunnic origins, which rhetorically places them in opposition against the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, especially against the imperialist aspirations of the Austrians. The Székelys fight is one of self-determination, yet in both Petőfi's poem and Dracula's speech their political status, earned by their militaristic achievements, is colored by references to an ancient past that is somehow recorded in their blood. The notion of racial purity is thus present in both texts, yet Petőfi's version is more symbolic in that it holds the Székelys as exemplaries of what true Hungarians should fight for, namely Hungarian sovereignty. Petőfi constructs a notion of Székely racial purity to call them to battle and aid him in his goal to remove Austrian influence from the Hungarian sphere. The novel, however, depicts Dracula not as the manipulated but as a manipulator who constructs an ideology of racial purity to maintain his position of power. In this way, the novel argues that a national culture informed by convictions of racial superiority is manipulative and misleading in nature.

Furthermore, Dracula's reference to his Hunnic origins promotes a civilizational worldview of primitivism, specifically that of devolution. Since the sixth-century writings of Jordanes,[3] European historiographers painted Attila as an anti-European menace, and leader of the Huns, a federation of pastoral nomad warriors. The discourse that regards the Huns as primitive barbarians continued into the nineteenth century but also evolved as civilization went through stages of modernization: when *Dracula* was published, the Enlightenment had already taken place, and the paradigm shifted from theocentric to humanist. The Scottish economist and

3 For a classical description of Attila, see Jordanes (1908: 56-57).

philosopher Adam Smith (1763) was especially concerned with the evolution of civilization, and in his *Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms,* famously notes that "the four stages of society are hunting, pasturage, farming and commerce" (107). The Huns, as pastoral nomads, belong around the first and second stages, while Dracula, despite his apparent noble character and castle, belongs to the stage of hunters, as he tells Harker "Ah, sir, you dwellers in the city cannot enter into the feelings of the hunter" (Stoker, 1897: 21). With this remark, the novel juxtaposes Dracula the hunter to the English Harker, the former still possessed by primitive instincts, which have been distilled out of the English businessman through the comforts of modernity. The threat of devolution that Dracula embodies is thus one of the true horrors to the nineteenth-century Anglophone audience.

The view that Harker's and Dracula's respective racializations acutely relate to the course of civilization becomes clear when Dracula attacks the Habsburgs and Romanovs and describes himself as superior. Dracula tells Harker that "the Szekelys–and the Dracula as their heart's blood, their brains, and their swords–can boast a record that mushroom growths like the Habsburgs and the Romanoffs can never reach" (Stoker, 1897: 31). In this passage, Dracula again appeals to racial superiority provided by his blood and contrasts himself and his nation to the Austrian Habsburg and Russian Romanov dynasties, who similarly entitled themselves to power based on their royal bloodline. In the nineteenth century, both the Habsburgs and the Romanovs led large, multinational empires, while in the novel, Dracula is the leader of the multinational Transylvania. In turn, Dracula's ancestor, Attila, led the Hunnic empire, a tribal confederation in the fifth century. However, according to Dracula, the Habsburgs and Romanov dynasties are below him due to arriving later onto the geopolitical stage; Dracula's civilization, through his Hunnic blood, has been present in Europe since ancient times. He compares the Habsburgs and the Romanovs to mushrooms, a metaphor that is strikingly Burkean in nature. On 17 November 1772, Edmund Burke wrote in a letter to the Duke of Richmond that:

> Persons in your station of life ought to have long views. You people of great families and hereditary trusts and fortunes, are not like such as I am, who, whatever we may be, by the rapidity of our growth, and even by the fruit we bear, and flatter ourselves that, while we creep on the ground, we belly into melons that are exquisite for size and flavor, yet still are but annual plants, that perish with our season, and leave no sort of traces behind us. You, if you are what you ought to be, are in my eye the great oaks that shade a country, and perpetuate your benefits from generation to generation. (Burke, 1852: 190)

