

## Ruby Lips and Whitby Jet

Dobson, Eleanor

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# gothic studies



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## Ruby Lips and Whitby Jet: Dracula's Language of Jewels

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**Abstract:** This essay proposes that a number of the concerns expressed in *Dracula* can be read through Bram Stoker's employment of the imagery of precious metals and jewels. Focusing on the materiality of place – the treasure-laced landscape of Transylvania and the cliffs of Whitby famous for their reserves of jet – and the association between these materials and vampirism, I argue that analysing the symbolism of precious materials leads to a fuller understanding of many of the novel's key anxieties. Not only does this analysis demonstrate Stoker's elaborate use of jewel imagery in developing the notion of the female vampire as a hard, penetrative woman, it identifies the imperial implications of the trade in precious materials. In doing so, it claims that Stoker employs a 'language of jewels' in *Dracula*, through which he critiques the imperialistic plundering of Eastern lands, and demonstrates how these monsters – intimately entwined with these materials – attempt a rejection of Western appropriation.

**Key words:** *Dracula*, Stoker, jewels, gold, silver, ruby, pearl, jet

### Ruby Lips and Whitby Jet: *Dracula's* Language of Jewels

In the larger and older jewels every facet may stand for a bloody deed.<sup>1</sup>

The nineteenth century saw a proliferation in the availability of jewels and jewellery on an unprecedented scale, and, following suit, an abundance of literary narratives with precious materials at their heart, Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868), H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle' (1892) among the most famous.<sup>2</sup> Victorians were able to 'read' and 'decode' jewels, both culturally and textually, in much the same way as they could decipher the traditional meanings with which flowers had become entangled: floriography – the 'language of flowers' – rapidly developed as a method of encoded communication over the course of the nineteenth century. A number of recent studies have taken particular care in decrypting the floriographical meanings in Victorian and neo-Victorian texts.<sup>3</sup> Less critical attention, however, has been paid to the symbolism inherent in jewels and precious metals, and those scholars who do identify meanings and significations lying just beyond the jewel's polished surface, including Jean Arnold in her ground-breaking study *Victorian Jewelry, Identity, and the Novel: Prisms of Culture* (2011), tend to focus their attention upon that most celebrated of precious stones: the diamond. I seek to go some way to redressing this balance by decoding the imagery of the full variety of precious materials alluded to by Bram Stoker in his most famous novel, *Dracula* (1897), examining their symbolic deployments and (often) biblical connotations. Finally, having considered these precious metals and stones, I turn to diamonds in the essay's conclusion; through connecting these jewels to Queen Victoria's Koh-i-Noor, *Dracula*, published in Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year, can be seen to project a number of nineteenth-century concerns onto this emblematic stone.

While its main focus centres on a single type of gemstone, Arnold's study nevertheless establishes the cultural context in which real and literary jewels were at work in the Victorian era. It was by the dawn of the nineteenth century, she states, that 'jewelry had become ubiquitous as an object of desire', and during this period in which 'the display of jewels ...

lavishly exceeded previous centuries, when such displays had [previously] been reserved for kings and queens to symbolize political power'.<sup>4</sup> The result of a more widespread ownership of jewels gave rise to a fuller range of connotations; 'mined and traded around the globe' these commodities were 'valued as signs of wealth, class, empire, gender roles and relations, and aesthetic refinement'.<sup>5</sup> Not only did precious materials carry this shared spectrum of connotations, they also had significances unique to each stone or metal.

It is one of **my major claims** that Stoker was harnessing the associations of these materials in constructing his novel. It is well-known that Stoker imbued his texts with cryptic information, and one need only look to his early twentieth-century novel, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903; 1912), for an immediate indication that jewels were forefront in his mind at the *fin de siècle*. Dig a little deeper, and one discovers that this novel too is cryptically encoded. A number of critics have noted, for example, that when the final four letters of the first name of the female protagonist, Margaret Trelawny, are reversed, they spell out the name of Tera, the Egyptian queen who is Margaret's physical *doppelgänger*. Amongst these scholars, Glennis Byron's analysis is the most thorough: having observed that Margaret's full name 'contains two anagrams of Tera ... A little more speculative play with names yields some potentially significant results. Tera has its roots in the Greek *teras* or monster'.<sup>6</sup> As in Byron's reading of *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, we might fruitfully understand *Dracula* as saturated with symbolic codes, and in particular, uncover the hidden meanings behind Stoker's references to precious materials. **Items of jewellery were, like Stoker's characters' names, used as vessels of textual code: acrostic pieces of jewellery with their origins in late eighteenth-century France became fashionable in nineteenth-century Britain. Taking the first letter of each gemstone reveals the item's message, commonly sentiments such as 'j'adore', 'love', 'regard' and 'dearest'.<sup>7</sup> Precious materials were thus decipherable vectors of a wealth of associations, from textual messages through to religious, mythological and folkloric connotations.**

