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[jjmg@uma.es](mailto:jjmg@uma.es)**'The Enemy Within': Liminality, Otherness and Neo-Victorian Gypsies**

Gypsies, or Romanies, are a collective against whom, for centuries, white Europeans have posited a series of racial prejudices and stereotypes. Qualified alternatively as criminals, child kidnappers, or tricksters, gypsies have long been portrayed in British literature as liminal individuals, positively perceived as linked to nature and the pastoral ancestry of European populations, on the one hand, but contrary to the values of modernity, on the other (Nord 3-4), as well as often linked to Eastern mysticism in their usual representation as fortune-tellers or palm-readers. Nineteenth-century literature exhibited such preoccupations with the figure of the gypsy and its liminality and otherness, as it is illustrated in works such as Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816), George Elliot's *Silas Marner* (1861), Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1891), or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). This paper aims at analysing the renewed presence of the gypsy in neo-Victorianism, focusing in part on Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011) but especially on Sara Stockbridge's neo-Victorian novel *Cross my Palm* (2011), in which the central character Rose, a gypsy fortune-teller who entertains high-class Victorian ladies in palm-reading soirées, gets entangled in a plot of murder, treason and deceit evocative of Victorian sensation novels in the 1860s and 1870s. Setting off from the idea that neo-Victorian fiction rearticulates repressed voices from "silenced other Victorians" (Voigts-Virchow 115), this paper will trace how gypsy characters, whose presence in Victorian fiction was peripheral, spectral and at times invisible, are brought to the very centre of the narration in neo-Victorian fiction. Stockbridge's *Cross my Palm* (2011) provides a spatialising perspective on gypsiness in Victorian London, using the tension between the Victorian imperial centre and its suburban periphery to illustrate gypsies' persistent dislocated status, especially applied to Romanies' stereotypical image as nomadic people and the ensuing difficulty to pinpoint their identity. Additionally, Stockbridge's novel provides a revision of the usual trope of gypsies associated to child kidnapping, or in Jodie Matthews' words, "the 'Gypsy' child-stealing myth" (Matthews 137) and its relation to (neo)Victorian conceptions of the family. Through a close analysis of the above mentioned texts, and paying particular attention to the topography of Victorian London as well nineteenth-century Europe, I will provide a reading of gypsiness in contemporary neo-Victorian literature using as a backdrop racialised representations of the gypsy collective and their enduring representation as alien figures which keep permeating contemporary European culture and society, as it is attested by events such as the harsh dismantlement of Romani camps in 2010 in France or the pervading accusations of child-kidnapping to gypsies in different legal or criminal cases.

Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930*. New York: Columbia UP, 2006.

Matthews, Jodie. "Back Where They Belong: Gypsies, Kidnapping and Assimilation in Victorian Children's Literature." *Romani Studies*, 20.2 (2010): 137-159.

*Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* 2011. Dir. Guy Ritchie. Perf. Robert Downey Jr., Jude Law and Noomi Rapace. Warner Bros. DVD.

Stockbridge, Sara. *Cross my Palm*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2011.

Voigts-Virchow, Eckart. "In-yer-Victorian-face: A Subcultural Hermeneutics of Neo-Victorianism". *LIT: Literature, Interpretation, Theory*, 20.1 (2009): 108-125.