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ON THE CLIFF EDGE OF ENGLAND: TOURISM AND IMPERIAL GOTHIC IN CORNWALL

By Shelley Trower

THE FINAL CHAPTERS OF BRAM STOKER'S novel *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) are set in a house on the "very verge" of a cliff in Cornwall, the peninsula located at the far south west of England. The narrator, Malcolm Ross, travels overnight from London to Cornwall, then describes his first sight of the house, and a little later the position of the dining-room, its walls hanging over the sea:

> We were all impressed by the house as it appeared in the bright moonlight. A great grey stone mansion of the Jacobean period; vast and spacious, standing high over the sea on the very verge of a high cliff. When we had swept round the curve of the avenue cut through the rock, and come out on the high plateau on which the house stood, the crash and murmur of waves breaking against rock far below us came with an invigorating breath of moist sea air . . .
>
> We had supper in the great dining-room on the south side, the walls of which actually hung over the sea. The murmur came up muffled, but it never ceased. As the little promontory stood well out into the sea, the northern side of the house was open; and the due north was in no way shut out by the great mass of rock, which, reared high above us, shut out the rest of the world. Far off across the bay we could see the trembling lights of the castle, and here and there along the shore the faint light of a fisher's window. For the rest the sea was a dark blue plain with here and there a flicker of light as the gleam of starlight fell on the slope of a swelling wave. (195–96; ch. 17)

In this liminal place, there is a confusion of categories: the sea not only crosses the boundary into land (the sound of its "murmur" and its moistness in the air) but seems itself to become land (a "dark blue plain"). The actual land is in contrast invisible from the house, being shut out by a mass of rock that rears high above. From the far distant shore, on the other side of the bay, the lights vibrate across both land and sea, further collapsing the sense of a distinction between them: from the "trembling lights" of the castle to the intermittent "flicker of light" on the waves.

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On the very edge of England, such locations offer a space that is felt to be almost, but not quite, detached from the nation, to be neither home nor elsewhere, but rather part-way between the two. The experience of being on the cliff edge here paves the way for the narrator's growing sense in the climactic scenes of this novel that this house is no longer part of the land of England but has been invaded and re-placed, in this case becoming part of Egypt. I will argue that cliffs are an exemplary embodiment of a more general perception of Cornwall, in particular, as being both part of yet different and separable from England. They thus form part of my discussion of how Cornwall's peripheral position as neither quite inside nor outside the imperial mainland of England allows apparently poisonous atmospheres from other, far flung regions overseas to invade. Stoker's fiction signals an anxiety in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods that England is internally fragmented, that a coherent national territory can be disturbed by differences within – from the far south west to the north east – as well as being subject to invasions from overseas. In this article I will look initially at travel narratives and their exoticization of Cornwall itself, before moving on to focus on novels and a short story by Stoker and Conan Doyle which use cliffs (especially the cliffs of Cornwall) as a space where England and the distant reaches of its empire – specifically Egypt and West Africa – overlap.

Two directions of imperialist movement are well-established within Victorian and Gothic studies: the movement of the explorer or imperialist adventurer outwards to regions perceived as exotic; and the return movement, of foreign bodies and objects, often experienced as an invasion, described by Stephen Arata as "reverse colonization" (621–45). Arata, like many critics and historians, observes that the late-Victorian period was a time of imperial crisis, with a decline in global markets for British goods, for example, an increased instability in British colonies and possessions, and a growing uneasiness about the morality of imperialism (622). Hence the emphasis on fictions which depict imperialist adventures gone wrong: explorers "go native" instead of civilizing the natives, and England is invaded instead of continuing to expand its empire. In his discussion of "imperial Gothic" Patrick Brantlinger similarly discusses "invasion-scare stories" around the turn of the century, "in which the outward movement of imperialist adventure is reversed" (*Rule of Darkness* 233).[1] These movements tend to begin and end in London, as in the classic case of *Dracula* in which Jonathan carries out his research into Transylvania in the British Museum before "leaving the West and entering the East" (1), a movement reversed by the vampire's invasion of the urban heart of civilization. What is striking is how both of these movements – outwards and inwards – collapse in the space of Cornwall, in fiction and non-fiction alike: it is a place to which explorers travel – like our narrator in *The Jewel* – being perceived as an exotic location that resembles foreign regions overseas, and it is a place that is invaded, as it is also (despite its exoticization) part of England.

Whether the movement is outwards toward the exotic or in the reverse direction, usually England and its "other" are, at least initially, sharply opposed. The English explorer may undergo the process of "going native" (Brantlinger 230), but the very possibility depends at the outset on the perception of an essential difference that is then subject to challenge or collapse. Cornwall, however, complicates this relation between England and those regions perceived as foreign, as this county is clearly part of the English nation at the same time as it is often perceived as being different from it – as distinctively "Celtic."[2] Critics have previously focused on "Celtic" places that are more clearly differentiated from England, considering Stoker's and Doyle's relations to Ireland and Scotland (see, for example, Glover

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and Wynne). While Scotland and Ireland became part of the United Kingdom with the Acts of Union in 1707 and 1800 respectively, they have never been part of England. There are many similarities in the way these authors depict Ireland, Scotland, and Cornwall, however: the "geographical doubling" which David Glover identifies in Stoker's depictions of Ireland and Transylvania, for example, can again be found in Stoker's depictions of Cornwall and Egypt, all of which are perceived at times as foreign from the perspective of the English traveler (32–35). Similarly, as Robert Peckham observes, R. L. Stevenson developed comparisons between Scotland and the Pacific islands, especially between the fate of their natives, while on his travels through America he perceived the Cornish emigrants as entirely different from their English neighbors at home (505–06). For Stevenson, though, the Cornish seem incomparable to anyone:

