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Jules Verne and the Transylvanian Struggle for Independence: Political Appropriation in Victor Onișor's 1897 Translation of *Le château des Carpathes*

Abstract: In 1897, when Great Britain witnessed the release of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Transylvania and Romania saw the publication of two renditions of Jules Verne's 1892 *Le château des Carpathes*. Originally printed in France, the novel's release coincided with the Transylvanian Memorandum movement, which brought international attention to the region's Romanian population and their struggle for emancipation from the oppressive measures imposed by the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy. Published in Transylvania, Victor Onișor's *Castelul din Carpați*, the most famous of the two translations, was serialized in the newspaper *Tribuna*, whose founder, Ioan Slavici, stood at the forefront of the movement and whose views traditionally aligned with the German cultural model due to their ties with the Romanian literary group "Junimea". In this chapter, I compare this rendition with Verne's text and the unsigned rendition published later that same year in Romania and show that *Tribuna's* politicized translation of *Le château des Carpathes* removed the German and Hungarian element underlying Verne's portrayal of the region, yet only denounced the influence of the former.

Keywords: Dracula, Jules Verne, Victor Onișor, vampire myth

Introduction

The emergence of the modern vampire myth in Romania is intrinsically connected with the practice of translation. Historian Ivan Evseev traces the introduction of the word "vampire" in the Romanian language back to an early translation of Victor Hugo's 1825 ballad "La ronde du sabbat" ["The Sabbath Round-Dance"], which was produced by Moldavian poet Constache Negruzzi and initially released in 1839.¹ By this juncture, "the Romanian elite [had already

¹ Ivan Evseev, "Vampir," in Ivan Evseev, *Dicționar de magie, demonologie și mitologie românească* (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1997), 481. Evseev correctly attributes the introduction of the word in the Romanian language to Negruzzi, yet according to Romanian critic Eugen Lovinescu, his translation of "La ronde du sabbat" was initially published in the cultural magazine *Albina* [The Bee] on September 17, 1839. Eugen Lovinescu,

thrown] itself into the arms of France, the great Latin sister in the West"² when, in the wake of the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–29, the Ottoman Empire's grip on Moldavia and Wallachia had been significantly reduced and the two Romanian Principalities came under the protection of a French-speaking Slav aristocracy.

"Within a generation, starting immediately after 1830, French imposed itself as the language of culture,"³ *la mode Parisienne* superseded Oriental fashion, and the affluent youth of the two Principalities set out for the French capital to pursue higher education. The Constitution of 1866, issued after the 1859 Union between Moldavia and Wallachia, drew obvious inspiration from its French-language Belgian counterpart. For several decades in a row, "[t]he French myth was so powerful that there was only room [...] for a single *countermyth*, antithetical and complementary: the German myth."⁴ Transylvania, a crown province of the Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian Empire since 1804, was particularly receptive to its influence, with the Romanian elite in Transylvania often reading French writers in German translations and attending universities in Vienna or Berlin.

"While the German cultural model was dominant for the Romanians of Transylvania, they also looked sympathetically towards France."⁵ It was in Sibiu that student and soon-to-be lawyer Victor Onișor released the first Romanian translation of Jules Verne's 1892 *Le château des Carpathes* [Castelul din Carpați/ The Carpathian Castle], one of the earliest works to associate Transylvania with vampires and call attention to its tumultuous political history. The talk of various local publications across the Romanian Principalities, Onișor's 1897 deluxe book-length edition – it had been serialized first in the Sibiu-based newspaper *Tribuna* [The Tribune] – received in short order various accolades for its "clear [and] elegant Romanian" and high production value, which boasted no less than 26 "splendid illustrations" reproducing the original artwork of the first French edition.⁶ Unsurprisingly, all the reviews mention the setting of the plot – the subtitle of the translation, "novel inspired by the life of the Romanian people in

Costache Negruzzi: *Viața și opera lui* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului de Arte Grafice Minerva, 1913), 96.

2 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 160.

3 *Ibid.*, 161.

4 *Ibid.*, 162.

5 *Ibid.*, 163.

6 All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The quotations above are extracted from a compilation of various reviews put together by the editors of *Tribuna*. ***, "Castelul din Carpați: Aprecierile presei," *Tribuna* 14, no. 242 (1897): 967.