Hitherto, there have been a number of insightful and convincing Marxist readings of *Dracula* that have touched upon the materiality of precious metals in the novel. Dracula is, according to Franco Moretti, 'a rational entrepreneur who invests his gold to expand his dominion'.<sup>8</sup> 'Figuratively, Stoker shows us Dracula bleeding money' when his coat is torn and a stream of coins pours forth, and, 'Even when he is not hoarding or haemorrhaging gold, Dracula's remarkable porosity is much like that which Marx attributes to capital'.<sup>9</sup> **Patrick Brantlinger, in 'Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914' (1985) also gestures towards ways in which the capitalism of nineteenth-century Britain interacted with contemporary imperial Gothic fiction: corresponding with his suggestions, that 'capitalism ... protect[ed] its interests by deflecting discontent onto alien or overseas targets', in *Dracula* the material wealth of capitalist society can be seen to become associated with Gothic monstrosity, denoting vampiric bodies, their homeland, and their encroachment upon British territory.<sup>10</sup> Seeking to complement these analyses with their particular interest in Dracula's gold, I focus on two strands of decipherment: the materiality of place, specifically the gold and silver of Transylvania and the jet of Whitby, and Stoker's use of precious jewel imagery which, in *Dracula*, is almost exclusively associated with notions of vampirism. Accordingly, I argue that Stoker's use of precious materials in *Dracula* comes to signify the intertwining of a number of the novel's concerns: the female vampire as a hard, penetrative woman; the imperial implications of the trade in jewels and these commodities' Eastern associations; wealth, class and ancient aristocracy. Unpicking the range of meanings behind the jewels and precious metals used to encrypt the novel's landscapes and vampiric characters can shed new critical light on the meanings encoded in Stoker's references to material culture.**

Silver Rivers and Emerald Grass: Materiality of Place

Early in *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker’s journey to Transylvania is punctuated by the language and imagery of precious metals, establishing the vampires’ homeland as a place associated with material wealth. For instance, Dracula instructs Harker ‘to go to the Golden Krone Hotel’, and among the sustenance that Harker so meticulously records in his journal, he enjoys a ‘Golden Mediasch’ wine.<sup>11</sup> As he travels, he notices the sublimity of the landscape around him in similar terms: the ‘very beautiful masses of weeping birch, their white stems shining like silver’ and the ‘silver threads where the rivers wind in deep gorges through the forests’ (7, 25). Although Harker speaks figuratively, these connections have a very real counterpart. As Jules Zanger notes, ‘The first act we see Dracula perform, in his disguise as Coachman, is to mark with stones the locations of buried treasure indicated by mysterious blue flames’.<sup>12</sup> This is a landscape peppered with treasure: literally, metaphorically, and linguistically.

The implications of Dracula’s buried hoards are of wealth and aristocracy, undercut by whispers of alchemy in the supernaturally-charged ‘ghostly flicker’ of the treasure-marking blue flames (12).<sup>13</sup> There is also a nod to aestheticism here, with its emphasis on the unique, antique and the finely-produced. One might take Talia Schaffer’s biographical and psychoanalytic examination of *Dracula* that reads the titular vampire as a veiled portrait of ‘the complex of fears, desires, secrecies, repressions, and punishments that [Oscar] Wilde’s name evoked’ after his trials, as particularly telling with aestheticism in mind: perhaps both Wilde and Dracula, in pursuit of fine objects, might be understood to burn with the ‘hard, gemlike flame’ that Walter Pater describes in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873) and which seems to mark the loci at which Dracula stores his treasure.<sup>14</sup>

Castle Dracula is filled with similar riches. Harker discovers that Dracula’s bedroom is empty save for

a great heap of gold in one corner – gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground. None of it that I noticed was less than three hundred years old. There were also chains and ornaments, some jewelled, but all of them old and stained. (44-45)

Long before Harker finds this trove in Dracula’s room, he notices ‘the antique silver lamp’ that Dracula holds when he greets him at the castle door, the gold ‘table service ... so beautifully wrought that it must be of immense value’ and, when this is cleared away ‘a rattling of ... silver in the next room’ (21). Gold and other precious metals of course evoke great antiquity, stretching back to ancient economies lacking coinage (typically recalled in myth and legend) in which precious stones and metals constituted one of the most primal, elemental forms of treasure. This imagery of gold and jewels, excavated like archaeological relics from beneath the soil might be seen to contrast with the industrialized economy of London during the heyday of Victorian capitalism, but as Dracula later demonstrates, modern coinage tumbling from inside his coat once he has invaded London, he can adapt his accumulation of wealth to the new world he seeks to invade.

Bacil F. Kirtley's investigations into the folklore upon which Stoker was drawing in his creation of *Dracula* are particularly pertinent when considering Harker's encounters with Dracula's buried and hoarded treasure. Referring to the mythology surrounding Vlad III, Voivode of Wallachia (known to posterity as Vlad Țepeș, 'Vlad the Impaler'), Kirtley records that this infamous aristocrat 'had workmen make him iron casks which he filled with gold and lowered into a river'.<sup>15</sup> Like the Impaler, Dracula takes care to hoard and entomb his treasure. An ecocritic might read this particular action as Dracula returning the natural resources to the earth from whence they came, a champion of Transylvania's natural environment. Only part of his treasure is buried, however, and much is described as dusty, suggesting a neglectful apathy or *ennui* rather than a reverence for the bounty of the natural world. Another of Kirtley's folkloric observations describes 'a golden drinking cup' belonging to the Impaler, which he placed by 'a spring of cool, sweet water': none ever drank or stole the cup for fear of incurring the Impaler's wrath.<sup>16</sup> Tales of this cup find their counterpart in Dracula's ostentatious tableware, and while Dracula willingly offers up these treasures for Harker's use, his observation of Harker dining from his golden table service is a stark contrast to his own feeding habits.