In these lines, Burke asserts that despite the achievements of individual members of the middling classes, only families of a long, old lineage ought to lead a country because their accumulated wealth can in turn enrich the country. Like Stoker's countryman Burke, Dracula similarly supports his claim to absolutism with ancient solidity. Through the mushroom metaphor, the novel makes Dracula's long and imposing speech Burkean and consequently offers legitimacy to his argument. Yet the novel also argues that Dracula has mere devolution to offer; that ideas of racial purity are undesirable because human civilization cannot modernize if it is

ruled by ideas that withhold change, and thus, progress. In the end, the novel confirms the unsustainability of racial purity, whether royal or ethnic, and provides hope with the defeat of Dracula. In this way, the novel also reflects how Burke opposed the antiquarian obsession with the past, which in his view threatened the present with "wanton and destructive energies" (Heimlich, 2021: 661). In Burke's view, historiography should always strive towards creating a peaceful society, yet "antiquarianism, with its characteristic bickering, trivial point-scoring, and above all its revisionism, loses sight of… the proper social and cultural telos" (Heimlich, 2021: 664). In the text, Dracula is both the oak, the ancient ruler of the country, and the antiquarian, who interprets Transylvanian history with a fixation on war, bloodshed and illusions of racial superiority, and thus has no intention of creating peace. While on the one hand, the novel supports Dracula's claim to hegemony with a reference to Burke, it also tends to an agreement with Burke's view on how antiquarian history writing is a threat to societal stability and is thus ought to be opposed.

Western Competition and Dracula's Transylvanian realm as a model state

As discussed in chapter 1 and 2, the novel stages a competition of the English Harker and Hun-Székely Dracula, each making their case for why their nation should be superior, namely modernization and racial purity respectively. Although the novel clearly supports the English's modernization over Dracula's racial purity, it is still confused regarding who should have the right to rule. Firstly, because it expands the confrontation between the English Harker and Hun-Székely by including the Dutch and the Americans as partners of the English, but also as potential hegemony holders. Secondly, the novel not only treats Dracula and Transylvania with fear, but also with fascination.

The Dutch Abraham van Helsing and American Quincey Morris provide aid in the quest to hunt down Dracula, and thus render the vampire-hunter fraternity an alliance of Western powers with the goal of upholding English hegemony. Yet Van Helsing's seniority and extensive knowledge allow him to take a leading position within the vampire-hunting fraternity. He collected information about Dracula's nature from his Budapestian friend Arminius and educates his team members on how to act, telling them "Now we must settle what we do. We have here much data, and we must proceed to lay out our campaign" (Stoker, 1897: 224). In these lines, the novel portrays Van Helsing as the backbone of the vampire-hunting fraternity, the leader who keeps the team together by speaking in the plural first person and commanding them by using verbs in the imperative form. In this way, the novel emphasizes the indispensability of the Dutch in upholding English hegemony, yet also begs the question of whether they themselves possess any right to rulership of the world. The novel, however, discourages the possibility of the Dutch themselves seizing hegemony through the intermittently-lucid psychiatric patient and Cassandra figure named Renfield, who tells Van Helsing: "I wish you would take yourself and your idiotic brain theories somewhere else. Damn all thick-headed Dutchmen!" (Stoker, 1897: 238). In this line, the novel suggests that the Dutch's accumulated knowledge simply does not, or rather, should not suffice as a claim to hegemony. It expresses a

certain contempt for the Dutch that urges them to take a step back on the world stage and temper their confidence before it turns into arrogance. The novel is somewhat confused regarding the Dutch, because it designates Van Helsing to be the most powerful actor in the vampire-hunting fraternity's quest to defeat Dracula, but also refuses to then admit that the Dutch could be the potential future hegemon. The novel thus sketches a role for the Dutch as partners in a future of indefinite English dominance, who should contribute to uphold this dominance, but are not allowed to interfere with it.

Despite the isolationist geopolitical strategy of late nineteenth-century America, the novel seriously considers the option of America as a world power through the character of Quincey Morris. In a letter to Mina, Lucy writes about Quincey that "he is such a nice fellow, an American from Texas, and he looks so young and so fresh that it seems almost impossible that he has been to so many places and has had such adventures" (Stoker, 1897: 56). Here, the text emphasizes Quincey's friendly nature, youth, health, and courage to present him as desirable. Dr. Seward goes even further and writes:

> What a fine fellow is Quincey! I believe in my heart of hearts that he suffered as much about Lucy's death as any of us; but he bore himself through it like a moral Viking. If America can go on breeding men like that, she will be a power in the world indeed. (Stoker, 1897: 162)

Dr. Seward is, like Lucy, keen to note how sympathetic Quincey is, but also adds a racial layer, comparing him to a "moral Viking" to illustrate his strength of character. The novel bases America's claim to potential future hegemony on the assertion that the people its policies and way of life produce are healthy, moral, and strong. Despite this, the novel still tones down its enthusiasm for the prospect of American hegemony through Quincey's death in the fight against Dracula and his living on as the son of the English Harkers, who name their child after Quincey (Stoker, 1897: 351). Like in the case of the Dutch Van Helsing, the Americans should be a part of the Western alliance, but only serve to uphold English hegemony. The novel illustrates that the fight for English hegemony, for modernism, for rational Protestantism, is dangerous, and if either of the powers must sacrifice itself for this sake, it will be anyone but the English. In this way, the novel makes the English not only compete against the Hun-Székely Dracula, but also internally against other Western world powers.