> There were no emigrants direct from Europe – save one German family and a knot of Cornish miners who kept grimly by themselves, one reading the New Testament all day long through steel spectacles, the rest discussing privately the secrets of their old-world, mysterious race. . . . A division of races, older and more original than that of Babel, keeps this close, esoteric family apart from neighbouring Englishmen. Not even a Red Indian seems more foreign in my eyes. This is one of the lessons of travel – that some of the strangest races dwell next door to you at home. (39)

Stevenson here highlights the paradox that Cornwall is part of England, and yet its natives seem more foreign than those overseas. Cornwall, then, with its potential to figure as foreign while it is also an English county, serves both as the outlying destination for the English explorer, or tourist, who typically heads out from the urban centre that is London, and as a space where England might be especially susceptible to invasion from elsewhere. The Cornish cliffs operate as an ambiguous space, a permeable border at the edge of England that serves as both a point of destination and infiltration – by poisonous alien air.

Exotic Cornwall

One of the main reasons for the popularized perception of Cornwall as different from England was its promotion by the tourist industry, through posters and publications produced by The Great Western Railway (which formed an advertising department in the 1880s), as an exotic, sunny, and warm part of England which resembled the Mediterranean while being located conveniently close to home.[3] As James Vernon notes, the proliferation of guide-books after the arrival of the railway contributed to the perception of Cornwall as both "a county of England and a foreign country [. . . and] of the Cornish as English, but not English" (153, 163).[4] He goes on to observe that many travelers in the nineteenth century were drawn to "the most distant and 'exotic' parts of the Empire" but that "others were no less struck by the difference of places closer to home" (162). Since the 1760s, in the age of "The Grand Tour," British travelers had increasingly turned for recreational travel toward regions and countries closer to home, such as the Peak and Lake Districts, Wales, and Scotland. One of the best-known writers on picturesque travel was William Gilpin, who travelled to Wales, Scotland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland in the 1770s, and who showed that "an exploration of rural Britain could compete with the fascination of continental Europe" (Hooper 174). Gilpin himself promoted such travels as adventures as well as aesthetically rewarding, but over the course of the nineteenth century the competition grew increasingly exotic and

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exciting. During the nineteenth century the Middle East, and especially Egypt, for instance, became a favorite tourist destination, continuing through the age of imperialism (see, for example, Fagan 251, 305–29; Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature* 74; Gregory). The Great Western Railway's promotional publication *The Cornish Riviera* thus makes the comparison with the sunny and warm climates of the Mediterranean, Monte Carlo, and, further afield, the islands of Madeira and the Azores, while it also describes Cornwall as a place of adventure, with its primitive traditions and folklore, its superstitious natives and dramatic landscapes, building on earlier perceptions of Cornwall as distinctively Celtic (for commentary on this see Vernon, especially 157 and 163–64). It repeatedly claims that Cornwall is now so near, and yet so "otherworldly," that nobody need travel the further distance to foreign regions. The Express trains could now take you from Paddington to Penzance in less than eight hours, in contrast to the pre-railway days when a traveler could expect to take about forty hours to reach Penzance (*Cornish Riviera* 6–8).[5]

> It is becoming every day more and more apparent to all classes of English men and English women that, with the Cornish Riviera practically at our doors, the necessity of costly and fatiguing foreign travel exists no longer. The sunny and sheltered littoral of "The Duchy" rivals (save in the matter of expense!) the far-off and much less accessible shores of Southern France or Northern Africa, or the still more distant Island of Madeira. (5–6)

Before the railway network extended into Cornwall – the line between Plymouth and Truro opened in 1859 – the region was far less accessible and less visited. Wilkie Collins's journey through Cornwall on foot in 1850 was thus relatively unusual, though his descriptions of the region as different from the rest of England – both in his *Rambles Beyond Railways* and in the two novels which draw on his trip, *Basil* and *The Dead Secret* – were quite typical: its landscapes are unique and wild, and the Cornish people have a character of their own. The fishermen and farmers are superstitious, with ancient traditions and folktales and a distinct identity like the Welsh, according to Collins.[6] Later accounts by the railway company emphasize that Cornwall is now much easier to get to while it also apparently retains its distinctiveness, not only in terms of its supposedly warm and sunny climate, but as a magical and mysterious location, full of folklore and sacred sites of legend, where the natives are especially superstitious. Early editions of *The Cornish Riviera* refer to Cornwall as an "old-world region of romance and folk-lore," with its sites of "Arthurian legend" and its "mysterious monuments" and wells and castles (26–32). Later versions by S. P. B. Mais expand on the difference between a "normal English holiday" and a trip to Cornwall in terms of the climate and landscape and also its supernatural elements – its "warlocks and pixies, miracle working saints and woe-working witches" – and superstitious Celtic natives: "Your Cornishman thinks little of Devon, and less of the rest of England. He is sufficient unto himself, affable and hospitable, like the Welsh extremely devout, and like all Celts extremely superstitious" (3). Further, Mais adds to the sunny Cornish holiday, a touch of adventure, a touch of terror, and, of the sublime, with his descriptions of the power of the sea and the dangerous cliffs, which echo Collins's descriptions of dramatic cliff scenery, such as a giant chasm named "Lion's Den" (*Rambles* 70). Like the Cornish people who think less than little of "the rest of England," Mais claims that the sea and rocky landscape are unique:

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> On no other coast do the waves dash up in long rollers for the surf-board riders to crest, on no other coast are there so many natural diving boards of rock overlooking secluded pools of infinite depth. Nowhere else does the sea make its terrific power felt so strongly. It may be friendly and full of colour to us in the summer, but the churchyards are full of bodies of shipwrecked sailors. (5)

Later chapters contain, along with stories of smugglers and wreckers, numerous descriptions of the spectacular and frightening grandeur of various formations of rocks along the cliffs, such as "a terrifying chasm" named the "Holed Headland," an "awe-inspiring granite cliff . . . more frightening than the Giant's Causeway," and "that most terrifying pile of rocks known as the Brisons, dreaded of all sailors" (Mais 84, 94, 96).

Thus Cornwall figures both as part of England and as exotic or even otherworldly, serving as a place for English exploration. It is as though this place located conveniently just down the line can provide the safe holiday sunniness of the Mediterranean and at the same time can offer adventure and excitement and even the thrill of danger. It offers the opportunity for a relatively manageable, semi-domestic version of the imperial activities described in the numerous and popular explorers' journals and adventure novels set in the more distant reaches of the empire such as India and Africa (see, for example, Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature* 30–35, 134–47). The sense of Cornwall as a place of exploration, and of relatively safe transgression, was further promoted by the boy's adventure novel which formed an important strand of the region's storytelling, as Ella Westland points out: "In the later nineteenth century, the period of Ballantyne and Stevenson, 'West Barbary' offered itself as an ideal land for exciting tales of wrecking, smuggling and danger at sea. It was also mysterious and spooky" (157). Cornwall's reputation as an exciting land of wild smugglers and pirates was further promoted through popular dramatic productions, such as William Schwenck Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's comic opera *The Pirates of Penzance, or Love and Duty* (1879),[7] the opening scene of which is "A rocky seashore on the coast of Cornwall" where pirates are mingling and drinking (13). The coastal town of Penzance was associated with such unlawful activity partly due to a history of fearful reports and rumors of pirate ships out at sea, and a particular incident in 1760 when a Turkish corsair ship ran aground.[8] Its geographically vulnerable and isolated position, and a series of historical attacks and potential invasions meant that Penzance was also a place where fears of invasion were concentrated. It was the place where the Spanish Armada was first spotted in 1588, for example, and it was attacked along with the neighboring villages of Paul, Mousehole, and Newlyn, in 1595 (as reported, for example, by Payton 129–30). Incidents such as these contributed to the image of Cornwall as wild and lawless, combined with perceptions of the Cornish themselves as "foreign," and as involved in smuggling and wrecking. The enormous popularity of Gilbert and Sullivan's opera in Britain and the United States thus further branded the Cornish coastline as a place of invasion, danger and adventure (while also critiquing peoples' fears, as the pirates are shown to be kind-hearted and noble).

The Cornish Riviera, then, like Collins's *Rambles* and *Basil* and other guides and novels and dramatic productions, accordingly depicts experiences of travelling to the "frightening" edge of England, to the very boundaries of the nation, to its unstable, stormy borders, where anything might happen. We see a similar journey in Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, when the narrator travels by train from London to Cornwall, although here it is not only that Cornwall is itself perceived as foreign, as being *like* the Mediterranean, but that it overlaps with, or is invaded by an exotic, dangerous place from the overseas empire: Egypt. Cliffs

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are frightening, not only because of their physical dangers – as a cause of shipwrecks, or as precarious edges from which one can fall off, or in other words as lethal points of entry and exit – but in their embodiment of insecure national borders, as unstable, shaky boundaries that undergo the continuous onslaught of the elements. Cornwall operates as a complex space the foreignness of which can be redoubled, both as a foreign region itself and as one that is invaded from further reaches of the empire.

The Mummy's Hand

IN *THE JEWEL OF SEVEN STARS* THE journeys outwards are to Egypt and to Cornwall, while Cornwall is in turn invaded by Egypt. The journey to Egypt is taken in the narrative's past, the leading explorer being Mr Trelawny who brought back various objects including an Egyptian mummy, that of Queen Tera. Mr Trelawny and his circle, including his daughter, Margaret, and Margaret's devoted admirer, our narrator Malcolm Ross, later make the journey from London to Cornwall as this is a relatively isolated place where the "Great Experiment," the resurrection of the mummy, can be carried out. Ross briefly describes the overnight train journey, which departs from London, to the southwest peninsula. During this journey a minor incident occurs on the coast where a small landslip causes a delay, and Margaret begins to behave strangely (later we learn that she is being possessed by the Egyptian queen), occasionally recovering herself "when there occurred some marked episode in the journey, such as stopping at a station, or when the thunderous rumble of crossing a viaduct woke the echoes of the hills or cliffs around us" (195; ch. 17). In this way the reader is given the sense of a distance being crossed, and of the progress toward a new adventure far from the city. Although this journey is shorter and involves less excitement than the earlier explorations in Egypt, the resemblance between the two outlying locations, where the key supernatural scenes take place, soon becomes clear. The Egyptian and the Cornish locations are both rocky, situated on a steep cliff, in a secret, ancient cave, and are isolated. The explorers in Egypt have to climb up the cliff and find the entrance to the cave, a tomb into which they descend to find the treasures and mummy. In Cornwall, similarly, the hidden house on the cliff contains a secret cave, previously used for smuggling, into which the explorers descend. Mr Trelawny explains that he has chosen this spot for the Great Experiment at least partly because of its similarity to the Egyptian location: "In a hundred different ways it fulfils the conditions which I am led to believe are primary with regard to success. Here, we are, and shall be, as isolated as Queen Tera herself would have been in her rocky tomb in the Valley of the Sorcerer, and still in a rocky cavern" (199; ch. 17). Here, then, Cornwall is not only depicted as distinctly non-English, as being rather more like a foreign country than a county of England; Mr Trelawny puts himself in the position of the Queen, imaginatively going to Egypt.