Transylvania," leaves, in fact, no room to circumvent it –, going in some cases as far as to suggest that this "so very *Romanian* novel, which was awarded a prize by the French Academy, reads as if its famed author sought to appeal to us Romanians specifically."⁷

It was the first yet not the only Romanian rendition of the novel to be published in 1897. A *Tribuna* advertorial dated June 7 anticipating the first installment of Onișor's translation claims that this version is "the sole authorized rendition of the novel into Romanian" by J. Hetzel, the French publisher of Verne's novels, with "no other newspaper or magazine [being] licensed to release [*Le château des Carpathes*]."⁸ Six months later, however, an unnamed contributor to *Ziarul călătoriilor și al întâmplărilor de pe mare și uscat* [The Journal of Travels and Adventures by Land and Sea], a magazine newly founded in Bucharest, the capital of the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (hereinafter referred to as "Romania"), would inaugurate the first issue, released on November 5, with a new translation of the first two chapters of *Le château des Carpathes*.

It is unclear whether Verne's publisher was in any way aware of this second rendition into Romanian – virtually all the press articles advertising Onișor's translation stress that, at least in Transylvania, no other publishing house except the *Tribuna*-owned "Tipografia" [The Printing House] was authorized to print this or any other rendition of the novel into Romanian –, yet it is certain that Romanians south of the Carpathians had access to a new translation of the novel, which was similarly promoted as "speaking highly of [their] brothers across the mountains."⁹ The anonymous rendition did not elicit as much critical attention as its Transylvanian counterpart, nor did the advertorials promoting its release acknowledge the existence of Onișor's version, published only a few months earlier that year, although other Bucharest-based newspapers took due note of it.¹⁰

In other words, Jules Verne's *Le château des Carpathes* was rendered twice into Romanian at a time when another novel would establish Transylvania as the definitive "imaginative whirlpool" of all superstitions: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In what follows, however, I will not refer to this vampire classic; although released

7 Ibid. Original emphasis.

8 ***, "Castelul din Carpați," *Tribuna* 14, no. 126 (1897): 502.

9 ***, "Informațiuni. Miercuri," *Universul* 15, no. 259 (1897): 3.

10 An October 1897 issue of *Adevărul* [The Truth] mentions the release of Onișor's translation. Despite not focusing on the merits of the rendition, which were spoken highly of in other reviews, the author notes that "readers will find in [Castelul din Carpați] moving scenes [and] picturesque descriptions which bear witness to the French writer's prodigious talent." ***, "Castelul din Carpați," *Adevărul* 10, no. 2971 (1897): 2.

in late May, several months before the two translations, neither the preface to the book-length edition of Onișor's *Castelul din Carpați* and its reviews, nor the press articles advertising the unsigned rendition mention it.¹¹ For the same reason, I will not dwell on other earlier horror works set in Transylvania such as Alexandre Dumas père's 1849 "Histoire de la dame pâle" ["The Pale Lady"], translated into Romanian as early as 1852,¹² even if the two French writers enjoyed a close relationship and were equally popular in both Romania and Transylvania.¹³

Rather, this chapter explores the political dimension of Verne's *Le château des Carpathes*, whose original release and translation in Transylvania coincided with the Memorandum movement and its aftermath, which paved the way for the 1918 Union between Transylvania and Romania. Prefaced and produced by Elie Dăianu and Victor Onișor respectively, two of the activists involved in the movement, *Castelul din Carpați* was originally serialized in the Sibiu-based newspaper *Tribuna*, which stood at the forefront of the campaign, yet whose views more closely aligned with the German rather the French cultural model. In comparing this rendition with Verne's text and the anonymous rendition published that same year in Romania, I show that *Tribuna's* version of *Le château des Carpathes*