It is fitting that, when Dracula makes his voyage away from his gold-laced homeland, the ship aboard which he travels, the *Demeter*, is stabilised by 'a ballast of silver sand', a fine white substance made not from the precious metal from which it takes its name, but particles of quartz crystal with a silvery, reflective sheen. The significance of the *Demeter's* name also has connotations of the subterranean depths of jewel mines: as a number of critics have identified, the title evokes the mythological tale of the abduction and rape of Demeter's daughter, Persephone, at the hands of Hades, the god of the underworld, a parallel to Dracula's preying upon British women later in the novel.<sup>17</sup> If Dracula is associated with Hades, his buried treasure functions as the spoils of the underworld: subterranean plunder. Even when transporting his (far more mundane) crates of earth, Dracula is surrounded by fragments of semi-precious stones, evoking the 'tiniest grains of dust' out of which the vampires can materialise, and to which Dracula himself returns after he has been vanquished (42). The appearance of this sand, similar to the luminous silver-toned trees and rivers of Transylvania, connects it – visibly at least – to this supernaturally-charged landscape.

The site of Dracula's landing, the North Yorkshire seaside town of Whitby, evokes something of Transylvania's jewel-like beauty – indeed, Gerald Walker and Lorraine Wright have commented upon the geographical and geological commonalities between the two.<sup>18</sup> Dracula's choice of Whitby as the place for his first steps upon British soil is especially noteworthy. The cliffs that mark the site of shipwrecks and the deaths of suicides (individuals thought particularly susceptible to a post-mortem rebirth as vampires) are also a source of jet, a material used extensively in the black jewellery which the Victorians habitually wore as a symbol of respect in periods of mourning. Displayed at the Great Exhibition in 1851, Whitby jet became sought after by wealthy patrons, Queen Victoria among them, and it was after the death of Prince Albert a decade later that the monarch adopted this material as her ornament of choice.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently the burgeoning popularity of jet saw it move from an elite to a mass commodity.

Jet is composed of fossilised wood; as the remains of something very ancient, a part of an organism that was alive in the distant past and is now preserved in death, jet seems eerily reminiscent of the vampiric state. Stoker makes sure to position jet at the forefront of his readers' minds when Mr. Swales (a character who speaks a dialect so thick that it often requires its own decipherment) criticises 'Them feet-folks from York and Leeds ... lookin' out to buy



cheap jet' (60). In Whitby, the very earth riddled with this morbid mineral, it is under the 'silver light of the moon' that Mina Murray sees Dracula attack Lucy Westenra; evidently, the vampire favours conditions aesthetically connected to the precious metals of his homeland. Before the storm which heralds Dracula's landing, the landscape is decidedly grey 'except the green grass, which seems like emerald', an image of a material product of the East transplanted onto the very landscape of Britain, a foreshadowing of Dracula's (quite literal) advance onto British turf (69). Indeed, over the course of the Victorian era, precious stones 'made their way from the fringes of empire to its center', and here the figurative presence of emerald in an otherwise grey British landscape symbolises the East's encroachment – an image that might not be interpreted solely as the West's immoral plundering of the East's resources but, through Dracula, an image of reverse colonisation.<sup>20</sup>

The emerald's historic symbolism also plays an important role here: as Patrick Voillot records, 'For sailors, fishermen, and other seafarers the emerald is among the most powerful talismans, granting protection from tempests'.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, as a stone once thought to come from the depths of hell, it is associated with Satan, who was believed to have worn an emerald in his helmet, the jewel from which the Holy Grail was supposedly cut. As a stone at once favoured by the devil and thought to be 'able to destroy infernal creatures, whose secrets it knew', and one which was thought to have protected against storms and been the receptacle from which Christ's blood was sipped, Stoker's use of the emerald to represent the luminous grass at this point foreshadows a number of the novel's events.<sup>22</sup> Through Dracula's rise and fall as he is initially feared and then ultimately driven from the British landscape, to his exsanguinations which mock the sacredness of the sacrament and transubstantiation, and even the safe passage of the *Demeter* (though the loss of its crew) to the shores of Whitby, the emerald encapsulates a number of the novel's plot developments, motifs and themes.

Like Transylvania, then, Whitby functions as a unique landscape interwoven with the promise of precious materials. Unlike the richness of Transylvania's silver and gold, however, jet, rich with connotations of death, was at the time of *Dracula's* publication a relatively inexpensive substance. Whitby, a cheap destination for day-trippers, becomes a Gothic British landscape – partially denoted as such by its associations with semi-precious materials – functioning as a mediator between the Gothic zenith of bountiful Transylvania, and the metropolis of London. As the centre of the British Empire, London, vampire-like, is the core of the vast web of material importation and gluttonous consumption.

