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## **The fear of the ‘Other’ and anti-semitism: Representations of the Jews in *Punch* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* in the light of rising English nationalism**

Othering is a common practice: who am I? In order to answer this question, one must first define who one is not. In nineteenth-century England, one of these ‘Others’ was the Anglo-Jewry, ever growing due to large masses of immigrants from the East, blamed for threatening the very quintessential, domestic English sphere. In reality, the nation was suffering from the nearing decline of the Empire. It is the aim of this article to examine how depictions in *Punch* Magazine and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* shaped the notions of English- and non-Englishness in the light of rising nationalism.

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The concept of ‘Othering’ gives away a lot of information - following the Hegelian idea, in order to define oneself, one must first define what one is not.<sup>1</sup> In nineteenth-century England, ‘Othering’ was just as common a practice as it is today. Effectively, ‘[t]he fear that a supposedly homogenous national culture was being overwhelmed by an unassimilable ‘Other’<sup>2</sup> helped to sustain the belief that it was an ‘Other’ that threatened a nation, while in reality, it was suffering from the decline of its long-standing position as the biggest Empire in the world. One of these ‘Others’ in the nineteenth century was the Anglo-Jewry, characterized by being both at the very core of the English society, and being apart from it. It is the aim of this article to examine how depictions in *Punch* magazine and the reading of the vampire in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* as Jewish helped shape the notions associated with English, and non-Englishness.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a rising British nationalism carried with it a heightened perception of ‘the Other’. While in the mid-nineteenth century, there were approximately 35,000 Jews living in England and Wales,<sup>3</sup> by the turn of the century, estimates reach up to 100,000.<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon was mainly fuelled by the mass immigration of Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia between the 1880s-1905, part of a general movement.<sup>5</sup> With the rising number of Jews in Britain

<sup>1</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca, 1969), p.93.

<sup>2</sup> Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of ‘The Jew’ in English Literature and Society* (Cambridge, 1993), p.6.

<sup>3</sup> David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture 1840-1914* (New York, 1994), p.21.

<sup>4</sup> V. D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England 1850-1950* (London, 1954), p.99

<sup>5</sup> Lipman, p.85.

came a heightened perception of this demographic group. It was three important events that eventually led to an increased awareness among the British: first of all, the larger number of Jews in Britain led to their struggle for full political rights, especially in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Furthermore, on a political level, the first professing Jew, Baron Lionel de Rothschild, was admitted to the House of Commons in 1858, and finally, his son admitted to the House of Lords in 1885.<sup>6</sup> Jews were definitely integrated very well into the British community by that time, a large proportion being both successful and well-connected. As Feldman points out, 'Jews were disproportionately well represented among the nation's very wealthy'.<sup>7</sup> Most of the Anglo-Jewish community at that time worked in finance, with the firm of Nathan Mayer Rothschild & Sons the most impressive example, issuing more than £700 million in loans to foreign governments between 1860 and 1876. In English society as well, the 'new' Anglo-Jewish community played a major part, with the 'English society once ruled by an aristocracy [...] now dominated by a plutocracy [,] [...] [which] is to a large extent Hebraic in its composition'.<sup>8</sup> In politics, too, the Anglo-Jewish minority began to play an even bigger role. By the time that Disraeli became prime minister in 1868, the 1870s brought about a change that meant increased antipathy towards the Jews, defining the root of Disraeli's ideas and actions as inherently 'Jewish' or 'oriental' (i.e. foreign).<sup>9</sup> One has to understand this situation on a larger scale: a speedily growing community of Anglo-Jews made up only a very small percentage of the overall population but had significant influence on the economy and on social life. In the nineteenth century, when the British Empire was beginning to decline, British nationalism began to rise;<sup>10</sup> there was a heightened perception of what was domestic and what was not. At the heart of it was the Anglo-Jewish community, both part of and apart from it.<sup>11</sup>

The growing antipathy against the Anglo-Jewish community and the rising English nationalism paralleled the invention of the steam-driven press and with it, the mass production of print media. As Linda Colley argues, the greater consciousness about nation and nationality was promoted by, among others, a growth in communication and wider circulation of newspapers as well as magazines.<sup>12</sup> Holmes gives various examples from literature portraying, what he calls 'unflattering images'<sup>13</sup> of the Anglo-Jewish community, depicted with a variety of features, from the Shakespearean figure of Shylock to *Daniel Deronda*. Literature and popular media play an important part in fostering dichotomies and stereotypes. What then, was domestic, and what was the significantly non-domestic 'Other'? It is the aim of this article to examine how this development was characterised in both a cartoon from *Punch* from July 1858, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Gutwein, *The Divided Elite: Economics, Politics, and Anglo-Jewry, 1882-1917* (Leiden, 1992), p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Feldman, p.78.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 81.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.13.