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- 11 In fact, *Dracula* appears to have come to public attention only as late as 1922, when F.W. Muranu's unauthorized cinema adaptation *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* [Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horrors] was released in Romanian theaters, and the fact that Stoker's novel is partially set in Transylvania was virtually ignored until Ion Gorun's German-mediated translation into Romanian was published in 1928–9. As I show in my introduction to the re-release of this rendition, *Dracula* was initially received in the Count's native lands as pulp fiction: unlike Onișor's rendition of Verne's novel, it was never reprinted in an individual edition, and until 2023, it had been considered lost or non-existent. Anca Simina Martin, "Studiu introductiv," in Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Bucharest: Editura Dezarticulat, 2023), 18.
- 12 George A. Baronzi's "Castelul brâncovenesc" [The Brankovan Castle] does not credit Dumas with the source work, yet Romanian critic G. Călinescu restores its paternity in 1960, concluding that this rendition, and Ștefan Octavian Iosif and Dimitrie Anghel's 1909 "Strigoii Carpaților" [The Vampire of the Carpathians] draw both on "Histoire de la dame pâle." Al. Piru, "Dumas și românii," *Luceafărul* 20, no. 31 (1977): 6.
- 13 According to Romanian critic Ștefan Baghiu, "[t]he French culture is [...] the main source for the local literary translation scene in respect to the novel, and non-French literatures are only soft 'competitors' in the 1890s. The French novel is now represented by Alexandre Dumas-Père's and Jules Verne's adventure novels." Ștefan Baghiu, "Translations of Novels in the Romanian Culture during the Interwar Period and WWII (1918–1944): A Quantitative Perspective," *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 7, no. 2 (2021): 28–45, 33.

removed the German and Hungarian element underlying Verne's portrayal of Transylvania, yet only denounced the influence of the latter, whereas the unsigned edition appears to have simply capitalized on the novel's setting and its author's popularity, with no discernable political agenda.

Onișor's *Castelul Carpaților* and the Memorandum Movement

According to Romanian historian Valeriu Achim, "the late nineteenth-century Memorandum activism (1885–1897) [...] was Transylvanian Romanians' most influential political movement between the 1848 Revolution and the Great Union of 1918."¹⁴ The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 brought the region back under Hungarian control, dissolving the separate principality which had existed since the "bestowed" Austrian Constitution of March 1849, which guaranteed Transylvania's independence from Budapest. The efforts to Magyarize the region's administration, education, and legal system would soon gain momentum, sparking an outcry among the Romanian elite who joined forces in 1881 and founded the Romanian National Party of Transylvania, Banat, and Hungary, a political formation designed to advocate for the rights and political representation of the majority Romanian population. The newspaper *Tribuna*, founded three years later, would become the party's mouthpiece in 1893, playing a vital role in the promotion of the Memorandum, a petition signaling the abusive measures of the Hungarian government, which had been drafted by the party and unsuccessfully submitted to the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph in 1892, despite being endorsed by King Carol I of Romania, almost 3,000 signatories, and a delegation of close to 300 Transylvanian professionals.¹⁵

As a result, "[t]he Hungarians took offence: the Romanians should have gone to Budapest, not Vienna (even though the Emperor of Austria and the King of Hungary were one and the same person),"¹⁶ and in 1894, the authors of the Memorandum were brought before court in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) and accused, among others, of conspiring to overthrow constitutional order by publishing the

14 Valeriu Achim, "Paternitatea nord-vestică a Memorandumului din 1892," in *Memorandul Românilor, Centenar (1892, 1894 – 1992, 1994): Contribuții la cunoașterea mișcării memorandiste*, eds. Viorica Ursu, Ioan Igna, Mircea Pop, and Lucia Pop (Baia Mare: Muzeul de istorie Baia Mare, 1994), 217–221, 217.

15 Liviu Botezan, "Vasile Lucaciu și mișcarea memorandistă," in *Memorandul Românilor*, 39–76, as well as 48–49.

16 Lucian Boia, *Romania: Borderland of Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 93.

petition and disseminating it in various foreign languages.¹⁷ This legal action and the subsequent guilty verdict caused an international uproar, with various political and cultural figures from abroad – which included the likes of Georges Clemenceau and Émile Zola – and various groups in Romania and Transylvania pressuring the Austro-Hungarian authorities to reconsider the decision and release the petitioners from prison. Among the fourteen incarcerated activists was Ioan Rațiu, one of the founders of the party, who, in 1896, would acquire ownership of *Tribuna*.¹⁸ The young Romanian activists studying in Budapest who called for protests against the trial – and were later investigated for their support of the movement¹⁹ – included none other than Victor Onișor and Elie Dăianu,²⁰ who authored the preface to the former's *Castelul din Carpați*.