## Pearly Teeth and Sapphire Eyes: Bejewelled Vampires

There is one particular passage in *Dracula* in which vampires are intimately connected to precious metals and jewels, and this extract forms the densest use of such imagery in the entirety of the novel. Resting in a room in Dracula's castle, Jonathan Harker is approached by three vampiresses. Two, he observes, have dark hair and red eyes, whereas the third is striking in her physical difference:

The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires... All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips.... They whispered together, and then they all three

laughed—such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of human lips. (35-36)

The collection of luxurious materials here, gold, silver, sapphires, rubies and pearls, **not only harks back to the (somewhat antiquated) idealised similes of the blason**, but connects the weird sisters to a metallic or gem-like hardness, strongly suggestive of their penetrative abilities. Furthermore, this imagery not only objectifies them through their evocation of desirable materials, it specifically positions them as artefacts that have been accumulated within Dracula's broader mass of treasure. As Piya Pal-Lapinski notes of Tera in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, the bone of her severed hand is likened to opal; 'the exotic female body is here fused with the precious stone' in 'An uncanny image'.<sup>23</sup> In both *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and *Dracula*, individuals who are not quite human are denoted as such through their synthesis with luxurious inorganic material.

The blonde hair of the fair vampiress is expressed in terms that closely associate it with material richness. Unlike Lucy's hair, which evokes the immaterial beauty of natural light in its 'sunny ripples', the vampiress's tresses – seemingly similar to Lucy's in appearance if not description – are 'golden', indicative instead of tangible wealth (35, 150). Gold has a whole host of opposing connotations; while blonde hair often symbolised 'childlike purity' in the Victorian imagination, gold's resistance to corrosion and tarnishing means that this metal in particular retains its brilliance over the centuries.<sup>24</sup> Rather than a young innocent, then, through her hair's association with gold, the vampiress is connected with a contrasting notion: that of antiquity. **She is – unlike Lucy who, the reader learns, is a mere nineteen years of age – a creature with an extensive past and an abhuman lifespan. By the time Stoker published *Dracula*, he had already composed another story with a supernatural focus on blonde hair, 'The Secret of the Growing Gold' (1892), in which the blonde tresses of a murdered woman continue to grow after her death, eventually ensnaring and killing her lover. Here, as in *Dracula*, the blonde hair of the dangerous and the dead is explicitly connected to this precious metal.**<sup>25</sup>

The laughter of the weird sisters is compared to silver, a metal often used as gold's foil, and in *Dracula*, one that is intimately connected to the Transylvanian landscape. The trio all share 'a silvery, musical laugh' described as 'hard' (35). The sound, likened by Harker (whose very name suggests a particular aptitude for hearing) to 'the intolerable, tingling sweetness of water-glasses when played on by a cunning hand', is echoed by the sound of Dracula's money falling to the ground later in the novel, when a slash to his coat sends 'a bundle of bank-notes and a stream of gold' spilling out: 'Through the sound of the shivering glass [John Seward] could hear the "ting" of the gold, as some of the sovereigns fell on the flagging' (285). **While the description of the vampiresses' laugh as 'silvery' denotes a melodic clarity, it is literalised in the subsequent description of gold pieces, particularly fitting in that the sound emerges from between lips which are also connected to precious materials.**

Rubies, the gemstone designated as the colour of the vampiresses' lips, have a rich and extensive symbolism, denoting passion, evoking blood through their appearance, and symbolising durability as one of the hardest natural gems. In the Bible, a woman's worth is specifically measured through a comparison with these gemstones: 'Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies'.<sup>26</sup> The association of the weird sisters' lips with rubies, then, suggests that their price does not extend beyond the value of these precious gems, and as such, they are morally lacking – specifically, their lack of virtue implies that they are fallen women with troubling sexual appetites. Historically, monarchs chose to wear rubies 'because of their prophetic power: they were said to announce evil omens by suddenly turning from pure



red to black'.<sup>27</sup> They were particularly conspicuous in the crowns of Christian sovereigns, intending to suggest parallels between the martyrdom of Christ on behalf of mankind and the martyrdom of the monarch on behalf of their people.<sup>28</sup> That rubies were traditionally worn by royalty suggests something aristocratic in the vampiresses' countenance, as well as evoking the importance often given to royal bloodlines (a bloodline is, of course, something very different within a vampiric context, where the process of reproduction is based on the exchange of blood). Edna Duffy and Maurizia Boscagli note, meanwhile, that as 'ostentatious jewelry-wearing went out of fashion for women in the years between 1890 and 1920', 'as an object whose previous provenance was chiefly aristocratic, [the jewel] in its new incarnation couldn't help but be a knock-off of a more high-brow form. Vulgarly, then, shimmered very close to the surface of even the most expensive Cartier jewels'.<sup>29</sup> The vampiresses are vulgar not only in their gaudy beauty but their sexual licentiousness, and as stones with magical properties, rubies further highlight their supernatural nature.

Rubies are also the only precious stone with which Dracula himself is directly associated. Harker encounters Dracula after he has sated his bloodlust, and comments that 'the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath' (48). This comparison feminises Dracula, not only through his visual alignment with the sexually-appealing lips of the weird sisters, but through his jewel-like flush. In the nineteenth century, most jewellery was worn by women, and that which was donned by men was usually modest in size and colour, at odds with the large ruby in a gold star-shaped setting that Dracula's predecessor, Vlad the Impaler, wears in his most famous portrait.<sup>30</sup> Through his connection to a brightly-coloured gemstone and its inhuman and extensive visibility beneath his skin, Dracula exhibits a flamboyant display of the jewel-like, at odds with late nineteenth-century notions of masculinity which allowed only understated adornment, and further linking him to the historic iconography of the Impaler.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, his jewel-like colour associates him with the 'body ornament' associated not only with women, but with 'so-called "primitive" peoples', emphasising his racial 'otherness'.<sup>32</sup>