The novel's ideological confusion deepens in passages in which it expresses sympathy for Dracula and especially for his home, Transylvania. While Harker in his initial travel narrative aimed to racialize the peoples of Transylvania, he also had sympathetic things to say about them and their country. He describes Transylvania as "a country which was full of beauty of every kind" (Stoker, 1897: 6), and despite finding the locals silly due to their superstitions, he writes that "everyone seemed so kind-hearted, and so sorrowful, and so sympathetic that I could not but be touched" (Stoker, 1897: 10). Mina, in her travel narrative, likewise finds Transylvania "a lovely country; full of beauties of all imaginable kinds, and the people are brave, and strong, and simple, and seem full of nice qualities" (Stoker, 1897: 335). However, Mina feels compelled to state that "they are *very*, *very* superstitious" (Stoker, 1897: 335). In these passages, the novel argues that the locals' superstitious practices simply remain strange to the English, yet by

foregrounding their "kind-heartedness" and "nice qualities," it suggests that the locals' superstitious behavior springs from their deep desire to take care of the English tourists, as if this would be their way to make foreigners feel welcome. Furthermore, the novel scrutinizes the disdain the English carry for superstition, since the fear of the locals was, in fact, justified, and their modes of self-defense, including rosaries and garlic, turned out to be useful. In this way, the novel aims to romanticize Transylvania and its people, who although of different ethnic backgrounds and speaking different languages, are united through their religious practices, and despite living in primitive conditions compared to the English, have a home rich in its scenery. Ultimately, the novel tempers its contempt for Transylvania and the locals with an ambivalent appreciation of their way of life; perhaps it is not ideal, but it is, the novel seems to believe, authentic.

Paradoxically, the novel also treats Dracula with a sympathetic fascination, especially in relation to his political aspirations. When Harker recounts Dracula's rhetorical speech on his history, Harker seems to have enjoyed it, writing that:

> I have had a long talk with the Count. I asked him a few questions on Transylvanian history, and he warmed up to the subject wonderfully … I wish I could put down all he said exactly as he said it, for to me it was most fascinating. (Stoker, 1897: 30)

In addition, the way Harker regarded Dracula at that moment also changed; whereas he previously felt disgust for his appearance, he now writes that Dracula "grew excited as he spoke, and walked about the room pulling his great white moustache and grasping anything on which he laid his hands as though he would crush it by main strength" (Stoker, 1897: 30). Harker, impressed by Dracula's lecture on Transylvanian history, regards him as a "great" leader. Through Harker succumbing to Dracula's rhetoric, the text attests that an appealing leader convinces his audience not based on feel-good facts of progress but on postulation alone: Dracula presents himself as a powerful leader, and consequently Harker regards Dracula as such, even though Harker feels uncanny during his stay at Dracula's castle, writing prior to the deliverance of Dracula's speech that "the castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner" (Stoker, 1897: 28). For the moment, however, the latter is irrelevant; the eloquence and poetic force of Dracula's speech renders him too much of an attractive leader to resist him. With this, the novel warns that a naive audience can accept even the most morally despicable ideas in the fervor of the moment. Part of the novel's fascination with Dracula thus does not lie in its appreciation for ideas of racial purity, but in the vigor with which they are delivered. Dracula, perhaps, teaches the English that they might sell their ideas of modernization if they offer an appealing illusion of grandeur with it.

While the novel depicts Dracula as a cruel, authoritarian leader, it simultaneously offers a reading of Dracula as a freedom fighter. Dracula is a staunch Transylvanianist, meaning that he revolts against Habsburg control over his region. This ideology of regional sovereignty seeps into his language: he rejects the Count title as subtly suggested by Harker (Stoker, 1897: 18-19) and exclusively speaks in terms of a Transylvanian nation: "we Transylvanian nobles" (Stoker, 1897: 26) and "we are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England" (Stoker,