In 1896, Rațiu – pardoned by the Emperor Franz Joseph in 1895 along with the other Memorandum petitioners – entrusted Dăianu with the editorial management of *Tribuna* at a time when “the dispute within the different factions of the Romanian National Party had intensified.”²¹ This atmosphere would carry over into the newspaper's editorial board, and the successful release of *Tribuna Poporului* [The People's Tribune], established by the founders of *Tribuna* in Arad a year later, along with the many fines incurred from breaking the period's press law, led to a crisis.²² It is against this background that the newspaper serialized Onișor's translation of *Le château des Carpathes*, starting on June 11/23, 1897.

17 Ștefan Pietraru, “Procesele presei românești din Transilvania (1867–1919),” in *Memorandul Românilor*, 234–241, 236.

18 Vlad Popovici, *Tribunismul (1884–1905)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa universitară clujeană), 196–197.

19 Valentin Orga, “Din zile de detenție: Însemnările lui Elie Dăianu din anii 1917–1918,” *Revista Bistriței XVII* (2003): 247–265, 248.

20 In 1901, Dăianu would translate into Romanian *Supplex Libellus Valachorum Transilvaniae* [The Petition of the Wallachians in Transylvania] (1791), two memoranda written in Latin whereby the Romanian signatories demanded from the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II equal political rights with the other ethnic groups of Transylvania. Orga, “Din zile de detenție,” 249. Victor Onișor would represent the Transylvanian County of Bistrița Năsăud in the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, an event which paved the way for the union between Transylvania and Romania in 1918. Luminița Moga, “Un studiu memorialistic despre Marea Unire – Victor Onișor și Marea Unire de la Alba-Iulia,” *Tribuna*. Online: <https://tribuna-magazine.com/un-studiu-memorialistic-despre-marea-unire-victor-onisor-si-marea-unire-de-la-alba-iulia>, last accessed 21 April 2023.

21 Orga, “Din zile de detenție,” 249.

22 Popovici, *Tribunismul*, 181–98.

Under the previous leadership, spearheaded by Romanian journalist and writer Ioan Slavici, *Tribuna's* literary policy focused on promoting those elements of the paradigm proposed by the "Junimea" [The Youth] literary society in Romania which could be grafted onto the newspaper's ideology: "phonetic spelling, cultural unity of all Romanians, and the coming together of the elite and the masses through cultural endeavors."²³ Popular realist works such as those penned by Slavici himself or the translation of foreign works which were built on similar frameworks – rural settings, a moral tone – or "exalt[ed] the national spirit within the political bounds of the Empire"²⁴ were instrumentalized to emphasize linguistic and cultural kinship with the Romanians beyond the Carpathians. Initially in favor of a reconciliation with the Hungarians, Slavici's pro-German views and ties with the "Junimea" group ultimately encouraged a substantially more positive portrayal of the Germans, who are frequently characterized in *Tribuna* as everything Hungarians are not, i.e., a "large, educated, and mighty people."²⁵

By the time Onișor published his version of Verne's novel in 1897, phonetic spelling had become the norm in Transylvania, and *Tribuna's* internal crisis had subsided, since in 1896, the old management left for Arad, where Slavici and others had established a new publication, *Tribuna poporului*. However, full emancipation from Hungarian control, let alone the union between Transylvania and Romania – an ideal which, despite their feuds, animated both publications –, was not yet in sight. In this context, the prospect of translating Verne's *Le château des Carpathes* was too tempting an opportunity to overlook, not only because it was authored by a highly popular French writer who represented an equally influential cultural model,²⁶ but also because it spoke in clear terms of a Hungarian-oppressed Transylvania. However, Verne's Transylvania features a second foreign element, the German one, which unlike the former, was unacknowledged yet similarly effaced.

23 Ibid., 334.

24 Ibid., 300.

25 Ibid., 378.

26 As Baghiu shows in his 2020 "Translations of Novels in the Romanian Culture During the Long Nineteenth Century (1794–1914)," the period spanning 1794 and 1918 witnessed the publication of 1,473 translations of French novels and only 131 renditions of German-language works. Ștefan Baghiu, "Translations of Novels in the Romanian Culture during the Long Nineteenth Century (1794–1914): A Quantitative Perspective," *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 6, no. 2 (2021): 87–106, 94.

