

“Gypsy in Space”: A Note on the Representation of the Roma in Contemporary Hungarian SF Short Stories

The Editors academic articles, articles May 28, 2022

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The representation of marginalized communities is extensively explored in both academic SF studies, and popular discourse around SF, particularly since the second half of the 1960s. Themes such as to what extent and by what means the living conditions, adversities, modes of resistances, worldviews, etc. of such communities are represented in SF narratives, as well as the role that individuals identifying themselves as community members play in the production/consumption/reception of SF, have been investigated by practitioners of quantitative and qualitative research. To date, however, there appear to be no studies that address the representation of the Roma in contemporary Hungarian SF speculative fiction. The present paper aims to do the following: (1) to introduce contemporary Hungarian SF short fiction and its readership; (2) to briefly explore the politics of “integration” and “reverse integration” as a means to contextualize the Roma within contemporary Hungarian society; (3) to give an outline of those “semiotic” means by which Roma characters in the short stories under scrutiny are identified; (4) to characterize the particular Roma representations from “invisibility” through “genocide” to “social mobility” that are present in the narratives in question. The texts used for my investigation are the relevant pieces of those submitted in 2014-2018 as candidates for the Péter Zsoldos Award, a national annual prize awarded for the best (published) Hungarian SF novel and short story.

- **Review:** This article underwent one anonymous peer review and editorial review from three editors.

- **License:** CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.
- **Citation:** Domokos, Áron. 2022. “Gypsy in Space”: A Note on the Representation of the Roma in Contemporary Hungarian SF Short Stories. *Vector*. 28 May 2022.
- **Keywords:** Roma; Hungarian SF; representation
- **DOI:** Forthcoming

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Together and apart: that is the definition of fraternity. The one we love is another. But the one we love is as close to us as we are to ourselves. So what is needed is not to see the Roma as only a ‘problem’ – and especially not as a ‘problem’ of the white majority – but to act according to the well-known rules of human love, which as a sentiment is not so simple (I have also described it as a contradiction), but in my humble view it is the only right one.

(Tamás 2017)

“Well, white folks ain’t planning for us to be here.”

I want to begin by mentioning that it is comparatively easy to notice the lack of Black representation in mainstream American SF up to the 1970s. Observing that there was not a single Black character in the now legendary 1976 dystopian film *Logan’s Run*, stand-up comedian Richard Pryor commented: “Well, white folks ain’t planning for us to be here. That’s why we got to make movies” (Pryor 1976). As for the Roma,¹ science fiction literature in English and other languages since the 19th century had very few Romani characters, and even fewer narratives were written by Romani authors. Let us now take a closer look at the Hungarian-language SF scene.



My study considers nearly 300 pieces of short fiction shortlisted for the 2014-2018 *Péter Zsoldos SF Award*, and takes a brief look at works in other media. I am going (1) to place the discourses on the representation of the Roma in a social-philosophical framework; (2) to problematize the issue of Roma representation and its “semiotic” aspect; and, in light of this, (3) to classify different ways in which Romani people are represented in contemporary Hungarian SF.

Survival as a way of life

Just as elsewhere in Europe, the Roma in Hungary cannot be considered a homogeneous community: they are different people in terms of language, socio-cultural status, occupation, history (they migrated and settled in the Carpathian Basin at different times), identity (Romany, Roma, Bey, Oláh, Sinti, Romanian). According to recent statistics, their number has risen “from 400,000 to 876,000, and their share in the total population has risen from 3.7% to 8.8%” (Pénzes et al. 2018: 10, 21). As a consequence of their increasing urbanization, an increasing proportion (62%) live in Budapest or in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants, and one third live mostly in North-East and South-West Hungary, mainly in peripheral border areas (ibid.). These often segregated and run-down villages and settlements, cut off from the outside world, are officially among the most disadvantaged regions in Hungary, and have some of the highest official levels of unemployment nationally (Domokos-Herczeg 2010: 82). The ‘Gypsy’-‘Hungarian’ distinction, the researchers add,

is linked to class differences, which in turn are primarily related to the nature of employment. It is important to note that the intertwining of ethnicity and class position is not only specific to the Roma and not only in Hungary, but is a feature of the capitalist mode of production, which creates a boundary between those in formal employment and the masses outside or only temporarily active in it

(Czirfusz et al. 2019: 158).