<sup>11</sup> Cheyette, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain, 1750-1650' *Past and Present*, (November 1986), p.100ff.

<sup>13</sup> Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society: 1876-1939* (London, 1979), p.114.

The cartoon below is from the *Punch* issue of 31 July 1858, appearing with an article on the Jewish Relief Act from the same month and year, and its implications are stereotypical for the depiction of Anglo-Jewry in the mid-nineteenth century. The Jewish Relief Act was also called the ‘Oaths Bill’, and was introduced following the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, effectively making it possible for Anglo-Jews to take the Oath of Allegiance, sworn for certain public servant positions. It ‘provided that whenever any of her Majesty’s subjects professing the Jewish religion shall be required to take the said oath the words “and I make this Declaration upon the true faith of a Christian” shall be omitted.’<sup>14</sup> The very existence of mockery in its illustrations is typical for *Punch*. It was a weekly magazine that was first published in 1841 with the aim of reporting on current affairs in a satirical manner. The magazine was probably best known for its illustrations that featured mockery and other humorous elements, which quickly came to be what is now known as a ‘cartoon’.<sup>15</sup> The idea, according to the founders, was to have a magazine that was more comical, but at the same time possessed a higher degree of literary standard than other comic magazines.<sup>16</sup> While at the beginning of its existence, *Punch* was largely known for attacking the Establishment, by the 1860s with the underlying sense of the British Empire coming to stay (but eventually starting to decline shortly after), it was less critical.<sup>17</sup> This could also be seen in its cartoons. It falls into the mid-1800s and can thus not be counted towards the period of increased antipathy towards the new Ashkenazi Anglo-Jews of the 1880s and onwards. Nevertheless it portrays a strong early stereotypical, picture of English Jewry, as the ‘new national enemy’ following the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829.



Figure 1. *Punch*, July 31 1858, London, (London: 1841-2002). © Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg.  
 “Punch 35, 1858” o.10.11588/diglit.16622.5, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> H. S. Q. Henriques, *The Jews and English Law* (Clark, NJ, 2006), p. 228.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.punch.co.uk/about/>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

The exaggeration depicted with regards to money in the cartoon addresses one way society assessed the ‘issue’ of the Anglo-Jewish community around the whole, and especially the second half of the nineteenth century. The first impression of the scene definitely points towards the association of Anglo-Jewry with money. The caricature portrays Baron Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, who had become the first Anglo-Jewish person to take the oath of allegiance in order to become a member of the House of Commons just a few days before the publishing date of this issue of *Punch*. The cartoon alleges that Baron de Rothschild is obsessed with money, is greedy and even light-fingered and thieving. Alluding to the ceremony of the oath of allegiance, the man in the cartoon touches the mace and examines it like a pawnbroker would do in his shop. The symbolic mace stands in for the monarch's presence and alludes to the royal permission by which Parliament sits. By the early 1880s, when the mass immigration from Eastern Europe and Russia began to rise, of the Anglo-Jewish community, 14.6% belonged to the upper or upper-middle class with a yearly income of £1,000 or over.<sup>18</sup> Taking into account that in the 1870s, 14% of the non-landed millionaires were made up of Anglo-Jewry,<sup>19</sup> the approximate number of the Jewish population in England of 51,250<sup>20</sup> compared to the overall population of 32,149,021 in 1881<sup>21</sup> seems small and disproportionate. By the early 1900s, the percentage of Anglo-Jewry among non-landed millionaires had risen to 23 per cent, with the overall Jewish population making up less than one per cent.<sup>22</sup> It is true that a large number of the wealthy Anglo-Jewry worked in banking and stock exchange,<sup>23</sup> which is what the cartoon is most likely alluding to. The material worth of the mace itself, held by the caricature of Baron de Rothschild, refers to the idea that he wants to make money out of everything, and most prominently, out of something that he does not own. Taking this thought further, the mace can stand as a signifier for the English Crown itself, which is at a threat by the ‘foreign’ Anglo-Jewry, characterised by strong social upward mobility. Now that Baron Lionel Nathan de Rothschild has become a Member of the House of Commons, the ‘Other’ portrayed by the Anglo-Jewry is not only right in the middle of the domestic sphere of England, where it controls a large amount of wealth, but is also right at the core of the political sphere, threatening quintessential England: the Monarchy and its large Empire, paralleled by no other.