Tribuna's Nationalistic Appropriation of Le château des Carpathes: A Comparison with Castelul Carpaților

With all his perceived sympathy towards the plight of the Romanians within the Carpathians – to which Elie Dăianu, who authored the preface to Onișor's translation, alludes when referencing the year in which the novel was published²⁷ –, Verne's Transylvania in *Le château des Carpathes* is an oddity: all the characters are Romanians, yet their names are, in most cases, German and the toponymy is, by and large, of Hungarian origin.²⁸ Dăianu attributes this peculiarity to the French writer's "Hungarian-informed sources,"²⁹ of which Verne makes no secret in the first chapter of his novel, where he mentions "M. [Auguste] de Gérando" and "M. Elisée Reclus,"³⁰ two French authors who wrote about Transylvania. "Our translator," continues Dăianu, "was so fortunate and so free to change the Hungarian names with Romanian ones as it is [Romanian characters] who have them and, in so doing, the book looks as if it was written by a Romanian."³¹ However, except for Patak, the village "doctor," and Telek, the count from Krajowa [Craiova], no other name is, as Ion Hobana puts it, "undoubtedly Magyar,"³² an aspect that Dăianu seems to conveniently overlook and Onișor duly localizes, with no consideration to the fact that they do not have direct Romanian counterparts: the fictional Werst is substituted with the real-life village Mățești, possibly through a calque with "Wurst,"³³ the shepherd Frik becomes Bucur, the herdsman who is believed to have founded Bucharest, while Hermod the schoolteacher, inspired by the eponymous character from E. T. A. Hoffmann's 1820 *Prinzessin Brambilla: Ein Capriccio nach J. Callot* [Princess Brambilla], turns into Petrică.

27 Elie Dăianu, "Jules Verne: Scriitor și scrieri," in Jules Verne, *Castelul din Carpați* (Sibiu: Tipografia, 1897), V–XII, XII.

28 Roxana M. Verona, "Jules Verne in Transylvania," *The Comparatist*, no. 28 (2004): 135–150, 136.

29 Dăianu, "Jules Verne," X.

30 Here, as on other occasions henceforth, I use an English translation of *Le château des Carpathes* whenever I quote Verne's novel. Jules Verne, *The Castle of the Carpathians* (Akron: The Saalfield Publishing Company, 1900), 1–2.

31 Dăianu, "Jules Verne," X.

32 Ion Hobana, *Jules Verne in România?* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1986), 68.

33 The casing of a "Wurst" or "sausage" is usually a pork intestine or "maț" in Romanian.

The anonymous translator of *Castelul Carpaților* is less inclined to fully Romani-
anize Verne's onomastics and toponymy. A case in point are the protagonists of the
novel – Rodolphe de Gortz, the Transylvanian hermit baron, and Franz de Telek, the
young Romanian count from Krajowa, whose German-Hungarian names Onișor
adapts as Radu de Gorț and Emil Telesco.³⁴ In contrast, the translator of *Castelul
Carpaților* resorts to the same Radu de Gorț, whereas Francisc de Telek or Telec, the
equivalent of the latter's name, still sounds decisively foreign. Admittedly, the stakes
of foregrounding Romanian origin were significantly higher in Rodolphe's case; his
lineage traces back to “[t]he barons of Gortz, [who were] mixed up in all the wars
which ensanguined the Transylvanian fields; they fought against the Hungarians,
the Saxons, the Szeklers,”³⁵ with their family motto, the “famous Wallachian pro-
verb, *Da pe moarte* [Dă până la moarte], ‘Give unto death;’ [bearing witness to how]
they poured out their blood for the cause of independence.”³⁶ Yet, in the absence of
a preface pointing to a nationalistic instrumentalization of Verne's text, it is nearly
impossible to argue whether the unknown translator genuinely intended to empha-
size de Gortz's patriotic genealogy – or his contribution to the region's struggle for
emancipation by “[taking] part in one of the sanguinary revolts of the Romanian
peasantry against Hungarian oppression”³⁷ – or found his name easier to stylize in
Romanian than de Telek's.

However, Onișor's rendition goes to even greater lengths to emphasize Verne's
sympathy towards the plight of Transylvanian Romanians. Indeed, as Matthew
Gibson explains in *Dracula and the Eastern Question*, the French writer manipu-
lates many “heroic elements of Hungarian history, [appropriating them] into that
of the Vlachs [in order to] [stress] their oppression and rebellion,” albeit it is dif-
ficult to say whether he did so out of political conviction – Verne was “a believer
in the rights of smaller nations to self-determination,”³⁸ yet in his late years, [he

34 The proper Romanian spelling is, however, “Telescu”; Onișor is probably paying lip
service to the French-inspired tradition of replacing the final “-u” with “-o,” which
was common practice among the Francophile Romanian elite in Romania even as late
as the interwar period, especially in the case of those who studied in or relocated to
France.