Similarly, the latest research highlights that the class differences (public work-wage work, informal and formal labour position, reserve army and wage labour, subproletarian-proletarian) correlate to the Gypsy-Hungarian distinction. (Éber 2021: 220-221.)

The rival social narratives and discourses about the Roma (constructed typically without their participation) – in which the SF works discussed below fit – can be divided into four logically possible broad groups:

1. the integration of the Roma into the state socialist or late capitalist production-based way of life, i.e. assimilation of the (non-white) minority into the (white) majority society;²
2. the integration of the non-Roma majority into the local Roma community (Borbély 2019, Isaszegi 2006);
3. the total rejection of integration and cooperation (an openly racist approach); and

4. the fraternal cooperation between the Roma and non-Roma (Tamás 2017).

The latter does not approve of development without “waiting for each other”, and even suggests suspending the growth of the party that considers itself “more advanced” and possibly restraining the level of consumption and production (Isaszegi 2006). Group 1 is the dominant discourse politically, and inspires most heated debates.

The *liberal* narrative (part of Group 1) sees integration-assimilation as a desirable and, what is more, a possible process, but also recognises significant challenges. These include entrenched socio-economic inequalities, inadequate or reprehensible government policies (across housing, education, employment, and other areas), and the microaggressions or open racism of majority society, which together can be called “structural racism”.³ Thus, liberal discourse sees its duty in political and legal representation/protection of the Roma.⁴ (For a detailed discussion of this, often condescending, attitude that ignores the context of European colonialism, its basic crimes and racist justification, see József Böröcz’s study, 2006).

The faith in integration of the *conservatives* (also Group 1) is much weaker, and accordingly they react to integration dilemmas erratically. Some of the measures they propose have positive effects, but others are inadequate and even mask covert support for segregation. They prioritise maintaining the psychological and material well-being of the majority-white society.

The *racist* discourse (Group 3) completely rejects any possibility of coexistence. It puts the emphasis on racial differences, i.e. claiming the Roma are inferior based on supposedly phenotypic, socio-cultural traits. In this scenario integration is either impossible, or undesirable; instead, creation of segregated areas, districts, ghettos, is being put forward. (It is interesting to note, for example, that the idea of establishing Cigania, i.e. the Roma as a political community/nation, also resonates with some Roma ideas.) It also advocates for institutional control of population growth for the Roma (sterilisation, birth control).⁵ In 2008-2009 (under the so-called “social liberal” government) a brutal series of crimes against the Roma were carried out, including attacks by neo-Nazi terrorists which killed six people and gravely injured five more. These murders were directly inspired by the racist discourse.

The proponents of cooperation (Group 2) and reverse integration (Group 2) are not interested in the cultural aspects, but emphasise the mode of

production. As András Borbély, Transylvanian social philosopher and literary scholar, writes

Deep down, a conflict of interests that is not easily resolved emerges between the principles of social equality and cultural differentiation. This implies that the Roma mode of production is not simply primitive, socially backward, discriminated against, or merely different from ours, etc., but is so different from the gadjos' mode of production as to make integration according to the principles of equality impossible. That is to say, cultural logic tends to override the social, legal, pedagogical, etc. systems of norms that the gadjos would like to be universal.

(Borbély, 2020)

The “Roma mode of production” (that can be interpreted as a kind of criticism of the Gadjos’ mode of production) refers to 1. a systematic rejection of accumulation (often interpreted as “laziness”); 2. rejection of paid employment, education, and exploitative attitude towards the environment. For Borbély, the Roma way of life would be beneficial for everyone; as production has peaked, we need to recycle and redistribute the goods already produced. The emphasis is on a forced scarcity rather than degrowth, as in Jean Ortica’s 1977 dystopian SF short story ‘Les survivants de l’Apocalypse’ (Ortica 1977). Similarly, for Borbély, this waste management, the ‘survival attitude’ is “a way of life [...] a culture [...] a mode of production – that is how we will increasingly resemble them” (Borbély 2020).