Similarly, the figure of the Count in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), although he is never explicitly stated as Jewish, serves as a personification of the Jewish stereotype of greed for money, signified by his bloodthirstiness. The vampires with their venomous bite effectively try to ensure the survival of their race. From an anti-Semitic perspective, the Anglo-Jewish community with their strive for social and economic advancement in the nineteenth century could be interpreted as doing just the same:

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<sup>18</sup> Lipman p. 77.

<sup>19</sup> Feldman, p.78.

<sup>20</sup> Lipman, p.66.

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table\\_page.jsp?tab\\_id=EW1881POP2\\_M4](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=EW1881POP2_M4)

<sup>22</sup> W. D. Rubinstein, ‘Jews among Top British Wealth Holders, 1857-1969: Decline of the Golden Age’ *Jewish Social Studies* (34, 1972), p.76f.

<sup>23</sup> Feldman, p.78.

they are comprised of a small number, and secure their continued existence, and even growth, by 'feeding upon' the English. One can interpret this as weakening Englishness in all its facets.<sup>24</sup> This idea can easily be discerned when analysing various passages of Stoker's novel dealing with the vital importance of blood for sustaining the vampire's existence. For example, when the reader is first introduced to the bloodthirsty appetite of the Count, with '[h]is face [...] deathly pale, and the lines of it [...] hard like drawn wires',<sup>25</sup> close to biting Jonathan Harker. The victim had up to then stood for everything morally good, for everything stereotypically English, and for tradition, and now almost becomes the Count's elixir. Once fed, his full strength comes back, his cheeks become red, yet with no human pulse and no breath, the Count resembles nothing human:

There, in one of the great boxes, of which there were fifty in all, on a pile of newly dug earth, lay the Count! He was either dead or asleep. I could not say which, for his eyes were open and stony, but without the glassiness of death, and the cheeks had the warmth of life through their pallor. The lips were as red as ever. But there was no sign of movement, no pulse, no breath, no beating of the heart.<sup>26</sup>

By feeding off Englishness as personified by Mina Harker, Dracula sustains his race's survival, just as the Anglo-Jewry of the nineteenth century may, from an anti-Semitic viewpoint, have sustained themselves by acquiring and dealing with the Englishmen's money and wealth. Similar to the Count lacking human qualities due to the nature of his race, the Jewish community of nineteenth-century England may be interpreted to have lacked the very human essence that was assigned to the Englishmen, because of their very race. In the eyes of the nineteenth-century English population, the (Anglo-) Jewry, no matter what, could not escape their 'characteristic', 'bloodthirsty' appetite for money, as portrayed in *Dracula*.

An aspect that is furthermore contained in both the cartoon from *Punch* and Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* are the parasitic desires that are assigned to the Jewish characters, reminiscent of anti-Semitic remarks, effectively strengthening nationalist ideas. The male figure in the *Punch* cartoon, Baron Rothschild, can be said to already be 'well-fed', nevertheless, he would like to enrich himself with the opportunities presented by the newly attained position as a Member of the House of Commons. The lusty gaze at the mace is comparable to the way that the nationalist English sentiment may have interpreted the advancing inclusion of ever more groups into the wider social and economic as well as political spheres of life. A prominent chronicler of England and journalist with political aspirations, William Cobbett in the early nineteenth century was an advocate for the Catholic Emancipation, but

<sup>24</sup> Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham, 1995), p.95.

<sup>25</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (London, 1997), p.43.