35 Verne, *The Castle*, 21.

36 Original emphasis. Verne, *The Castle*, 22.

37 *Ibid.*, 23.

38 Matthew Gibson, “Jules Verne's *Le Château des Carpathes* (1892) and the Romans
of Transylvania,” in *Dracula and the Eastern Question: British and French Vampire
Narratives of the Nineteenth-Century Near East*, ed. Matthew Gibson (Hampshire and
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 147–174, 147.

became] rather skeptical or even bitter about nationalist discourses³⁹ – or as a marketing ploy to appeal to his audience – the fictional Transylvania “nostalgically [evoked] an idealized Ancien Régime France,”⁴⁰ while the region’s real-life struggles were making headlines as early as 1881, when the French translation of *Memoriul studenților universitari români privitor la situația românilor din Transilvania și Ungaria* [The Plea of the Romanian Students Regarding the Predicament of Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary] was published.⁴¹ What is clear is that Onișor took similar liberties with Verne’s portrayal of Transylvania: its “wildest part” no longer coincides with “the county of Klausenburg or Kolosvar,”⁴² while “Erdelyi,” the Magyar denomination for the region, as Verne glosses it, becomes the Romanianized “Ardeal.”⁴³

Interestingly enough, similar changes were brought to the unsigned *Castelul Carpaților*, with the amendment that the Hungarian etymology of “Ardeal” is preserved,⁴⁴ and its translator, unlike Onișor, only Romanianizes the German “Hermanstadt” [Sibiu] and not the Hungarian “Kolosvar” [Cluj]. The attempts to Magyarize the region “to the advantage of Transylvanian unity”⁴⁵ are omitted from both translations, yet in the anonymous rendition, the original account of its ethnic make-up is added the presence of the Jews,⁴⁶ possibly for acknowledging Jonas, the innkeeper at “King Mathias,” who unlike the unnamed Polish peddler, the only other Jewish character, is neither transient nor excluded by the villagers in Werst, whose anxieties regarding the strange events at the castle he shares. For the French novelist, “Jonas is a philosemitic characterization who proves a general antisemitic rule,”⁴⁷ which also happens to be the key in which

39 Anca Mitroi, “Jules Verne’s Transylvania: Cartographic Omissions,” in *Histoires de la Terre: Earth Sciences and French Culture 1740–1940*, eds. Louise Lyle and David McCallam (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), 182.

40 Mitroi, “Jules Verne’s Transylvania,” 174.

41 Hobana, *Jules Verne*, 72.

42 Verne, *The Castle*, 3; Verne, *Castelul din Carpați*, 3; Verne, ‘Castelul Carpaților,’ *Ziarul călătoriilor și al întâmplărilor de pe mare și uscat* 1 (1897): 4.

43 Verne, *The Castle*, 3; Verne, *Castelul din Carpați*, 3.

44 Verne, *Castelul Carpaților*, 4, 5.

45 Verne, *The Castle*, 4; Verne, *Castelul din Carpați*, 4.

46 The unknown translator also deviates from the original text in that they distinguish between Germans and Saxons, while omitting the Szeklers of Moldavian origin or possibly subsuming them under Hungarians.

47 Daniel Renshaw, “A Fine Fellow ... Although rather Semitic’: Jews and Antisemitism in Jules Verne’s *Le château des Carpathes* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” *Jewish Culture and History* 23, no. 4 (2022): 289–306, 297–298.

Dăianu, who prefaced *Castelul din Carpați*, reads the character: “Oh! The Jews! Verne also warns us of the danger posed by this element, which Jonas, otherwise one of the earnest of Jews, embodies. He cautions that if we do not take heed, these ‘Jonases’ will gradually take possession of the Romanian peasants’ lands and make themselves masters of this country.”⁴⁸ In this context, too, Dăianu’s stance is a reflection of *Tribuna*’s discourse, which presumed a link between this group and the Magyarization efforts;⁴⁹ that Jonas’ inn is named after a famed Hungarian king whose equally well-known father was of Romanian origin may have triggered a similar analogy in *Castelul din Carpați*. Onișor’s translation might also contain traces of ethnic bias against the Slavs, which the same *Tribuna* treated rather ambivalently,⁵⁰ as this version, unlike *Castelul Carpaților*, no longer depicts the Romanian language as “a mixture of Latin and [Slavic].”⁵¹