“Because the colourful scarves and shawls look so cool on her”

On the presence of the Roma in fiction and its sub-genres, researchers broadly agree that “the speaking, creating, text-creating agent is monopositional, the exclusive property of the non-Roma majority” (Beck 2020). Ethnic Roma scholar Ian Hancock argues,

[i]n children’s literature... Roma appear relatively often – but never as characters who happen to be Gypsies, but only because they are Gypsies, because they represent a particular intention. This intention manifests itself, broadly speaking, in three ways: the Gypsy as a lying thief who typically takes the property of a non-Gypsy child; the Gypsy as a magician and fortune-teller; and the Gypsy as a romantic figure

(Hancock 1987)

Hines makes a similar point:

The SFF genre is truly mesmerized by the figure of the 'Gypsy'. Sometimes it pictures him as a romantic, free wanderer of the roads, an independent man who rejects the soul-shrinking laws of civilization and lives as he pleases. Sometimes it dresses him in mysticism and paints him as an old Gypsy woman with poignant curses. At other times, it represents the vigorous, sexually heated figure of the young Gypsy girl or man. Sometimes it just does it for fashion's sake, because the colourful scarves and shawls look so cool on her.

(Hines 2013).

These representations first emerged in the Romantic period, and are particularly popular in supernatural or fantasy contexts. In Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s view, "[i]n Romantic literature, supernatural abilities are often associated with archaic peoples (such as Gypsies, American Indians, Scottish Highlanders, Irish aborigines, Siberian shamans)" (Csicsery-Ronay Jr. 2008: 35). Trumpener (1996) seconds it: in the staged confrontation between enlightened and superstitious worldviews, the Roma represent magic and curses, barbarism, primitive democracy, the obstruction of the progress of civilisation, raw sexuality, savage energy and counterculture.

How do we identify a Roma protagonist?

The current corpus of compulsory reading in Hungarian elementary and high-school education is a subject of frequent debate.⁷ The literary canon established during the period of state socialism includes works that represent inequalities that arise from class. As a matter of fact, most of the protagonists of the novels and epic poems in the curriculum still come from lower classes. However, groups marginalized by gender, ethnicity and disability are underrepresented (Gulya 2018, 2020), while Roma characters are strikingly absent. They do however explore important questions around identity, even if limited by this omission.

How are the figures of the marginalized formed, first from the point of view of the creator, and then from recipients' points of view? Where Roma characters do appear, what defines them? Is it their description, their 'looks,' or the way they are seen by other characters? Or is it the way they speak, their name or the setting of the story? Is it perceived through the way other characters interact with them? Or is it the narrator who defines them? The proponents of corporeal narratology believe that all of these aspects play a role, but the process of encoding-decoding can only work through historically constructed, conditioned topoi (Punday, 2003: 6-12). Punday argues that the less explicitly a body is marked, the easier it is to identify with it. It becomes

more difficult the more pre-existing knowledge we have about the character. “This insight is also in line with the experience confirmed by many critical theories: the discourse of hegemony describes excluded groups very strongly in bodily terms, emphasizing their ‘alien’, ‘not-one-of/among-us’ character even in their corporeality”. (Rákai, 2015: 36)

Following Ian Hancock and Punday, here we should distinguish between the “marked Roma” and the “unmarked Roma”. With the former, the narrative draws attention to their Roma-ness, e.g. presenting their identity through the use of ready-made topoi. The character’s ethnic identity (Gypsy) becomes the driving force of their story and determines their function. With the latter, the ethnic identity of the character is left out of the narrative, and has little or no relevance to their function in the story.

The Roma in Hungarian SF short stories

To my knowledge, there are no Roma present in Hungarian SF publishing, either as owners, publishers or authors. This means that all the Romani characters in Hungarian SF within the framework of this study are written by non-Romani authors.

In my understanding of SF, I follow ideas explored by Margit Sárdi (Sárdi 2013: 32), and Paul Kincaid, Darko Suvin, Stanislaw Lem, Alfred Jarry, and MASFITT.⁸ As Kincaid puts it, science fiction is not one, but “many things – a future environment, a marvellous machine, an ideal society, an alien being, a twist in time, interstellar travel, a satirical perspective, a particular approach to the story” (Kincaid 2003: 416-417). For me, “science fiction as thematic literature offers, on the ground of a worldview that moves in notions of rationality-irrationality, rationally posited solutions (existing or not) to problems that are: a) not necessarily relevant to the present or not perceived in the present or b) perceived as relevant to the present” (Domokos, 2019: 65).⁹