Mr Trelawny and his helpers, consisting of Margaret, Malcolm Ross, a co-explorer in Egypt, Mr Corbeck, and Doctor Winchester, set about transporting his Egyptian possessions into the cave. Mr Trelawny's large collection of Egyptian artefacts, like other collections in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, clearly helps to contribute to his image as a triumphant imperial explorer, but as Erika Rappaport has recently observed, in the context of the dangers and instability associated with imperialism in late-century gothic, objects like the mummy's hand "occasionally come to life and grab back" (294).[9] Rappaport also considers this telling of the disruptive potential of commodities in the colonial marketplace, noting in particular

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that Stoker wrote *The Jewel of Seven Stars* "immediately after the Boer War at a moment when imperial possessions could be imagined as something to be lost as well as won" (294). Thus while Mr Trelawny has taken possession of the Egyptian goods, he begins to lose a degree of control as the Egyptian Queen seems in turn to take possession of his daughter, who becomes increasingly strange to our narrator. Egypt begins to enter Cornwall in an increasingly over-powering, supernatural, and disturbing way. Malcolm goes out for a stroll on the cliffs to think over Margaret's strangeness, and concludes that "in some occult way the Sorceress [the mummified Queen Tera] had power to change places with the other" (207; ch. 18). The collapse of space brought about by the Queen's "astral body" (206) becomes increasingly prominent as Margaret loses possession of herself, and the Cornish cave in the closing chapter is finally, it seems, lost to the dangerous presence of the foreign land. Though there are two different endings (Stoker revised the original for republication in 1912), in both, crucially, a mysterious Egyptian miasma – a "faint greenish vapour" or "smoke," with a "strange, pungent odour" (241, 247; ch. 20)[10] – fills the Cornish cave, becoming so dense as to obliterate vision and to overpower the witnesses. In the 1903 edition, the filling of the room with smoke corresponds climactically with the shaking of the cliff below the house as though the land of Cornwall is in danger of falling apart, of becoming altogether detached from the nation of England, of collapsing into the sea: "The storm still thundered round the house, and I could feel the rock on which it was built tremble under the furious onslaught of the waves" (241; ch. 20). At this point, the narrator can just about see in a now blinding light, that the mummy's hand appears to rise in a white mist. But the stormy wind then breaks through the window causing the vapour to drift from its course. Smoke fills the room so that the narrator can no longer see at all, and when he eventually finds his companions they are all dead. In the 1912 version the smoke again becomes denser and denser, obliterating the light and producing a darkness which the narrator here explicitly calls "the Egyptian darkness" (248). Again the presence of Egypt in these climactic scenes seems dangerously to overwhelm the space of the cave, a space which had already seemed far removed from England. In this revised ending the results of the experiment are left uncertain, but Margaret survives and there is the hint that the Queen was resurrected and might continue to live on as part of her.

Poisonous air is used in a very similar way in Stoker's earlier novel *Dracula* and short story "The Invisible Giant." In early encounters, both the vampire and the giant are surrounded by mist, much as the mummy whose hand, holding the jewel of seven stars, is briefly resurrected "[i]n the heart of this mist" (242; ch. 20). As Martin Willis has shown, Stoker drew on medical theories of disease for "The Invisible Giant" and *Dracula*, including miasmatist and contagionist theories, which provided different accounts of how disease could spread through populations. According to contagionist accounts, disease spread through direct contact and could be contained by quarantine, by the policing of borders. The miasmatist theory was promoted by liberals who saw disease as a product of the environment, of conditions such as foul air and bad water, and could best be managed by the alleviation of poverty. According to miasmatists, quarantine was ineffective as "bad air" could transcend borders. Stoker's understanding of miasmatist theory can thus help to explain the nature of the "invading spectre" in both "The Invisible Giant" and *Dracula*, which originates from elsewhere, penetrates British borders, and has "the potential to infect a population with an unforseen and unnamed disease" (303). Willis's argument can also be readily applied to *The Jewel*, in which the mummy, like Dracula's coffin, is described as being dusty and

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smelly, drawing on miasmatic conceptions of infection. When Mr Trelawny begins to tear the bandages away from the mummified cat (Queen Tera's pet), there arose a "little cloud of red pungent dust" (228); when the mummy of Queen Tera herself is unwrapped "there was the same attendant red dust and pungent presence of bitumen" (233; ch. 20). As the unrolling goes on the pungency increases, until they begin "to feel it as though it caught or touched us in some special way" (233). The air has a physical impact here which increases dangerously as the experiment progresses. As in *Dracula* the theme of imperial disturbance of an ancient culture – carried out initially by Harker, or in this novel Mr Trelawny – is associated with ancestral infection and allows, as Willis puts it, the "penetration of British borders by the biological body of the alien" (311). Harker sets up a business transaction which allows the sale of the British property to the foreigner, while Mr Trelawny raids the Egyptian tomb and directly imports the foreign mummy himself.