The blonde vampiress's sapphire eyes correspond to Dracula's blood-bloated skin and the vampiresses' ruby lips: both sapphire and ruby are varieties of the mineral corundum.<sup>33</sup> Traditionally, sapphires are considered 'emblematic of immortality and chastity' and 'the mystery of the celestial'.<sup>34</sup> Of course, the vampiress frustrates these meanings. While she would, but for the intervention of the vampire hunters, live indefinitely, she is a hellish rather than a heavenly creature, and her preying upon Jonathan is heavily sexualised. While the red eyes of the other vampiresses indicate something animal and abhuman, her blue eyes suggest that the transformation into monster is not irreversible, and gestures towards the holy peace that softens the vampires' features after they have been staked, speaking to the Christian redemption which is implied at the moment of the monsters' destruction, along with the immortality of the Christian soul. In this sense, the vampiress's sapphire-coloured eyes might be interpreted as the denotation of her future after she has been released from the curse of the vampire: once purified, her soul can be at peace and ascend to heaven.

Tellingly, the only other reference to sapphires in the text is the psychiatric inmate Renfield's description of the flies that Dracula sends to his window: 'Great big fat ones with steel and sapphire on their wings' (260). Sapphire eyes, once hypnotic and beautiful, become, at this later stage, associated with the iridescence of insects. The flies are food for Renfield, just as this vampiress was once – we assume – food for Dracula, and the sapphire on their wings associates them with all varieties of consumption: both nineteenth-century consumer culture whose appetite for gemstones was ever intensifying, and their literal consumption by Renfield. The connections between flies, death and decay further tarnish the imagery of the sapphire in the

novel, and the sapphire eyes of the blonde vampiress subsequently become symbolic of putrefaction as well as her redemption, along with the kind of decadent perversity that Renfield's zoophagy denotes.

Of the full wealth of precious materials referred to in the passage lingering upon the vampiresses' appearance, the description of the weird sisters' 'brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls' is perhaps the most saturated with symbolism, often with paradoxical meanings. Aviva Briefel records that, 'In the jargon of jewels, pearls without holes are known as "virgins," and those with holes as "widows", marking the classification of pearls as particularly sexualised in language.<sup>35</sup> This also associates these gemstones with the death of men, in particular, and, as Briefel goes on to claim, 'pearls were widely used to represent human tears in nineteenth-century mourning jewelry'.<sup>36</sup> These associations hint at the deathly potential of the vampiresses' pearly teeth, then, as well as gesturing towards the moment of sexual penetration and the loss of innocence accompanying the loss of virginity. Pearls are formed within the shells of oysters, a renowned aphrodisiac, suggestive, of course, of the alacrity with which Harker succumbs to the trio's advances as well as their seductive powers. Furthermore, oysters are sequential hermaphrodites, able to change their sex, a fitting complement to the novel's vampires who, as a substantial body of criticism has unearthed, blur and overstep nineteenth-century gender boundaries.<sup>37</sup> When Professor Van Helsing declares Mina a 'pearl among women', he connects her to notions of purity, and marks her out as rare and desirable. Through the reference to pearls, however, we are reminded of the hermaphroditism of oysters and the masculine, penetrative aggression of the female vampires; Mina too overcomes traditional gender roles, among other things, through her 'man's brain' (204, 218).

This is the not the only moment of connection between Mina and precious materials in the novel; Dracula's teeth are remarked to be 'as white as ivory' when Harker first encounters him as his mysterious driver (9), and later, after the communion wafer leaves a mark on Mina's forehead, Van Helsing hopes that once Dracula is vanquished her skin might be 'all white as ivory' (277). Van Helsing's use of ivory – a material connected, like pearls, to the vampires' teeth – to describe Mina's unblemished skin suggests that even after the vampires have been vanquished and the effects of Dracula's attack reversed, there will remain something vampiric – something of the Eastern commodity – about Mina. Van Helsing's earlier allusion to pearls portends the sharpening of Mina's teeth after her encounter with Dracula, one particular change to her physiology that inspires the troupe of vampiresses to address her, upon their meeting, as 'sister' (344).

In the Bible, pearls are associated with the pearly gates of heaven: 'And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl'.<sup>38</sup> Of course, the pearls that glitter against the vampiresses' lips, also mark entrances to an afterlife, although one of an entirely different nature. Pearls also have connotations of pride and extravagance, not only in the biblical passage denouncing Babylon, 'that great city, that was ... decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls', but in accounts of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra dissolving a pearl and drinking it in her wine – a display of lavishness and debauched excess.<sup>39</sup> These associations in particular, of an Eastern *femme fatale*, along with the decadent empire over which she ruled that fell to ruin, speak not only to the dangerous desirability of the vampiresses and the specific imperial implications of the trade in pearls in the nineteenth century, but Britain's wider political concerns. In his influential essay, 'The Occidental Tourist: "Dracula" and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization' (1990), Stephen D. Arata sums up the range of these misgivings: 'The decay of British global influence, the loss of overseas markets for British goods, ... the increasing unrest in British colonies and possessions, the growing domestic uneasiness over the morality

of imperialism'.<sup>40</sup> Made up of the very materials that the West is so eager to consume, the vampiresses are a monstrous version of the precious metals and jewels imported from the furthest reaches of empire. These, however, are commodities with bite.