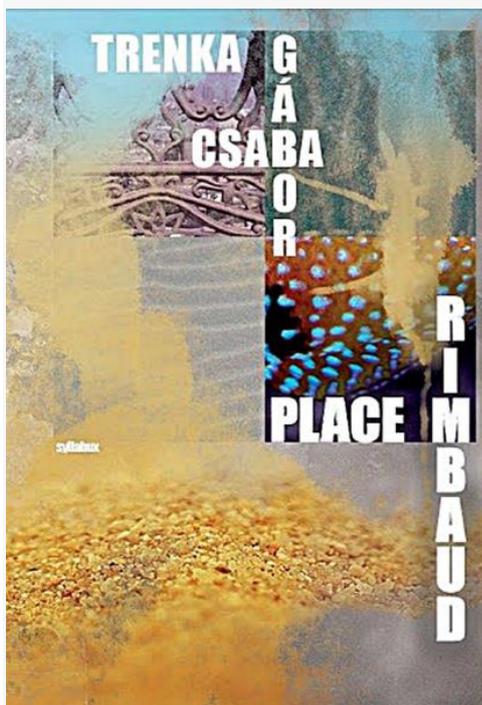
The SF narratives that are part of this study (281 pieces of short fiction altogether) were selected from the candidates for the 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 *Péter Zsoldos Award*, announced by the *Avana Association*. There are 75 male and 27 female authors in the list. These stories defy categorisation: there are space detectives and spy stories, adventure stories about AI and post-apocalyptic narratives, there’s a historical fantasy and a space opera, a psychedelic romance and pornographic texts, classic mystery stories and “novel within a novel”, as well as rewritten fairy tales, thrillers, military

science fiction, works of alternative history, dystopia and even visionary prose poems.

Many of the issues raised by those stories are relevant to our present days: split consciousness, demographic changes, abortion rights, news manipulation, power struggles, animal rights, the food crisis, loneliness, exploitation and oppression, intergenerational conflict, the malleability of virtual reality, the dangers of the web, the dangers of Facebook, automatic cars, 3D printing, etc.

Astonishingly enough, identifiably Romani characters are depicted in only two stories out of 281 texts, despite all this variety of subjects. Even then, they have minor roles in the story.

Short story 1. The Roma in an alternate history – Csaba Gábor Trenka: ‘The Sheik of Kisvárda’ (2015)



Csaba Gábor Trenka (1959) is an author of excellent speculative novels and YA fiction, all of which reflect present-day social reality.¹⁰ His short story ‘The Sheik of Kisvárda’ is set in an alternate history (Domokos 2022), although the human relationships depicted bear many similarities to our present. The narrator is a wanderer, and the story unfolds before us through his thousand tales. In this parallel universe, the laws of “poetic storytelling” are at work: the events take place in 1421 in Islamic calendar (in our world that is 2000), in the essentially peaceful secularised world of Islamic

dominance, but we also learn about earlier significant events (e.g. two Algerian-Turkish wars).

We can infer that the protagonist is recalling past events from some time in the 1460s. The story takes place in Kisvárda (a little-known small town in the poorer north-eastern part of Hungary) in an Islamic-Christian-Roma community. We are not given much background, apart from the telling names. Life is peaceful there, Christianity is declining, but there are still some who practise it. The narrator does not care much about religious life, and does not judge anyone. The Roma are portrayed as the poorest class.

In this alternative history world, the level of technology is less advanced: the town has a few battle wagons and a few non-functioning fire engines, the streets are lit by kerosene lamps, the camel market is bustling, there are no computers or internet, but science fiction anthologies and magazines are in their heyday. In this Orientalist setting it is easy to sympathise with the adolescent heroes, especially the young narrator, his love for fantastic stories (more of these pulp fiction adventures, with their captivating language, are built into the story!) and his first timid attempt at conquering a woman's heart that ends in disaster.

The representations of the Roma as minor characters follow Trumpener's well-known and in some cases offensive stereotypes. Since the very beginning of the story poverty is aligned with ethnicity: "Misery was synonymous with Gypsyism, a world of shabby, dilapidated houses and tin shacks that made up a third of Kisvárda, deep in the sand hills and temperate rainforests. Our parents kept us away from it with well-placed horror stories." This reflects the view of the bourgeois majority society. According to them, the narrator explains, "Gypsies come to steal in droves on Palmyra Avenue (so they are forced to cheat on taxes because the Gypsies take the profits)". Their residence is the camp, the temporary settlement: "[They] have camped for centuries at the end of the Assyrian district, among the sand dunes, and the only reminder of their nomadic existence was that they roasted camel meat on charcoal fires." They are depicted as having a passionate nature, but not easy to frighten, especially when harmed: they would defend themselves with gerryrigged mines and rocket launchers.