1897: 23). More concretely, he describes the old struggle of the locals against the Austrians and Hungarians in terms of a fight between patriots and invaders (Stoker, 1897: 24), and argues that "after the battle of Mohacs, we threw off the Hungarian yoke, we of the Dracula blood were amongst their leaders, for our spirit would not brook that we were not free" (Stoker, 1897: 31). In other words, Dracula sees his historical struggles as fought between imperialists and natives, and regards himself as the latter, a leader protecting the people and fighting for freedom, which to him means Transylvanian independence. Transylvanian freedom, however, is of a collective kind and entails that native leaders should have the freedom to rule over their own country, even if it means that a tyrant such as Dracula would rule it. Despite his invasion and terrorization of England, the novel presents Dracula as an anti-imperialist leader dreaming of an independent Transylvanian state, primitive, full of peculiarities, but also of beauty and perhaps most importantly: a country that holds multilingualism as the norm. Unlike other empires, such as the British, Dracula does not force his subjects to assimilate to his Székely identity, and leaves the question of national identity undefined. The novel, through the English subjectivity of Harker, surrounds this multilingualism with fear and confusion, but eventually acknowledges through the appreciative descriptions of Harker and Mina that Dracula's lack of wanting to enforce a homogenous identity on his subjects provides them with the freedom to culturally develop themselves.

This alternative reading entailing the regional patriot Dracula and primitive but culturally sovereign Transylvania as attractive seems contradictory to the Gothic genre the novel belongs to, but becomes more logical when Stoker's Irish background, and the relationship between the British Empire and Ireland, are considered. The British Empire treated Ireland as a colony, with Anglicization and economic collapse in Ireland as a result, yet Stoker had a relatively privileged position within this context. Stoker, who hailed from the Protestant elite in Dublin orientated himself politically and

> imbibed Irish nationalism from Lady Wilde, yet also worked for Le Fanu's pro-imperialist paper. He was an ardent admirer of Gladstone and Home Rule, but sided with the conservative wing of the movement when the nationalist leader Parnell was disgraced. (Luckhurst, 2011: xxv)

Thus, the novel is a symptom of a culture in conflict: of Irish nationalism versus English imperialism, of the native Irish language versus the imposed English language, of the Catholic Irish countryside versus the Protestant Anglicized cities. In a reading of the novel as a parallel of the situation in Ireland, Dracula and his multilingual Transylvania represent a potential model for what Ireland could be like, an alternative of regional, religious and linguistic self-determination to the centuries of English colonialism. This reading of *Dracula* as a common Gothic novel and yet as anti-imperialist inspiration draws on the tendency in Anglo-Irish Gothic literature to portray resistance against English hegemony as both monstrous and attractive. Such an example is Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish* Girl, which paints the 1800 Act of Union symbolizing the marriage of the English Horatio to the Irish Glorvina on the one hand as dangerous to the English, yet on the other as an instance of "compassionate, even romantic paternalist colonization" (Heimlich, 2021: 674). *Dracula* is likewise keen to express sympathy

for Dracula and his ideas of anti-imperialist ethno-nationalism, but ultimately abandons them through the victory of the Western vampire-hunting fraternity. With this, the novel argues its preference for English modernization and imperialism over local ethno-nationalist sentiments to be fed, especially with the nineteenth-century threat of Germanic ideologies promoting racial purity and militarism looming.

Conclusion

Ultimately, *Dracula* juxtaposes two competing racializations: while Harker's travel narrative revolves around contrasting the perceived inferior nature of superstitious Transylvanian locals to his own modern, rational Protestant English self, and later provides to the reader a description of Dracula as a vile monster, Dracula turns the tables around and holds the Székelys to be a superior warrior race. Dracula bases this claim on two aspects: his Hunnic blood and the militaristic achievements of the Székelys. Through this juxtaposition, the novel illustrates that during the late nineteenth century, there were two opposing and competing ways for Europe to shape itself ideologically: either with modernism, rationalism, and economic progress or with an archaic worldview of racial purity and its wars, bloodshed, superstitious practices and socio-economic devolution. Although the novel portrays Dracula and his ideas as evil and parasitic, it also cherishes a certain degree of fascination and sympathy for him and his Transylvania. In the novel, the fascination with Dracula lies in the autocratic vigor and Burkean eloquence with which Dracula argues his morally reprehensible ideas, suggesting that an audience participating in the orator's illusion of grandeur is key to its persuasion. In addition, the novel, although first linking Transylvanian multilingualism to fear and confusion, also appreciates the multilingual population of Transylvania and its primitive way of life, arguing it is attractive in its own right. The novel's fascination and sympathy for Dracula and his Transylvanian subjects complicates a decisive answer to the question of who should have the right to rule Europe. Although the novel expresses its preference for the English program through the victory of the Western vampire-hunting fraternity over Dracula, the novel is nevertheless confused since it ambivalently considers the Dutch and the Americans as potential future hegemons. The novel's appreciation for Dracula and his Transylvania seems contradictory to its Gothic genre, but is in fact part of a larger tendency in nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish literature that holds resistance against English hegemony both as appealing and appalling. While this resistance is typically Irish, in *Dracula* the counterpart to the English is the Hun-Székely Dracula. Despite the novel not mentioning Ireland explicitly, the text can be read as a comparison of the situation in Ireland, since the Irish face English colonialism from the British Empire, and Dracula's Transylvania struggles for independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Regarding Hungarian-Celtic relations, a comparison of Dracula's rhetoric speech to the Hungarian revolutionary Sándor Petőfi's poetry on the Székelys reveals similarities to a striking extent, which illustrates that to Stoker, the Székelys were examples of regional patriots. In Hungarian discourse, the poets Sándor Petőfi and János Arany fought for Hungarian independence from Austrian control and sought solidarity with other ethnic groups. While Petőfi turned to a Hungarian subgroup, the Székelys, for support, Arany wrote about the Welsh. His poem "A walesi