<sup>26</sup> Stoker, p.50.

completely disapproved of Jewish Emancipation as enacted by the 1858 Jewish Relief Act. He was one of the most prominent figures in English history to openly call the Jewish population parasitic in 1833.<sup>27</sup> He did not only attack Benjamin Disraeli, who was openly mocked in *Punch* as well, he also noted that the Jewry ‘liv[e] in all the filthiness of usury and increase’,<sup>28</sup> once again drawing the conclusion that the Anglo-Jewry feeds off their host, the Englishmen. In the background of the *Punch* cartoon, one can see a shocked Member of the House of Commons, the drawing of him faint and vague, as if depicting the very parasitic personality of the Jewish Baron de Rothschild. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, the parasitic features alluding to the Jewishness of the Count are just as prominent. He literally sucks the life out of his victims, and drains them of their powers. Like parasites, the vampire feeds to live and lives to feed,<sup>29</sup> feeding off their host. As Halberstam further shows, this idea went so far as to point towards the late nineteenth century ideas of Jews being parasitic and repugnant in the sense that they transmitted diseases.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Anglo-Jewry in the late nineteenth century with the wave of Ashkenazi immigrants was linked to being responsible for the spread of syphilis,<sup>31</sup> and in earlier centuries, ideas for specifically Jewish diseases such as ‘Judenkrätze’ existed<sup>32</sup> - to a certain extent, though, it has to be noted that some poor (Jews) did show similar symptoms, which can however, be attributed to poverty, and not to Judaism. *Dracula*, like the Jew, and vice versa, are not only parasites to the wealth of the English community, but further stand for the conflict with nation, and reproduction of ‘the English’.<sup>33</sup> Especially the ever-larger groups of Jewish immigrants in the late nineteenth century could be interpreted as a threat to the quintessential English life and race and all they symbolize, resulting in the anti-Semitic tendency to relate Jews to parasitism.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the use of facial features of Jewish stereotypes strengthens the level of anti-Semitism portrayed, depicting the fear of the new Jewish immigrants. In *Punch*, Baron de Rothschild’s nose is exaggerated to the point where one can clearly interpret it as unnatural. The well-fed body depicts the gluttony assigned to the Jewish, the top hat and the jacket are a form of mockery too, since they were often assigned to the Jewish population.<sup>35</sup> One can almost equate the top hat to a criminal’s hiding place for (even more) acquired monetary wealth. The Count in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is described in a number of ways, but either way, his physiognomy is most prominent. He is assigned bushy hair and an aquiline or beaky nose as well as a beard – evidence that the Count in *Dracula* was intended to be interpreted as Jewish.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the aspect of physiognomy, especially the nose, was of utmost importance in creating

<sup>27</sup> Israel Finestein, *Jewish Society in Victorian England* (Elstree, 1993), p.39.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Julius, *Trials of Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford, 2010), p.401.

<sup>29</sup> Halberstam, p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Sander Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (London, 1991), p. 172.

<sup>33</sup> Halberstam, p. 96.

<sup>34</sup> R. Patai & J. Patai, *The Myth of the Jewish Race* (Detroit, 1989), p. 146.

<sup>35</sup> Dennis Showalter, *Little Man, What Now?* (Hamden, CT, 1983), p. 69.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Stoker, chpt. 2

the stereotypical Jewish character, not only in literature and media.<sup>37</sup> People who were seen as having a Jewish nose had long been mocked, and the first rhinoplasty performed in 1898 was seen as having cured the patient of a disease.<sup>38</sup> Although it is unknown whether the patient was Jewish or not, the success outlines the very widely spread idea of the Jewish nose. This notion alone again points towards the negative tendencies assigned to (Anglo-)Jewry in the nineteenth century. Linking further back to the idea of Judaism as inherently malignant and repugnant, in the mid-nineteenth century, there were voices claiming that the ‘very Jewish nose’ was the result of the Jewish-associated syphilis.<sup>39</sup> Linking back to *Punch*’s cartoon of Baron de Rothschild, it is interesting to note that his caricature, along with others, can be interpreted as essentially portraying the ‘characteristics of recent and impoverished immigrants’.<sup>40</sup> Especially Sephardic Jews were, after all, known to have a broad knowledge of the stock market, new to England, but already introduced in the Netherlands in earlier centuries, which was a capital fear for the English.<sup>41</sup> The largely successful Sephardic Jews, often working in finance, were ‘visually erased’ and ‘the Jewish physiognomy’ from then on mostly depicted along the physical features assigned to the poorer Ashkenazi immigrants arriving in Britain in the late nineteenth century. There is a definite link to Ashkenazi-specific anti-semitism in *Dracula*, linked to the new Ashkenazi immigrants in the late nineteenth century, as the Count is of Eastern European origin, and is one of the first Gothic novels to feature this region. Furthermore, in physiognomy, as advanced by Johann Casper Lavater, the very physical features of ‘the Jew’ reflect the social stereotyping and personal features assigned to them, such as greed and light-fingeredness,<sup>42</sup> as listed earlier. Along these lines, *Dracula* with his specific physique echoes the nineteenth-century idea of physiognomy as an indicator for delinquency and crime.<sup>43</sup> Most definitely, both the physiognomy of the *Punch* caricature of Baron de Rothschild and of Count Dracula confirms the assumption of a construction of ‘the Other’ in the light of new Ashkenazi immigration in the late nineteenth century.