The protagonist's good friend, Omar Lakatos, is from a well-off Gypsy family. A somewhat slow, yet highly imaginative young boy, he is keen on learning a new profession every week. A leading member of his adolescent circle of friends, he has great physical strength and a strong desire for women: "Omar loved not girls, but naked girls [...] But the Gypsies,

according to popular belief, do not consider it (sex) a crime and it is not regulated, they always have sex with everyone, as soon as the hormones that kill childhood are sufficiently increased in girls.” Trying to save his friends’ reputation, he admits to a theft of a missing object that neither he, nor his friends have touched – he knows he will be a suspect anyway, and his father can help him out by paying “the bill”. Traces of everyday racism present in the community of Kisvárda are similar to those of present-day Hungarian towns of the same size.

In this alternate historical world, just as in our time, social mobility or “ascension” can be achieved through assimilation and joining the bourgeois class. As we learn from some perfunctory remarks, the former police captain of Debrecen and the imam of Nyíregyháza both had originally come from the Gypsy camp.

I agree with Baka’s (2014) acknowledgment of the short story’s aesthetic merits, as the linguistic-stylistic elaboration as well as the rich and inventive network of narration raise it to a level that stands with the highest literature.

Short story 2. The Roma in a dystopia – Judit Lőrinczy: ‘The Taste of Arabica’ (2013)



Judit Lőrinczy¹¹ (1982), author of the urban fantasy *Lost Gondwana* and the World War II magical realist novel *The Pendulum Stones*, paints a powerful

and oppressive vision in her *The Taste of Arabica*. The story is set in the realistic (dystopian?) near future (around 2040), in the time of the United States of Europe. There is a Wall between the ‘Western’ world (that keeps the semblance of prosperity of old, even if oil lamps are used to save money on electricity, food is available through a quota-based money substitute, and the countries are ruled by semi-dictatorships), and the chaotic, starving, helpless ‘Eastern’ world. Millions of desperate people are trying to cross, illegally or legally, from the Eastern to the Western side.

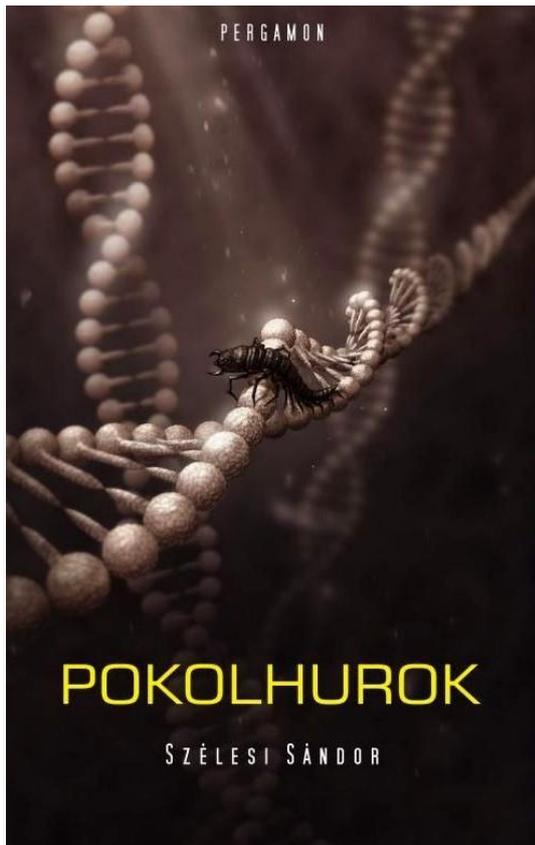
The Wall cuts Hungary in two, and passes through Szeged in South-East Hungary. We learn the story of Alma, a Hungarian diplomat on a scholarship to the EU, her colleagues and her lover, Miklós, who attempts to immigrate illegally. There are indications of a past cataclysm and its consequences: a gigantic solar flare brought chaos into the world, fanatics blew up key servers, a drug war broke out, China’s economy based on false data collapsed, the Gulf Stream ceased to flow, India dropped a nuclear bomb on Pakistan, New York’s dams burst, the Tisza dried up, etc. The omniscient narrator gives us a detailed account of the lives on both sides, bringing the two protagonists’ lives closer together, questioning the sustainability of the Wall. Occasionally, his narrative is interrupted by official immigration requests or refusals.