The paragraphs above are not the only ones in which the Transylvanian translation deviates from the source text – the Hungarian government, which, according to Verne, could “[decide] to destroy this inaccessible haunt [the castle],” is stripped of its ethnic component, hence occulting the Magyar jurisdiction over Transylvanian issues⁵² – or overemphasizes the French novelist’s perceived philo-Romanianness – in a footnote on “Da pe maorte” and “Roman no père” [Românul nu piere], Dăianu or Onișor speak highly of the Romanian-language slogans and words with which Verne interspersed his novel.⁵³ However, these are not the only contexts in which the unknown translator seems to move indiscriminately between fidelity and adaptation: in *Castelul Carpaților*, the peasant revolt in which de Gortz participates no longer references the Hungarian oppression to which they are subjected, yet the Magyar authorities are still said to have dominion over the future of his castle.⁵⁴

Although it is tempting to read omissions such the Transylvanians’ Magyarization as a silent dialogue between the two translations on the region’s struggle for

48 Dăianu, “Jules Verne,” XI. Dăianu does not comment on Transylvania’s other marginalized group, the Roma, which are conspicuously missing from Onișor’s translation of the ethnic tableau Verne painted for the setting of *Le château des Carpathes*. They are, however, present elsewhere in the rendition where the French novelist mentions them.

49 Popovici, *Tribunismul*, 379.

50 Ibid.

51 Verne, *The Castle*, 9; Verne, *Castelul din Carpați*, 378–379.

52 Verne, *The Castle*, 102–3; Verne, *Castelul din Carpați*, 120.

53 Verne, *Castelul din Carpați*, 26.

54 Verne, *Castelul Carpaților*, 7; Jules Verne, “Castelul Carpaților,” *Ziarul călătoriilor și al întâmplărilor de pe mare și uscat* 1, no. 6 (1897): 43–47, 45.

independence, *Castelul Carpaților* ultimately features too much translational inconsistency and too little textual evidence to support such a theory. In contrast, *Castelul din Carpați* appears to have brought targeted changes to Verne's text, foregrounding Hungarian oppression and silently localizing the German foreign element, while simultaneously emphasizing Transylvania's agency and the Romanian element. This programmatic approach to *Le château des Carpathes* did not pass unnoticed; with the exception of only one critic, all other reviewers recognized it for what it sought to be: a foreign-authored plea for Transylvania's self-determination and a testimony in support of Romanian continuity in the region.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: Ilarie Chendi's Review of *Castelul din Carpați*

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter and noted by other scholars,⁵⁵ *Castelul din Carpați* was welcomed enthusiastically by most literary critics, especially in Transylvania. In Bucharest, *Liga Română* [The Romanian League], the publication of the Romanian organization "Liga pentru unitatea culturală a tuturor românilor" [The League for the Cultural Unity of All Romanians],⁵⁶ which advocated fervently for the Transylvanian cause and against the persecution of the Memorandum petitioners,⁵⁷ similarly noted the translation's potential for "providing foreigners with an accurate representation of the cultural and national relations of the Romanians across the mountains."⁵⁸ Others remarked on the novel's – and hence the rendition's – contribution to promoting scientific advancements,⁵⁹ while still other critics commented on their role in "combating ill-founded beliefs in ghost and supernatural beings,"⁶⁰ merits which Dăianu also highlights in his preface.⁶¹

55 Verona, "Jules Verne," 145; Mitroi, "Jules Verne's Transylvania," 183; Hobana, *Jules Verne*, 106.

56 The League's founders in 1891 included, among others, Ioan Slavici.

57 Petre Țurlea, "Profesorul Ioan Lupulescu: Primul secretar al Ligii Culturale," in *Memorandul Românilor*, 162–163.

58 ***, "Voci din presă despre *Castelul din Carpați*: Liga Română," *Tribuna* 14, no. 281 (1898): 119.

59 ***, "Voci din presă despre *Castelul din Carpați*: Unirea," *Tribuna* 14, no. 285 (1898): 147.