### Diamond Buckles and Jubilees

To bring this article to a conclusion requires the interweaving of these dual threads: the idea of the Eastern landscape as characterised by an encroaching jewel-like beauty, and the notion that the vampires' 'Easternness', inhumanity, and sexual fluidity is crystallised in the imagery of precious materials. While jewel imagery in *Dracula* is rife, the novel presents comparatively few items of actual jewellery. To unite these strands requires a consideration of these objects, and in particular the only item of jewellery in *Dracula* to receive more than a sentence of text devoted to it: the diamond buckle that Lucy wears upon a velvet choker. It is this item that plays the greatest part in the narrative and its wider symbolism. The other items of jewellery in *Dracula* consist of four crucifixes and Mina's wedding ring – all but one of these items of jewellery, we might note, are worn around the neck, the customary site of vampiric penetration. Van Helsing owns two of these crucifixes, one in gold and the other in silver.<sup>41</sup> The two other crucifixes in the novel are both strung on beads: one is given to Harker in Transylvania, and the other belongs to the captain of the *Demeter*.<sup>42</sup> This ring is referred to only briefly in a letter that she writes to Lucy directly after her marriage, revealing that she has sealed her husband's diary with an impression of the ring, a gesture of marital trust (100).<sup>43</sup> Mina's only item of adornment is also sacrificed for this purpose: when she marries Harker she wears 'a little bit of pale blue ribbon' around her neck (100); a far more modest adornment than Lucy's, although it too is worn tight around the throat.<sup>44</sup>

Having considered the full range of jewel imagery associated with the vampiresses in particular, it is difficult to conceive that there might not be striking significance in the fact that Lucy's one item of jewellery encircles her neck, especially when this trinket is revealed to have been concealing 'a red mark on her throat' left by Dracula (115-16). This necklace is described as a 'narrow black velvet band ... buckled with an old diamond buckle' (115). The black velvet band seems more appropriate as an item of mourning jewellery, anticipating the bite of Dracula's pearl-like teeth with their connotations of the representation of human tears in periods of mourning, and foreshadows tragedy, with its imagery duplicated in the Transylvanian landscape through which Dracula is pursued, with its 'river lying like a black ribbon' (349). The buckle, meanwhile, (evidently an antique and quite possibly an heirloom given her fiancé Arthur Holmwood's social status), does not merely denote class and wealth, but the associations between buckles and restraints call to mind the strait-waistcoat used to incapacitate Renfield, and its position about her throat as a collar signifies ownership. But whose ownership might this be?

While the diamond buckle was a gift from Holmwood who intends, through his and Lucy's upcoming wedding ceremony, for the couple to be tethered in legal, religious and romantic union, there is something more at work. Early in the novel, Transylvania and its vampires are closely intertwined with the language and imagery of precious materials. Moreover, through wearing diamonds, which were thought to protect the wearer from ghosts, Lucy is singled out as being under particular supernatural threat.<sup>45</sup> Lucy's diamonds, therefore, might be encountered with a sense of foreboding, and indeed, the buckle marks the site at which Dracula – the East to

Lucy's West – penetrates her, and begins the process of her vampiric transformation. Mina even assumes that the first marks Dracula makes upon Lucy's throat are the work of the safety-pin with which she fastens Lucy's shawl, equating Dracula's teeth with the thinness and sharpness of a pin, used in all varieties of Victorian jewellery. This part of Lucy, already adorned with an Eastern commodity, and one associated with an unmatched hardness, anticipates the pin-like bite of the vampire's fangs. The particular association of vampire women with the imagery of jewels earlier in the novel also suggests that Lucy too will become one of Dracula's treasures, while Mina, whose throat is left unadorned with precious materials, and whose wedding ring is left modestly undescribed and its metal unnamed, is not transformed.

Lucy's diamonds would have sparked a number of connotations in the minds of the novel's original readers. At the turn of the century, diamonds were 'redolent of exoticism, femininity, waste and all the "othered" allures considered counter to a rationalizing modernity'.<sup>46</sup> In a study of the Koh-i-Noor, the infamous Indian diamond surrendered to Queen Victoria on the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the East India Company, Danielle C. Kinsey states that this particular jewel 'registered ... as an emblem of a frivolous, feminized, and orientalized luxury commodity'; the diamond was often considered to epitomise 'old-fashioned plunder imperialism'.<sup>47</sup> 'Victorian consumers', Kinsey claims, 'were in many ways hyperaware of where things came from and the networks of exploitation that were in place to deliver these goods'.<sup>48</sup> While the controversy surrounding the Koh-i-Noor was at its peak a few decades prior, 1897, the year of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (and the publication of Stoker's novel) launched the Crown Jewels back to the forefront of the public consciousness, particularly when Victoria was offered 'the 245-carat Jubilee Diamond from South Africa' to celebrate the sixty years of her reign.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps as a result of the controversy surrounding the Koh-i-Noor decades prior, Queen Victoria refused the gift.