The pollution of Englishness is also apparent in the language of the *Punch* cartoon and *Dracula*. According to Jonathan Harker, *Dracula* will always be the foreigner, even though he has ‘a vast number of English books [...] all relating to England and English life and customs and manners’,<sup>44</sup> and Englishmen will never cease to notice his foreignness due to his way of speaking. *Dracula*, interestingly, is aware of this, as he himself notes how anyone in London would always recognize him as a foreigner. Naturally, Standard English is only spoken by a small number of educated Britons such as Jonathan Harker or John Seward, whereas the Count himself is a

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<sup>37</sup> Gilman, p. 179.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Gilman, p.173ff.

<sup>40</sup> Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), p. 130.

<sup>41</sup> Pearl, p.130.

<sup>42</sup> Jay Geller, *On Freud’s Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumstances* (New York, 2007), p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> Halberstam, p.93.

<sup>44</sup> Stoker, p.25.

parvenu, even asking Harker to correct any mistakes he makes.<sup>45</sup> Just like his words are often syntactically misplaced, he is himself misplaced in the English sphere. The mere fact that most of what is known about the Count is narrated through the other, non-foreign characters is comparable to the process of 'Othering' the Anglo-Jewry. The caricature of Baron de Rothschild utters distinctly foreign words as well: 'Vot a beewtiful Bauble! Vonder vether its reel Gold!' His 'Jewish accent' marks him as different and as decidedly not belonging to the cultivated Englishmen.<sup>46</sup> Even though Baron de Rothschild, as a member of the Anglo-Jewry, has come as close to the domestic English core as possible by becoming a Member of the House of Commons in July 1858, his very accent gives away that he will never, no matter what, become a true Englishman. A Jew was, after all, in the eyes of the English, perceived as a Jew first, most immediately by his apparent misuse of the English language.

By and large, both artefacts depict the imminent fear of decline of the English nation, of the loss of everything 'domestic' as threatened by Jewish immigrants in the nineteenth century, especially the Ashkenazi from the East in the latter half. Indeed, this sentiment is not only reflected by physiognomy, but also by the (mis-)use of language, and the personal traits assigned to both the definite Jewish caricature, and assumingly Jewish personification of the vampire. That being said, ultimately, the stereotypical notions of what was 'Jewish' and what was not in both *Punch* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is characterized by what is non-English, not what is essentially 'Jewish'. The Anglo-Jewry in the nineteenth century only functioned as a placeholder: had there been no Jewish population, the Anti-Semite would have invented it – as a means to distinctly depict what is *not* English, and what is. In order to create an English identity, there has to be a 'national enemy' to some extent. One might argue that after the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, the Anglo-Jewry became the 'non-English' counterpart. Until the mid-nineteenth century the culprit was the largely successful Sephardic population, later the new wave of Ashkenazi immigrants. In essence, the real vampires or light-fingered, greedy population were the Englishmen: they fed off 'the Other' in order to sustain their own imagined Englishness, in light of the decline of the British Empire, its social and cultural power, and ultimately, to ensure the preservation of its national identity.

<sup>45</sup> William Hughes, *Bram Stoker's Dracula: A Reader's Guide* (London, 2009), p. 20ff.

<sup>46</sup> Gilman, p.11.

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Figure 1. *Punch*, July 31 1858, London, (London: 1841-2002). © Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg. "Punch 35, 1858" o. 10.11588/diglit.16622.5, p. 42.