Willis argues that contagionist as well as miasmatist discourses are present in complex, contradictory ways in Stoker's fiction, as it is the poor policing of borders – or indeed Harker's self-interested, imperialist trespassing – that causes the disease to spread contagiously to England. But the miasmatist theories best explain the nature of the atmospheric pollution, manifested visibly, but blindingly, in the air. In both novels the "borders" mentioned by Willis are also physically manifest in the form of coastlines. We have already seen how the house with the cave hangs right over the sea in *The Jewel*; in *Dracula* the alien's initial invasion similarly takes place as close to the edge as possible, in a graveyard that "descends so steeply over the harbour that part of the bank has fallen away, and some of the graves have been destroyed" (62; ch. 6). This is Mina's favorite spot, where she sits as the storm approaches, bringing with it the foreign ship. As she watches, the line between land and sea and sky blurs even further, becoming lost in an equalizing greyness: "Everything is grey – except the green grass, which seems like emerald amongst it; grey earthy rock; grey clouds, tinged with the sunburst at the far edge, hang over the grey sea, into which the sand-points stretch like grey fingers" (73; ch. 6). And with the stormy greyness the mist first begins to enter England, further blurring and then erasing the difference between sea and the wet sky that becomes so dense it resembles solid land (like the "dark blue plain" in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*): "The horizon is lost in a grey mist. All is vastness; the clouds are piled up like giant rocks" (73; ch. 6). The masses of fog then drift inland, obliterating vision like in the Cornish cave, leaving "only the organ of hearing" to sense the violence of the storm. Out of this darkness springs the alien creature – the wolf – much as the mummy's hand rises out of the mist, and heads straight towards the point on the projecting cliff:

> [T]he very instant the shore was touched, an immense dog sprang up on deck from below, as if shot up by the concussion, and running forward, jumped from the bow onto the sand. Making straight for the steep cliff, where the churchyard hangs over the laneway to the East Pier so steeply that some of the flat tombstones – "thruff-steans" or "through-stones," as they call them in the Whitby vernacular – actually project over where the sustaining cliff has fallen away, it disappeared in the darkness. (79; ch. 7)

Stoker builds on these scenes at Whitby for *The Jewel*, relocating the point of foreign invasion in Cornwall where he further develops the sense of difference from (the rest of) England. With the "Whitby vernacular" in *Dracula*, which the locals speak in at some length (63–67, 74; ch. 6), we get some sense of Whitby's distinctiveness. Yorkshire's regionalism is

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comparable to some extent to that of Cornwall: it is similarly distant from the urban centre, with its own landscapes and legends and dialects, and it provides an escape for tourists. The influx of tourists is mentioned in *Dracula* at the start of the newspaper report of the storm, the ship, and the wolf:

> Saturday evening was as fine as ever was known, and the great body of holiday-makers set out yesterday for visits to Mulgrave Woods, Robin Hood's Bay, Rig Mill, Runswick, Staithes, and the various trips in the neighbourhood of Whitby. The steamers *Emma* and *Scarborough* made excursions along the coast, and there was an unusual amount of 'tripping' both to and from Whitby. (75)

Despite the similarities between Yorkshire and Cornwall as semi-foreign holiday destinations, however, Mina's journey to Yorkshire hardly constitutes the mini-imperial adventure we see in *The Jewel* – we hear nothing more of it than "Lucy met me at the station" (62; ch. 6) – while there are hints in her account of the local scenery, history, and folklore, of the regional difference that is more fully exploited in Stoker's later novel. As Nancy Armstrong points out, focusing on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* – also set in Yorkshire (further to the west) – nineteenth-century fiction and folklore took part in a regional mapping of Britain that divided it into a literate urban centre and a "celtic or ethnic periphery" (245). Novelists and folklorists described the English countryside as marginal in ways that resembled foreign nations, which the tourist industry selectively incorporated into its own narratives. Armstrong points to some of the similarities between British colonial attitudes toward Africa and Asia and the voyeuristic gaze of a narrator-tourist such as Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights* who documents and classifies the natives as primitive while also romanticizing them. We see similar characteristics of the travel narrative in *Dracula* with Mina's detailed accounts of her new surroundings and the dialect-speaking "natives" (echoing Jonathan's earlier accounts of Romania), while *The Jewel* provides us with a more developed sense of an imperial adventure into regional difference with its more eventful train journey to Cornwall, followed by the detailed description of the scenery, the house on the cliffs with its Egyptian cave, and his Cornish lover/Egyptian Queen. In *The Jewel* the peripheral region is described, as I have said, not just as different from England but as closely resembling Egypt, before being invaded by its poisonous atmosphere to the extent that it becomes indistinguishable. It is as if the mini-imperial journeys are finally magnified into the real thing: our narrators become immersed absolutely in the alien atmospheres.