The Jubilee was certainly an occasion for the celebration of empire: Stoker's ghostwritten *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906) records that 'every colour and ethnological variety of the human race' were in attendance at festivities hosted at the Lyceum Theatre, with 'the Indian Princes and the Colonial Premiers' '[i]n the boxes and stalls'.<sup>50</sup> The account states that 'much more attention was paid to the Colonial and Indian guests than had ever been done before', comparing the events of the Diamond Jubilee to those of the Golden Jubilee (in which Stoker and Irving were also involved).<sup>51</sup> This increased attention (along with Victoria's refusal of the Jubilee Diamond) hints, however, at a swelling sense of anxiety surrounding the colonies, invited to celebrate the longevity of the sovereign decked out in the spoils of empire. As the only mention of diamonds in *Dracula*, Lucy's buckle becomes the site of this focus: at this significant landmark in Victoria's reign, all of the meanings encapsulated within the Koh-i-Noor, the most famous diamond in Victorian Britain, are translocated onto, and represented by, this item of jewellery. The Koh-i-Noor's name, which translates as 'Mountain of Light', can be connected to Lucy's, whose full name, Lucy Westenra, might be taken to mean 'Light of the West'. Connected through light imagery, and emblematic of Western civilisation, then, associations between Lucy and the diamond suggest that she comes to represent Victoria herself.

Lucy's buckle can be read as the nexus of the myriad associations of Victoria's jewel and *Dracula's* related concerns: the exploitation of the land and resources of the East by the British Empire, the East's retaliation in the form of sexualised vampiric attack, and female susceptibility to these acts of aggression resulting in inevitable corruption. First adorned with jewels from the East, and then becoming jewel-like themselves in a supernatural mirroring of the Eastern lands from whence those precious materials were plundered, Lucy (standing in for Queen Victoria),

and the trio of vampiresses who foreshadow her transformation into a creature of the night, speak an encoded tongue: one which Bram Stoker whispers softly in their ears.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle', in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, (London, George Newnes, 1892), pp. 156-80, at p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> All of these narratives surrounding jewels have attracted the attention of critics demonstrating the judgements on imperialism inherent within the texts. See Melissa Free, "'Dirty Linen': Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 48.4 (2006), 340-71; William J. Scheick, 'Adolescent Pornography and Imperialism in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 34.1 (1991), 19-30; and Hilary A. Goldsmith 'The Fact and Fiction of Darwinism: The Representation of Race, Ethnicity and Imperialism in the Sherlock Holmes Stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle', in Vivien Miller and Helen Oakley (ed.), *Cross-Cultural Connections in Crime Fictions* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 24-39.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Ana Parejo Vaidillo, "'Gay Strangers': Reflections on Decadence and the Decadent Poetics of A. Mary F. Robinson', *Cahiers Victorians & Édouardiens*, 78 (2013), 2-15; Olivia Malfait, "'Against the World': Michael Field, Female Marriage and the Aura of Amateurism", *English Studies*, 96.2 (2015), 157-72; and Cristina Pătrașcu, 'Symbolic Codes of Communication in the Victorian Era: The Language of Flowers in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*', *Cultural Intertexts*, 1.1-2 (2014), 95-102.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Arnold, *Victorian Jewelry, Identity, and the Novel: Prisms of Culture* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2011), pp. 5, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Glennis Byron, 'Bram Stoker's Gothic and the Resources of Science', *Critical Survey*, 19.2 (2007), 48-62 at p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Allum, *The Collector's Cabinet: Tales, Facts and Fictions from the World of Antiques* (London: Icon Books, 2015), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London, Verso, 2005), p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> Jules Zanger, 'A Sympathetic Vibration: Dracula and the Jews', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 34.1 (1991), 33-44 at p. 42; Jan B. Gordon, 'The "Transparency" of *Dracula*', in Carol Margaret Davison (ed.), *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897-1997* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), pp. 95-122 at p. 106. See also Gail Turley Houston, *From Dickens to Dracula: Gothic, Economics, and Victorian Fiction*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, 'Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 28.3 (1985), 243-52 at p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1897), pp. 3, 5. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.

<sup>12</sup> Zanger, 'A Sympathetic Vibration', at p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> It is probable that Stoker gleaned the folkloric 'legend of the blue flame' from Emily Gerard's article 'Transylvanian Superstitions' (1885). See Elizabeth Miller, 'Getting to Know the Un-Dead: Bram Stoker, Vampires, and *Dracula*', in Peter Day (ed.), *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 3-19 at p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Talia Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me": The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*', *ELH*, 61.2 (1994), 381-425 at p. 398; Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888), p. 250. There have also been suggestions that the jewel imagery in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890; 1891) 'might have been read ... in the eyes of the knowing Victorian observer, as the "antics" of one whose sexual identity the court system would soon after describe as perverse'. See Edna Duffy and Maurizia Boscagli, 'Selling Jewels: Modernist Commodification and Disappearance as Style', *Modernism/modernity*, 14.2 (2007), 189-207 at p. 201.

<sup>15</sup> Bacil F. Kirtley, "'Dracula," the Monastic Chronicles and Slavic Folklore', *Midwest Folklore*, 6.3 (1956), 133-39 at p. 135.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., at p. 134.

<sup>17</sup> Carolyn Harford, 'Violation and the inscription of opposites in *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', *Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1.2 (2012), 49-56.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Walker and Lorraine Wright, 'Locating *Dracula*: Contextualising the Geography of Transylvania', in Carol Margaret Davison (ed.), *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897-1997* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), pp. 49-74, at p. 61.