bárdok [The Welsh Bards]" (1857) tells the story of how three Welsh bards refuse to recite a praise poem for the English king Edward I (Arany). These examples suggest that Hungarian-Celtic relations in literature form a counterpart to the English, Dutch and American vampire-hunting fraternity of *Dracula*. In addition, this imagined fraternity of Celtic nations and Hungarians is characterized by transnational sympathy for their respective efforts to retain their own identity in the wake of larger empires imposing their own programs, and thus demand further investigation. Another suggestion for further research on the novel concerns the discussion of politics in its afterlife. Is any of the novel's political commentary on the Hun-Székely Dracula retained in modern adaptations, such as films and cultural heritage sites? In other words, how has Dracula evolved in popular culture and what does that reveal about changes in context?

Appendix 1: Translation of Sándor Petőfi's "A Székelyek"

The Székelys

I don't have to say: go forward, Székelys!
You go forward anyway, heroic lads;
Each of them wishes to fight there,
Where the battle clamors most terribly.
The Székely blood has not degenerated yet!
Every small drop is worth an expensive pearl.

The way they approach death,
Is like how others attend weddings;
Flowers are attached to their hats
And they sing on the battlefield.
The Székely blood has not degenerated yet!
Every small drop is worth an expensive pearl.

Who would dare to challenge them?
Who carries such courage in their hearts?
They go, and fly, like the wind, and chase
The enemy, like the wind chases dust!
The Székely blood has not degenerated yet,
Every small drop is worth an expensive pearl!

Karánsebes, 17 April 1849.

Translated by: Viktória Marácz
Taken from: https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Verstar-verstar-otven-kolto-osszes-verse-2/petofi-sandor-DFB2/1849-FBA8/a-szekelyek-FC25/.

Appendix 2: Translation of Sándor Petőfi's "A Székelyekhez"

To the Székelys

The dark cloud encircles the sky,
A lonely star shines at the center.
That star is the Hungarian people's image,
That strange people have enclosed.

The world is vast, and we don't have brothers in it,
No one, who will join us in our sorrows.
Of course, the world isn't brotherly to the Hungarian!
Every human who sees him is his enemy.

If the Hungarian forsakes the Hungarian,
Then there will be no one for him,
He will vanish, like a star from the sky,
When the dark clouds fall on it.

Rise, Székely, rise, common is our enemy,
Who damages you, like they damage us,
Who chained you, like they chained us,
We will break the common shackles together!

Because we have to be free at last;
Let the whole world be against us!
Let us not fall into doubt,
Because we have the truth and God!

Let us show them: the Hungarian is not
Like a candle, that can be blown out;
The Hungarian has to live forever,
And may not be a slave any longer!

Rise, Székely, confront the enemy;
Who confronts them, if not the Székely?
Since Attila was their forefather,
Whom they named the scrouge of God!

In vain, Vienna, your wickedness in vain!
You may send to us the Serb, the Croat;
It shall stand, it shall stand, the Hungarian home!
We shall live, we shall live in freedom!

Pest, September 1848.
Translated by: Viktória Marácz

Taken from: https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Verstar-verstar-otven-kolto-osszes-verse-2/petofi-sandor-DFB2/1848-F625/a-szekelyekhez-FABB/.

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