The Devil's Foot

An overpowering vapour similarly infiltrates Cornwall in Conan Doyle's story "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot." As in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, this story firstly involves the movement outwards from London to Cornwall, where an exhausted Sherlock Holmes is advised by his doctor to take a holiday. Holmes and Watson take up residence in a cottage located "at the further extremity of the Cornish peninsula" (51), much as the protagonists of *The Jewel* inhabit the house on the edge of the cliff with its spectacular view of the sea. That this is the very edge of the land of England is similarly emphasized in "The Adventure" by the view from their cottage:

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> From the windows of our little whitewashed house, which stood high upon a grassy headland, we looked down upon the whole sinister semi-circle of Mounts Bay, that old death trap of sailing vessels, with its fringe of black cliffs and surge-swept reefs on which innumerable seamen have met their end. (51)

For Conan Doyle, the distinctiveness of Cornwall and the Cornish was due to its position as a peninsula stuck out in the sea. In his autobiographical *Through the Magic Door* he writes: "That long peninsula extending out into the ocean has caught all sorts of strange floating things" which have "woven themselves into the texture of the Cornish race" – a race which occasionally throws up great men with "un-English ways and features" (87).[11] Cornwall's position as a peninsula is also prominent in "The Adventure," in which Conan Doyle seems to transfer his (autobiographical) feelings into Watson's narrative. Following his account of the sea view from the headland Watson goes on to describe Cornwall as though it is not quite part of the modern nation. Again, as in Stoker's novels, the boundary between land and sea is blurred where Watson describes how their surroundings on the land side were as "sombre" and "lonely" as the sea, with no sign of human life except the prehistoric "traces of some vanished race . . . of forgotten nations" (51–52). Holmes becomes interested in the prehistoric remains and in the ancient "Cornish branch of the great Celtic speech" (77), the study of which is interrupted and only resumed once the mysterious case, which suddenly intrudes on their holiday – or, rather, transforms it into a more exotic imperialist adventure – is solved.

Once again, then, Cornwall is being portrayed as un-English or foreign, which paves the way for the further leap into Africa. Holmes eventually discovers that the fumes from an African poison, imported by the explorer Dr Leon Sterndale, were used to murder two victims. The first noticeable clue that the deaths might have been caused by something in the air is provided when Holmes and Watson investigate the scene of the second murder, of Mr Mortimer Tregennis, shortly after it has taken place: "The atmosphere of the room was of a horrible and depressing stuffiness. The servant who had first entered had thrown up the window, or it would have been even more intolerable" (64). Like the first victim, Mr Tregennis's sister, his face and body are twisted and contorted by terror. Holmes then begins to gather evidence that in both cases something was burned to produce "an atmosphere causing strange toxic effects" (67). Having taken some of the powder he found by the lamp in Mr Tregennis's room, Holmes then sets about burning it in an experiment on himself and Watson in order to ascertain its effects. Watson reports that he very quickly began to feel mentally affected:

> I had hardly settled in my chair before I was conscious of a thick, musky odour, subtle and nauseous. At the very first whiff of it my brain and my imagination were beyond all control. A thick, black cloud swirled before my eyes, and my mind told me that in this cloud, unseen as yet, lurked all that was vaguely horrible, all that was monstrous and inconceivably wicked in the universe. Vague shapes swirled and swam amid the dark cloud-bank, each a menace and a warning of something coming, the advent of some unspeakable dweller upon the threshold, whose very shadow would blast my soul. A freezing horror took possession of me. (68)

Just as in the final scenes of *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, the existence of the room on the cliffs of Cornwall is lost to the narrator's senses. The visibility of the room is obscured by clouds

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that look like land – "the dark cloud-bank" (much like the clouds "piled up like giant rocks" in *Dracula*) – indicating the danger of a collapse in the distinction between land and sea, the horror of something on the "threshold." His mind and body are possessed by the presence of this strange cloud from somewhere as yet unknown, which he only just manages to escape through a desperate force of will after seeing Holmes's face looking exactly like the two dead victims. He then lurches with Holmes out of the door and onto the grass outside. Gradually, the cloud begins to clear, and they become conscious of their location, of the grass beneath them: "Slowly it rose from our souls like the mists from a landscape until peace and reason had returned, and we were sitting upon the grass" (69).

This story, like Stoker's novel, seems thus to take up and expand on miasmatic theories of disease, as the mist or cloud here similarly transcends national borders, invades and overpowers the domestic space, and threatens the lives of several people including the English hero Holmes himself. The major difference between the two narratives is that in Conan Doyle's the Londoners provide an entirely rational explanation for the mysterious, seemingly supernatural occurrences, while in Stoker's the possible resurrection of an ancient Egyptian Queen remains somewhat mysterious. Holmes discovers that the deaths were caused by the poison used by West African medicine-men, and named "Devil's-foot root" by a botanical missionary because the root is shaped like a foot, half human and half goatlike. A parallel between the missionary in Africa and the Cornish natives is suggested, as the latter are prone to be superstitious and to believe the Devil is involved in the deaths, thus requiring the intervention of modern, civilized city dwellers to solve their mystery. "'We are devil-ridden, Mr Holmes!'" reports the vicar when he goes to the detective with the news of Mr Tregennis's death: "'Satan himself is loose in it! We are given over into his hands!' He danced about in his agitation, a ludicrous object if it were not for his ashy face and startled eyes. Finally he shot out his terrible news" (64). On hearing this news Holmes immediately jumps up and goes to the house with the horrible atmosphere, and begins to unravel the entirely unsupernatural plot. His ability to do so seems to derive at least partly from his rational exclusion in the early stages of the mystery of supernatural explanations, in a conversation with Watson: "I take it, in the first place, that neither of us is prepared to admit diabolical intrusions into the affairs of men. Let us begin by ruling that entirely out of our minds" (60).