In this believable and detailed world the Roma characters play a minor role, but give us an idea of the Roma as a community that largely avoids romanticizing tropes. Roma refer to non-Roma, white people, for example, as ‘peasants’. Thus we learn that in the cataclysm, the majority society once again resorted to radical segregation, and the Roma were deported “within a few years, to isolated villages in northern Hungary, Békés and southern Baranya, or to the Budapest Black Enclave” (Lőrinczy 2013: 32). The Roma were divided into two groups: those living in and outside the enclave.

[Teresa] shared a fifty-three square metre flat with ten other people. The five children and the woman slept in one small room. They had been pushed out of the slightly larger living room, and as Miklós later learned, Teresa feared that sooner or later she would have to move up to the ninth or tenth floor, or worse, find a new place in Teszkófalú [a dilapidated shopping centre; Á.D.]. Until they are put on a collection train.

The three independent Roma characters (Teresa, Lakat, Csali) all excel at survival and share the male protagonist’s adventures for a short while.

Addendum #1: The Roma in a SF bio-thriller – Sándor Szélesi: *Hell’s Loop* (2016)



“... [T]his book is a cry for help. I wanted to make people aware, among other things – explained the author (1969)¹² in an interview about the short novel – that even the seemingly innocent Roma jokes are racist” (Csermely 2017). As described by both the author and the publisher, *Hell’s Loop* can be considered SF (it is focused around genetics), and contains few references to the present social problems of Hungary. “In *Hell’s Loop*, we are exposed to the inner monologue, anxieties and self-aggrandisement of a mass murderer, and through these, to a picture of a hopelessly repulsive society” (Odaértett 2021). The narrator, Gábor, is grieving over the death of his parents, murdered by Roma killers. In a desperate attempt to overcome his pain, he throws himself into his studies, and eventually becomes a researcher in biology at the University of California. Despite all his efforts, his repressed anger gradually resurfaces and urges him to create a race-specific virus that can eradicate the Romani people. The idea of using a virus as an ethnic bioweapon is not new. It appeared in Wells’ *War of the Worlds* and was most notoriously used in Jack London’s deeply racist short story *The Unparalleled Invasion* (1907), in which a billion Chinese were murdered. More recently, a UK TV series *Utopia* (2013-2014) toys with the same idea, only in this case the scientist is Romani and the virus he designs is meant to leave all ethnic groups except the Roma infertile.¹³

The references and influences in *Hell's Loop* stretch far: the futile search for psychological motivations may remind us of Camus' *The Stranger*, the genocide explained from the point of view of the perpetrator may evoke Merle's *Death Is My Trade*. Certain pages of *Hell's Loop* are reminiscent of sociological case studies, in the way they expose individual, subcultural and social levels of racism towards the Roma (Trehan-Koczé 2009).

Disconcertingly, even though the novel deals with relationships between ethnic minorities and the majority of society, there are hardly any specific Romani characters in the novel.

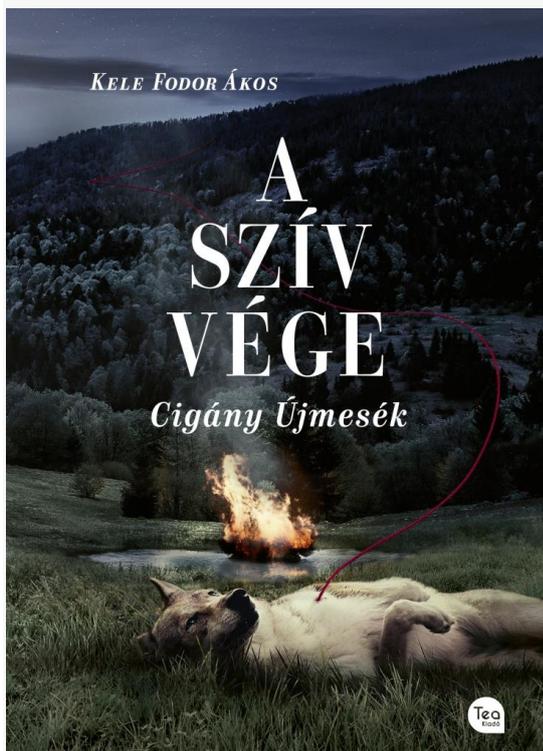
Addendum #2: The Roma in a SF black comedy – Balázs Lengyel: *Lajkó – Gypsy in Space* (2018)