<sup>19</sup> Helen Muller, *Jet Jewellery and Ornaments* (Aylesbury: Shire Publications, 1980), p. 14.



<sup>20</sup> Stefanie Markovits, 'Form Things: Looking at Genre through Victorian Diamonds', *Victorian Studies*, 52.4 (2010), 591-619 at p. 594.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Voillot, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, trans. Jack Hawkes (London, Thames & Hudson, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Piya Pal-Lapinski, *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture: A Reconsideration* (Hanover, NH, University of New Hampshire, 2005), p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> Rose Weitz, *Rapunzel's Daughters: What Women's Hair tells us about Women's Lives*, (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> In both 'The Secret of the Growing Gold' and *Dracula*, blonde hair is explicitly connected to racial anxieties. See Abigail Heiniger, 'Under Blond Hair in the Victorian Imagination: The Hungarian Roots of Bram Stoker's "The Secret of the Growing Gold"', *AHEA: E-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association* 4 (2011), 1-11.

<sup>26</sup> Proverbs 31. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Voillot, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> Duffy and Boscagli, 'Selling Jewels', at pp. 191, 195.

<sup>30</sup> Arnold, *Victorian Jewelry*, p. 59 n. 32; Voillot, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> In *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, the gemstone of the novel's title is a ruby, carved with Egyptian hieroglyphs and the asterism of the Plough. The jewel belongs to the (fictional) Egyptian Queen Tera who, like *Dracula*, is an ancient aristocrat seeking to invade the Western world.

<sup>32</sup> Duffy and Boscagli, 'Selling Jewels', at p. 195.

<sup>33</sup> Voillot, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, p. 87. The two darker vampiresses have red-coloured eyes in contrast to the sapphire-hued irises of the fair vampiress, which corresponds to the fact that 'In the traditional view of precious gems, no distinction was made between rubies and sapphires, which were called red rubies and blue rubies', pp. 86-87.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Aviva Briefel, *The Deceivers: Art Forgery and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 164. See 'On Pearls', *Connoisseur* 4-5 (1902-1903), 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 214 n. 37. Pertinent here is the Freudian interpretation of the significance of pearls. When Sigmund Freud speaks of one of his patients, Dora, he considers her desire for semen to be projected onto 'pearl-drop earrings': female pursuit of sex is explained alongside a woman's drive to fill her 'jewel-case' with 'treasure'. See Bram Dijkstra, *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Culture*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), pp. 108-09. Dijkstra reads Freud's analysis as the simultaneous fear of and attraction to the sexually-aware woman as the vampiric consumer of male fluids, seeking to cloak his own lust in an 'elaborate exposition of Dora's need to fill her empty jewel box with pearl drops', p. 110.

<sup>37</sup> Take, for example, the episodes in which *Dracula* forces Mina to drink blood from his breast, and Harker's delight in feeling the penetrative points of the vampiress's teeth resting on his throat. See Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', *Representations*, 8 (1984), 107-33. With oysters' sequential hermaphroditism in mind, one might also interpret pearls as symbolic of gender-swapping in, for example, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928).

<sup>38</sup> Revelations 21. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Revelations 18. 16.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: "Dracula" and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', *Victorian Studies*, 33.4 (1990), 621-56 at p. 622.

<sup>41</sup> Of these, the gold crucifix is perhaps the most significant. Schaffer records that while courting Florence Balcombe, who would later go on to marry Stoker, Oscar Wilde gave her 'a small gold cross engraved with both their names'. Schaffer reads Stoker's concerns over the nature of their relationship in the symbol of the gold crucifix, which, she claims, 'also signifies female sexuality, wantonness, duplicity, and crime' and 'licenses sexual riot, fluid identities, infections transmission, theft, and adulterous fantasy'. The golden crucifix has a 'double significance as sexual licence and phallic censor'. See Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me"', at pp. 391, 412, 413.

<sup>42</sup> While the crucifixes ward off vampires, the materials from which they are made do not seem to have an impact upon their ability to repel.

<sup>43</sup> Mina's wedding band has a connection to the circulatory system in the antiquated (and erroneous) belief that the ring finger is the site of the vena amoris, a vein said to run directly to the heart: it might,



therefore, be considered to encapsulate both romantic desire and vampiric desire through such associations.

<sup>44</sup> Schaffer offers the most interesting analysis of Mina’s blue ribbon, which is used to wrap Harker’s journal. Reading the contents of this diary as an account of a same-sex encounter between Dracula and Harker, Schaffer notes that ‘Mina has to undress herself in order to package the book. The record of a homosexual affair is dressed in the pastel colors of a heterosexual wedding, to look just like a bridal gift’. See Schaffer, “A Wilde Desire Took Me”, at p. 405.

<sup>45</sup> Voillot, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Duffy and Boscagli, ‘Selling Jewels’, at p. 191.

<sup>47</sup> Danielle C. Kinsey, ‘Koh-i-Noor: Empire, Diamonds and the Performance of British Material Culture’, *The Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), 391-419 at p. 392.

<sup>48</sup> Kinsey, ‘Koh-i-Noor’, at p. 392; Voillot, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> Kinsey, ‘Koh-i-Noor’, at p. 419.

<sup>50</sup> Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (London: William Heinemann, 1906), vol. 1, p. 252.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 333-34.