Unlike Holmes, missionaries and explorers are often depicted in fiction as "going native," as many critics have observed.[12] The African explorer and lion-hunter, Dr Leon Sterndale, says as much of himself when interrogated by Holmes: "'I have lived so long among savages and beyond the law,' said he, 'that I have got into the way of being a law to myself'" (71). His very name, "Leon," of course immediately indicates that he was always already foreign, already animal. In contrast to Holmes's (or Home's) composed, rational behavior, he seems when provoked to behave like a passionate, dangerous beast: "Sterndale's fierce face turned to a dusky red, his eyes glared, and the knotted, passionate veins started out in his forehead, while he sprang forward with clenched hands towards my companion" (71). He is also Cornish, like the other murderer, Mr Tregennis, who stole his poison, and like the explorer from *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, Mr Trelawny (the prefix Tre- is very common in Cornish surnames and place names, and is Cornish for homestead). Both of the stories emphasize the explorers' Cornishness through their families. Sterndale is a cousin of the Tregennis family on his "Cornish mother's side" ("Adventure" 62), and Trelawny has inherited the hidden house on the cliff from "an ancestor" who built it "in the days when a great house

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far away from a centre had to be prepared to defend itself" (Stoker 191). Both stories thus suggest that the explorers were already not quite English even before their travels abroad, according with established perceptions of the Cornish, like other "Celts," and races in the more far-flung regions of empire, as being more primitive, savage, and dangerous, prisoners of nature and irrationality (see Vernon 156–59). The Cornish explorers are clearly depicted as sources of potential danger, while they are also romanticized and admirable as masculine heroic characters (Mr Trelawny's daughter is similarly exoticized and desirable) in a comparable way to overseas natives or "noble savages" (see, for example, Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature* 33–34, 135–39). Sterndale's lion-like fierceness is as threatening as his native landscape, "the sinister semi-circle of Mounts Bay, that old death trap . . . [where] innumerable seamen have met their end" ("Adventure" 51). Trelawny's passionate interest in the Egyptian mummy endangers the lives of others as well as his own. These characters are both depicted as somewhat formidable and exotic Celts, in contrast to the more reserved, self-possessed narrators, Dr Watson and Malcolm Ross, both of whom originate in London, from where they narrate their more domestic journeys to the south westerly cliff tops.

To some extent, then, these fictions are comparable to what critics have termed "imperial Gothic," or what Victor Sage has called "empire Gothic" (3–23),[13] which concerns exploration of and invasion from distant – non-English – regions, as I discussed earlier. They are quite typical in their characterization of explorers who seem to "go native" as superstitious or associated with the supernatural, or as primitive and often dangerous "others," and in their depictions, in turn, of exotic invasions. Yet Cornwall as well as Africa plays a crucial part of these narratives, a county that is "far away from a centre" that is London (*The Jewel* 191) and that seems itself to constitute a semi-domestic kind of imperial destination. The narrators of *The Jewel* and "The Adventure" embark on what at first seems to resemble the adventure holidays promised by the tourist industry, with the scenic views of dramatic cliff scenery and the beginnings of a series of mysterious events, but these adventures become increasingly hazardous and disturbing. On the one hand the narrators' journeys are a kind of echo of the earlier African explorations, so that they might identify with the heroics of imperialist explorers, yet on the other there is a distinction between these upright English gentlemen and the rather more reckless, rather more fanatical and dangerous Cornish importers of poisonous alien substances. But all the explorers, the English as well as the Cornish, are finally subjected to the atmospheric invasion from overseas – an invasion that serves effectively to replace Cornwall with Africa – so that any distinction between the two kinds of explorers collapses, at least for a time.

This dual possibility of both identifying with and differentiating from the Cornish in these stories reflects the way that Cornwall was perceived as different or even foreign while at the same time being part of England. We might understand this in terms of what William Hughes has described as "Gothic Tourism." Hughes proposes that following the contraction of the boundaries of the British Empire after the "glorious age of expansion" the British countryside was increasingly "rescripted as a new, sometimes perilous, final frontier for the jaded – or outmoded – social explorer," replacing such adventurous destinations as Africa, India and the East (122). He differentiates "Tourist Gothic" in this context from what Victor Sage has called "Empire Gothic"[14]: those fictions by writers including Conan Doyle and Kipling in which the fear is that "the Empire has come home, or been brought back, to Britain, that the Gothic Otherness of India or Africa has been transplanted into the English countryside or onto the familiar street plan of an English city" (122). In contrast, the realization for the

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Gothic tourist, according to Hughes, "is not that the foreign is somehow here, a cuckoo in the domestic nest, but that something equally horrific yet quintessentially domestic, wholly home-grown but rarely acknowledged, forms the Other to the perceiving self" (122).

The three narratives I've examined here suggest that there is indeed a disturbing otherness to be found within England, but that the countryside, or in this case the cliff-top, does not necessarily replace those destinations in the overseas empire – rather, there is an overlap. The threat here seems to originate both from colonies overseas and from the Other lurking within. At the core of the narratives is the idea of a domestic Cornishness that seems to be a precondition for the passionate, heroic but catastrophic explorations of Africa in the first place, explorations which in turn allow the alien miasma to invade. In other words the Cornish explorers (Trelawny and Sterndale) were always already, in a sense, somewhat un-English or foreign, while the possession of the Cornish daughter by Queen Tera only adds another layer of exotic attraction. While the obvious threat in these stories seems to be the poisonous atmospheres from overseas, there is also a sense of fragmentation of a coherent national identity or territory, a fragmentation that may be embodied in the crumbling, shaking cliffs of *Dracula* and *The Jewel.* As Vernon puts it, "it may be more productive to examine the internal relationships of the inherently unstable 'British Self,' than to assume that 'the Other' is always overseas, somewhere else" (169). As the British empire was contracting overseas, losing control of African colonies, and as nationalist movements also gained strength within the United Kingdom and even emerged within England (in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall) (see, for example, Vernon and Tregidga),[15] the fear seems to have developed that the mainland of England itself was becoming subject to erosion, its outlying regions slipping from its grasp. We can thus extend the notion of tourist Gothic to Cornwall, where it meets empire Gothic in a way that reflects the perception of Cornwall and the Cornish as already foreign, and somehow also, an always already lost imperial possession.