The 2018 film *Gypsy in Space* calls itself a black comedy.¹⁴ Among other things, it aims to ridicule socialism and indirectly discredit and diminish Russian space exploration in line with the expectations of the Western viewer. A melancholic satire, it works with stereotypes and creates an alternative/apocryphal world, in which the dictatorship of the 1950s and 1960s with its caricature, non-individual or merely user-oriented functioning, bureaucratic and corrupt stupidity, and paranoia, collides with the desires and opportunities of the “little man”. The film follows the life of Lajkó, née Lajos Serbán, who has longed for space and flight since childhood, from the early loss of his mother (victim of a childhood rocket experiment), to his semi-successful space visit to the Soviet space pilot training camp (Baikonur). Lajkó's ethnicity is grotesquely stereotypical and director Lengyel follows the romanticised topoi: Lajkó has many brothers and sisters, a Gypsy fortune-teller predicts his future, they all live in a shabby house, they tell each other stories in the evenings by the fire, his father is a large, sexually overheated male. The attitude of the majority of society towards him bears traces of racism, but the film gravitates towards “acceptance, understanding and humanity, which, according to the film, must be more important than the hatred, nationalism and political ideologies that are instilled in us from above” (Kovács, 2018).

Conclusion

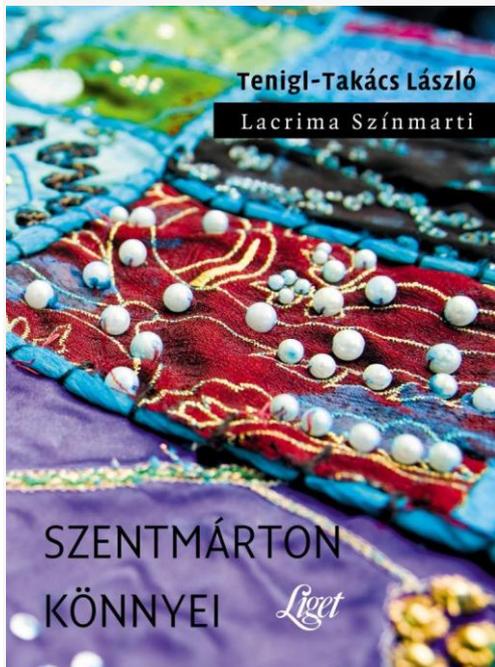
Although there are a number of nationally acknowledged Hungarian Roma authors – Károly Bari, József Choli Daróczi, Tamás Jónás, Menyhért Lakatos, Béla Osztojkán and Magda Szécsi¹⁵ – I could not find a single Hungarian Roma SFF writer. If we look through the very short – just four stories – list of Roma-related Hungarian pieces of SF short fiction out of the 281 short stories described above and in the addendums, it seems that the representation of the

Roma in contemporary Hungarian SF seems to be limited to certain genres: alternate history, dystopia, post-apocalypse, bio-thriller, and satire. In other words, the Roma are only legitimately represented in genres that are associated with a radical subversion of our times. Unfortunately, the authors do not use Roma characters when discussing any of the important social issues. The Roma in literature are best described by the concept of “invisibility” (Ellison 1952), that is, class blindness as characteristic of the more conservative strategy.¹⁶ I do not blame the authors: understandably, the majority of SF writers, firmly middle-class, are not aware of the problems of the Roma living next to them.



Nevertheless, some Roma characters are indeed visible in the short stories discussed here, about which the following concluding remarks can be made. Whenever the Roma appear, the author includes them in the plot in a reflexive way. That is to say, the figures do not *happen to be* of Roma origin. If they are Roma Hungarians, their Roma-ness will be addressed in the literary pieces in one way or another. This is not a negative quality of the stories, however, as all of them seem to advocate the liberal-assimilationist approach. It is from this perspective that *Hell's Loop* presents a destructively racist scenario, and *The Taste of Arabica* shows the nightmare of radical segregation. *The Sheik of Kisvárda* and *Lajkó –Gypsy in Space*, by contrast, depict a peaceful context, in which the Roma still make up a lower stratum of society. The latter reaches out to the traditional stereotypes of romance (positive and negative, beautifying and criminalizing) and thus unconsciously

uses offensive, racist topoi. Tenigl-Takács who lived with Roma communities for decades, wrote a study on the representation of Roma in film. He considers such topoi of romanticization distinctly dangerous, avoidable but difficult to eliminate: “The romanticization of Roma is thus a common interest and will probably be a dominant element in film-making for decades to come” (2017).