60 D. P. Barciănu, "Castelul din Carpați: Recensiune," *Tribuna* 15, no. 34 (1898): 135.

61 Dăianu, "Jules Verne," VII, IX, X–XI.

Transylvanian-born critic Ilarie Chendi went against the grain; after a brief, positive piece on the rendition,⁶² the magazine *Familia* [The Family], headquartered in Oradea, then also part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, released the harshest and, at the same time, the most forward-thinking review of Verne's novel.⁶³ "*Le Château des Carpathes* [...] is not written for the Romanians but for the French," Chendi argues, "[a]nd to amuse the latter, the novelist does not give any thought to how he portrays us."⁶⁴ The critic admits, however, extenuating circumstances – "Die Kunst ist schauen und empfinden." Verne's perspective and sentiment were misguided by [the] imperfect mediator" he found in French geographer and friend Elisée Reclus's account of a "romantic Latin people dwelling in the Carpathians and living a primitive yet idyllic life"⁶⁵ –, but remains steadfast in his condemnation of the author's colonial gaze: "[t]he more gullible, naïve, and superstitious [the French novelist] portrays us [and] the more outlandish the Oriental robes he drapes us in, the more *impactful* his novel."⁶⁶

As for the translation, Chendi considers that "M. V. Onișor carried out the task which he had taken upon himself with undoubted skill."⁶⁷ Yet by Romanianizing Verne's toponymy and the names of the original characters, the critic continues, "the reader was inoculated some impressions which, had they read

62 ***, "Jules Verne în românește," *Familia* 33, no. 42 (1897): 503.

63 Chendi's review is a valuable critical contribution even outside of its considerations on *Castelul din Carpați*. In the essay, the scholar attempts to map the source cultures of the texts which had been rendered into Romanian until that moment – however, he erroneously argues that "most translations come from German" –, while also urging for a more "orderly and strategic" translation program. Ilarie Chendi, "Jules Verne: Castelul din Carpați. Recenziune (I)," *Familia* 33, no. 45 (1897): 546–548, 546. Moreover, he nuances Dăianu's understanding of what a "scientific" novel is – i.e., a work which "never [transcends] the realm of reality and probability, and for whose unexplained events one finds, sooner rather than latter, a logical explanation, be it in a law of physics, chemistry, or mathematics" –, arguing that in such writings "the inanimate is animated and science is used as a distraction." That technology breathes life into the superstitions of Werst's villagers and perpetuates their state of oppression is an interpretation which also features in contemporary readings of the novel such as that proposed by Matthew Gibson in his 2006 *Dracula and the Eastern Question*. Dăianu, "Jules Verne," VII; Gibson, "Jules Verne's *Le Château des Carpathes*," 159–60; Ilarie Chendi, "Jules Verne: Castelul din Carpați. Recenziune (II)," *Familia* 33, no. 47 (1897): 555–558, 556.

64 *Ibid.*, 555.

65 *Ibid.*, 547.

66 Original emphasis. In English, "Art is to look and feel!" *Ibid.*, 555.

67 *Ibid.*, 558.

the original, they would *not* have gotten,” which is only aggravated by Dăianu’s political comments, extracted from the “all-too-few reflections such as ‘Dă pe moarte,’ which have nothing to do with the rest of the novel.”⁶⁸ His comments, although forward-thinking in the context of modern readings of the Gothic representation of Transylvania and “Orientalized” discourses on the (semi)peripheries, did not generate too strong of an echo; in an article celebrating Verne’s 100th anniversary, published a few days short of December 1, 1928, which marked a decade since the Union of Transylvania with Romania, and a little over a month before the release of Ion Gorun’s German-mediated translation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Em. C. Grigoraș wrote,

“[W]e, Romanians, have the duty to celebrate Jules Verne. When the question of our nationality was brought before the entire world, Jules Verne drew attention to us through *Le château des Carpathes*. Who can forget the immense joy of the previous generations when, amidst the period’s topical issues, [the novel] was released in our country, too. And in Transylvania of all places! Who can forget this keen observer of ours, who in the very first pages of his novel barraged our adversaries with [“Go unto death”] and [“The Romanian shall not perish”], written in our own language? [...]

Today, when our circumstances are different, let us not forget he who, with his colossal talent, knew how to bring us into the limelight, a service which we so greatly needed to get where we are now.”⁶⁹

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⁶⁸ Original emphasis. *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Em. C. Grigoraș, “Jules Verne,” *Adevărul* 43, no. 13781 (1928): 1.

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