The Cornish cliff-edge, then, is a space that figures both as a paradigm for a foreignness within (a kind of heart of darkness) but also as a locus of instability for Britain and its Empire. To travel there is to activate a threat to Empire, to set in motion the reverse invasion. The narrator-explorers like Watson and Ross need only travel for a few hours on the Great Western Railway to find a place that is interchangeable with the outer reaches of the empire, a place which is, as it were, always already foreign. The ease with which they are able to reach this space of imperial adventure (a mere eight hours from Paddington to Penzance) accentuates the confusions and accelerates the threat. Arriving in Cornwall, Watson and Ross are transported into the depths of the empire, only to discover, mid-adventure, that they are still also in England, and that the threatening other, cloaked in local miasma, is now only eight hours from central London. The reverse invasion is at the ticket counter.

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NOTES

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1. Sage discusses further instances of what he calls "Empire Gothic," in which exploration outwards results in "encroachment" and "invasion," as "The Empire will strike back" (7, 11).
2. The history of the "Celts" is full of contention and debate, but we can at least trace the modern idea of Cornwall as Celtic back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For more about the historical development of this idea of Cornwall in the context of "Celticity" more generally, see Chapman, James, Berresford Ellis.
3. The Great Western Railway had set up an advertising department in 1886, as documented by Wilson (21). For discussion of the railway and tourism in Cornwall along with other factors in the exoticization of Cornwall see Payton (256–58), and for a wider context beyond the railways of how the tourist industry promoted Cornwall as different from the rest of England see Perry. For a more focused account of the railway and the "domestic exotic" see Thomas.
4. Vernon explores the tension between the imagination of Cornwall as both "a county of England and a foreign country" in depth, looking at antiquarianism and Cornish revivalism as well as the tourist industry.
5. In 1904 the first edition of *The Cornish Riviera* was published, followed by five further editions up to the year 1926. I refer here to the reprint of the 1905 edition. In 1928 a new version written by S. P. B. Mais was published, followed by two further editions in 1929 and 1934.
6. For comments about farmers and fishermen being especially superstitious, and the comparison between the Cornish and Welsh, for example see *Rambles* (41, 47). In *Basil* the narrator's Cornish nurse introduced him as a child to Cornwall through her descriptions of its stories and scenery and native people, the superstitious nature of which he goes on to condemn (243*ff*). In *The Dead Secret* it is a Cornish nurse's superstitious fear which maintains the secret of the title, while the working class locals like the maidservant Betsey are prone to believe in ghost stories (see for example 246). For more about Collins in the context of nineteenth-century travel and the walking tour in Cornwall and further afield see Vernon, "Border Crossings" (161–62).
7. For more on the context of melodrama and other dramatic productions in Cornwall in this period, including those inspired in the 1880s by the huge success of *The Pirates of Penzance*, see Kent (123–24).
8. Once fears of a raid from these Turks had subsided, they seem to have become an object of curiosity to local visitors with their "Asiatic dress, long beards and mustachios, with turbans . . . the dark complexion and harsh features of a piratical band," all of which "made them objects of terror and surprise" (Gilbert 97). I am very grateful to Jo Esra for pointing these incidents and this report out to me and for explaining the context of constructions of piracy in Cornwall in general, drawing on her study "Shaping West Barbary: Identity and West Country Barbary Captivity."
9. Rappaport's article discusses four articles around this topic of imperial possessions, making a connection here between the two which are of particular interest to my discussion of Stoker's novel: Wintle's article considers the collector Sir Richard Carnac Temple as a "triumphant colonial chief, a 'shining light' in the emerging discipline of anthropology, and a wealthy, upper-class lord of the manor" (279); Briefel discusses how objects like the mummy's hand can pose a threat to the collector (263–71). For further discussion of the mummy as an imperial possession and commodity see Daly.
10. In the 1903 version it is described as a "faint greenish vapour," while in the 1912 version (included as an appendix in this edition) it becomes a "faint greenish smoke." On the same pages both versions refer to its "pungent odour."
11. Conan Doyle goes on, incidentally, to present the Brontës, with their Cornish mother, as examples of un-Englishness with their "intense glowing imagination" that contrasts with the calm of Austen (88). The importance of the Cornish mother will become more evident shortly, but we might speculate for now that the Brontës' family background could have stimulated an awareness of Yorkshire as comparable to Cornwall.

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12. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is of course a classic example of such "regression." Also see the reference to Brantlinger above.
13. Punter and Byron also define "imperial gothic" in terms of exploration, otherness, the supernatural, and going native (44–49).
14. See note 1 above for the reference to Sage.
15. Stoker and Conan Doyle were aware of the Celtic revivalist movement in Cornwall, and of individuals such as Henry Jenner who attempted to revive the Cornish language and traditions as part of this movement, contributing to nationalist thinking in Cornwall. Samantha Rayne explores these links, uncovering correspondence between Conan Doyle and Jenner for example, in her study "Henry Jenner and Old Cornwall: Haunting, Identity, and 'Celtic' Nationalism 1900–1950."

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