There is now a wealth of material written by or about the Roma. However, there are still few recent publications in the realm of fantasy-genres. I would like to draw attention to two of them, both of which, by their very nature, move towards the above mentioned romanticisation. One is a volume by Ákos Kele Fodor, a non-Roma writer who collects and rewrites Gypsy tales and myths. His excellent work *The End of the Heart – Gypsy New Tales* (2018) contains scenes of violence and transgression. The second one is *Bestiarium Ciganorum* (2020), published by the National Association of Roma Women of the 21st Century, an album with 200 glossaries and 144 illustrations, which brings together legendary Roma creatures, following the example of J.K. Rowling.

Endnotes

^[1] The words “Roma”, “Romani” and “Gypsy” are used interchangeably in the paper in an unbiased way, without any negative connotations intended. I note, however, that although the usage of the term “Roma,” introduced by international organizations in the 1970s, is now widespread in Hungarian Roma communities, many Roma prefer to use “cigány” (Hungarian for

“Gypsy”), which often feels not only more neutral but also more comfortable to them. (Dupcsik 2009)

^[2] Social researchers are also concerned with the racism of state socialism. László Hadházy’s film about the dismantling of a Gypsy settlement in the late seventies, entitled *Cigányfilm* [Gypsy Film] presents an interesting case study: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knie26dy0HE>.

^[3] In Péter Kardos and Gábor Nyári’s book (2004), an 18-year-old Gypsy boy with no social capital and minimal life experience, who grew up in a rural institution, is cast in the shoes of a role-playing character who, when plunged into the jungle of the capital, finds himself in a desperate situation no matter what choice he takes. <https://ciganylabirintus.blog.hu/>.

^[4] See for example a Roma-produced “Hungarian-international civil Roma online community TV channel”: <https://baxtale.tv/> The Roma Image Workshop also does valuable work: <http://romakepmuhely.hu>.

^[5] See Szombati, K. *The Revolt of the Provinces: Anti-Gypsyism and Right-Wing Politics in Hungary. (Dislocations Book 23)* (Berghahn Books, 2018). Kindle Edition.

^[6] People of non-Roma origin in Romani language.

^[7] Apart from literary merit, tradition and educational value, research results concerning what and how Hungarian children actually read cannot be overlooked (Gombos 2020).

^[8] The Hungarian Sci-Fi Historical Society. See their website at <https://sites.google.com/site/scifitort/>.

^[9] This definition was shaped in my discussions with fellow scholar Béla Isaszegi. His unpublished manuscript Isaszegi 2004 has also shaped the way I think about SF.

^[10] One such novel of his is entitled *Rimbaud Square* (Place Rimbaud, 2013). Trenka’s website is accessible at <https://trenkacsaba.wixsite.com/tcg-site/en>.

^[11] Read more about Judit Lőrinczy on her blog: <http://judlorin.blogspot.com/2012/01/about-me.html>.

^[12] Sándor Szélesi’s website is accessible at <https://szelesisandor.hu/rolam>.

[13] Film details: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2384811>.

[14] More information on the film is available at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4795022>.

[15] If translated to English, this writer may be added to Reidy's excellent list of "Twenty Gypsy women you should be reading" (Reidy 2014).

[16] This is true even in the otherwise excellent collections of alternate histories, published in recent years, which deal with twentieth century Hungarian history.

[17] "Do we need a Hungarian artist of Gypsy origin only if we need a Gypsy artist, or we need them too when a Hungarian artist without any specific ethnic background is needed? Are they called upon even if they have to reflect on a non-Gypsy issue?", asks, for example, painter Norbert Oláh: <https://balkon.art/home/online-2021/olah-norbert-a-cigany-muvesz-szorongasa-off-biennale-budapest/>

[18] He is also the author of one of the best sociographic essays on a group of Roma: Tenigl-Takács, L. *Tears of St. Martin / Lacrima Színmarti*. (Liget: Budapest, 2007).^[1] See <https://magyarmuzeumok.hu/cikk/bestiarium-ciganorum-legendas-roma-lenyek-enciklopediaja> on this volume.

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